

The Logic of Drug-Related Violence

A Case Study of Mexico from 2006 to 2011



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November 15, 2011

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Acknowledgement

While writing this thesis, I was honored to receive support and encouragement of a number of people, which I am very grateful for. First and foremost, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to my thesis supervisor Dr. Gearoid Millar for all his good instructions, insightful comments, explanations and advice. I would also like to thank my second reader, Dr. Mathijs van Leeuwen, for supervising me before his departure to Uganda, and in particular for suggesting me many interesting literature, especially Stathis Kalyvas' theory of selective violence.

Moreover, I would like to thank my friends from Mexico for the good times we had and the personal stories they shared with me.

I would also like to thank all those who gave me encouragement and support along the way, in particular Néstor Neyra Vera, who kindly borrowed me his laptop after mine had unfortunately broken down during the very first days of my arrival in Peru; Lourdes Suárez, for her patience and sympathy; Frederick Ranitzsch, for supplying me with his data on Mexico and the good advice he gave me at the beginning of this thesis project; and also thanks to Julian Niehaus, Elena Stateva, Olivia Journee, Christian Waloszek, Natnael Siyume Tadesse and Christa Hijkoop who have helped me during the writing process with their comments or moral support.

I would also like to thank my lecturers and fellow students from the Master Conflict, Territories and Identities for making this Master program a great and enriching experience.

Last but not least, I am very grateful to my parents who never stopped believing in me and always supported me in whatever I did. Without their help throughout all these years this thesis would have not been possible.

Thank you all!

Miriam Eberle

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my dear Mexican friend, Ana Santana, who passed away at the beginning of this year. Thank you for all the beautiful moments we shared. You will always live on in my memories.

Abstract

Mexico has experienced a dramatic escalation of drug-related violence under Mexican President Calderón which has reached a level of intensity and atrocity transcending previous periods of drug-related violence. How to explain the dramatic rise of drug-related violence since 2006? Why are some states plagued with extremely high levels of drug-related violence, whereas others remain largely unaffected? The thesis seeks to explain the variation of drug related violence across time and space by using Stathis Kalyvas' theory of selective violence.

The central propositions and hypotheses of Kalyvas' theory will be tested by using data on the Mexican case in general and Michoacán in 2009 in particular. The aim is to show whether or not the theory correctly predicts drug-related violence in Mexico.

However, there have been some major impediments that complicated the use of Kalyvas theoretical model on the Mexican case: (1) data is often lacking and incomplete; (2) the Mexican "conflict" is a mixture of irregular and conventional warfare; (3) there is more than one conflict, namely one between the Mexican government and the DTOs, and various other conflicts among the different DTOs themselves; and (4) the relationship between DTOs and state officials cannot be compared with the one that exists between incumbents and insurgents in a classical sense.

Although only a plausibility probe, the case of Mexico between 2006 and 2011 and of Michoacán in 2009 in particular, provides strong evidence that Kalyvas' theoretical model can even be applied on this case: (1) civilian support matters for the outcome of the conflict and the actors involved are eager to obtain it; (2) violence plays a key role in obtaining control and collaboration; (3) Mexican DTOs use both types of violence, though selective violence seems to be the predominant type of violence. A shift from indiscriminate violence to more selective violence within the process of the conflict does not seem to conform to the empirical reality.

The measurement of territorial control on the case of Michoacán turned out to be difficult; in some cases impossible. Furthermore, there was only little empirical evidence. It was therefore not possible to make rigorous hypotheses testing. Despite these limitations there was evidence that: (1) zone 1 and zone 5 are affected by low levels of violence; (2) zone 2 and 4 are affected by high levels of violence; and (3) Kalyvas' last hypothesis for zones of parity could neither be confirmed nor denied because of the lack of empirical evidence. However, I assume that the internal logic of DTOs must contradict this hypothesis. Instead I argue that they are equally affected by violence like zone 2 and 4.

The following recommendations can be made: (1) the Mexican government has to put more efforts to obtain civilian support which implies combating corruption, regaining trust of the civilian population and winning the “war of perceptions” by preventing DTOs from spreading their propaganda; (2) active or passive collaboration with a DTO does not necessarily mean sympathy, it might also be the result of lacking alternatives and a will to survive; (3) the mere reliance on the Mexican armed forces is counterproductive and has contributed to the escalating levels in violence; as a result (4) Kalyvas’ theory of selective violence should be integrated into the policy process. This bears practical contributions, namely to better interpret the varying patterns of drug-related violence which could help to produce more subtle approaches how to cope with DTOs.

List of abbreviations

AFI	Agencia Federal de Investigaciones Federal Investigations Agency
AFO	Arellano Félix organization
ATS	Amphetamine-type stimulants
BLO	Beltrán Leyva Organisation
CEDEMUN	National Institute for Federalism and Municipal Development
CFR	Council on Foreign Relations
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIPF	Centro de Inteligencia de la Policía Federal Federal Police Intelligence Center
CISEN	Centro de Investigación y Seguridad Nacional National Security and Investigation Center
CNDH	Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos National Human Rights Commission
CRS	Congressional Research Service
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration
DTO	Drug trafficking organization
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
INEGI	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía
INAFED	Instituto Nacional para el Federalismo y el Desarrollo Municipal National Institute for Federalism and Municipal Development
ISN	International Relations and Security Network
LFM	La Familia Michoacana
NDIC	National Drug Intelligence Center
OCG	Organized Crime Group
PAN	Partido Acción Nacional National Action Party
PF	Policía Federal Federal Police
PFM	Policía Federal Ministerial Federal Ministerial Police
PFP	Policía Federal Preventiva Federal Preventive Police
PGR	Procuraduría General de la República Attorney General of the Republic
PJF	Policía Judicial Federal Federal Judicial Police

PRD	Partido de la Revolución Democrática Party of the Democratic Revolution
PRI	Partido Revolucionario Institucional Institutional Revolutionary Party
PVEM	Partido Verde Ecologista de México Ecologist Green Party of Mexico
SEDENA	Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional Secretariat of National Defense
SEGOB	Secretaría de Gobernación Secretariat of the Interior
SEMAR	Secretaría de Marina Secretariat of the Marines
SIEDO	Subprocuraduría de Investigación Especializada en Delincuencia Organizada Assistant Attorney General's Office for Special Investigations on Organized Crime
SNSP	Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública National Public Security System
SSI	Strategic Studies Institute
SSP	Secretaría de Seguridad Pública Secretariat of Public Security
TBI	Trans-Border Institute
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

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Terminology

The terminology is often confusing with the same terms used in different ways both within the academic literature and in general usage. This section will briefly explain some key words that play a crucial role in this thesis.

Drug cartel

“Drug cartel” is a term often used, even though it is actually misleading because it suggests that Mexican DTOs have all merged to a syndicate in order to set market prices and limit competition by controlling the production and distribution of narcotic drugs. This is not the case. They control neither price nor production levels. However, “drug cartel” is a widely accepted and recognized term in academic and policy circles, as well as the media referring to Mexican drug trafficking organizations. Instead they are *“shifting, contingent, temporal alliances of traffickers whose territories and memberships evolve and change”* constantly (Astorga, 2005, p. 154-155).

Drug Trafficking Group (DTO)

“Drug trafficking organization” (DTO) is a term frequently used by scholars and the U.S. government. Even though some researchers argue that this term neglects that the DTO’s criminal activities are usually not limited to drug trafficking. Most criminal groups are indeed carrying out a diverse range of other illicit activities, such as smuggling and trafficking in humans, kidnapping, extortion, trafficking in stolen and pirated goods, and the like (Salazar & Olson, 2007). However, most of the “DTOs” have become that powerful because of drug-trafficking; and it is still the most important criminal activity for most of them.

Organized Criminal Groups (OCG)

“Organized Criminal Groups” or simply put “organized crime” is an extremely complex and complicate term to define. Even though some significant attempts had been made, no general accepted definition could be found yet (Paoli, 2002; Abandinsky, 2007; von Lampe, 2002; von Lampe, 2006a). This fact is crystallized in the evolvment of an abundance of diverse definitions on organized crime. German criminologist Klaus von Lampe has collected more than 150 definitions. Various scholars emphasize that organized crime has to be considered as a construct, rather than a social reality. The meaning of the term has changed significantly over the years in order to legitimize political or institutional interests (von Lampe, 2006a, p. 412; Paoli, 2006; Woodiwiss, 2000). Nonetheless, some researchers have made the effort to review many of these

definitions in order to identify the most common features of organized crime. Abandinsky (2007) is one of them who summarized them as follows: (1) organized crime has no political goals; (2) is hierarchical; (3) has a limited or exclusive membership; (4) constitutes a unique subculture; (5) perpetuates itself; (6) exhibits a willingness to use illegal violence and bribery; (7) demonstrates specialization/division of labor; (8) is monopolistic; and (9) is governed by explicit rules and regulations.

While acknowledging that all the terms have to be taken with a pinch of salt, I will use the terms drug cartel, drug trafficking organizations (DTO) and organized criminal groups (OCG) interchangeably throughout this thesis.

Drug-related violence

There is no general agreement over the terminology used to describe “*violence related to criminal activity by drug-trafficking organizations*” (Shirk, 2010, p. 1). Drug-related violence is defined on the base of Goldstein’s “systemic violence” and therewith on violence occurring from territorial disputes, struggles for power and resources linked to drug trafficking (see 1.1). The term “systemic violence” has rarely been used. Most scholars, policy makers, and journalists usually refer to “drug violence”, “narco-violence”, “cartel-related violence”, etc. I will use the terms “drug-related violence” or “drug-related killings” throughout this thesis.

Homicide

Homicide is a legal label used to collect data about a specific way in which people are killed. It is often used synonymously with murder, but murder and manslaughter are actually part of the broad category of homicide. However, not all homicides are criminal in intent, e.g. the killing in self-defense is seen as a homicide, whereas the killing of a person by a police officer is not considered as a homicide in law and therefore usually excluded from such databases (Geneva Declaration, 2008; West’s Encyclopedia of American Law, 2008).

1. Introduction

Mexico has experienced a dramatic escalation of drug-related violence under Mexican President Calderón which has reached a level of intensity and atrocity transcending previous periods of drug-related violence. From 2007 to 2010, over 34,550 people died due to drug-related killings. And this trend seems to continue. Chilling are not only the extraordinary increase of death tolls, but also the brutal tactics of the Drug-trafficking organizations (DTO). Torture, decapitations and other ferocities have become common, videos of executions are posted on YouTube, and barrels of acid have been used to dissolve of corpses.

These are some examples that arouse the impression that the situation in Mexico got out of control. As a result, the U.S. State Department has put out a travel warning for a number of places in Mexico (Reuters, 2011). According to the BBC (2011), the escalation of drug-related violence and inter-cartel fighting have led to the displacement of about 230,000 people with Sinaloa and Michoacán as the most affected states. Some voices within the U.S. have started to question whether the spillover of violence presents a threat to their own national security (Debusmann, 2009), and some commentators even speak about Mexico as a country becoming a failed state (Friedman, 2008).

These alarming developments attracted a lot of attention by the media, international policy circles, as well as scholars from various disciplines, resulting in an abundance of information. Media reports are, however, often dominated by sensational and terrifying stories. Bad news sells, or as the old media motto says: *"If it bleeds, it leads"*. Media reports often give the impression that large parts of Mexico have become a 'no-go-area'. Instead drug-related violence is only concentrated in a few key states and distributed very unequally. While some states (e.g. Chihuahua, Sinaloa, Guerrero and Baja California) are plagued with extremely high levels of drug-related violence, others remain largely unaffected (e.g. Baja California Sur, Yucatán, Campeche, etc.). By looking at the municipality (or county) level the picture gets even more confusing. Ciudad Juárez is the most extreme example. In 2010, about 2,738 deaths were registered in the capital city of Chihuahua, also known as the "murder city", whereas Coyame del Sotol and Buenaventura, two municipalities close to Ciudad Juárez remained largely unaffected (Geo-Mexico, 2011). How is it possible that one municipality is so struck by violence, while the neighboring municipality is violence-free?

Policy makers and scholars have given more nuanced insights into the topic, but they have usually focused on specific aspects, such as the impact of DTOs on the Mexican state and its democracy (Grayson, 2010a; Bailey & Taylor 2009; Bailey 2009; Ranitzsch, 2010), the historic complicity between DTOs and the Mexican state (Astorga, 1999; Astorga, 2009), or the effectiveness of Mexico's counternarcotic strategy (Hoffmann, 2008; Bailey 2009).

Drug-related violence itself has usually been a widely neglected topic in the theory building process. It has usually been treated as the logical outcome or by-product of organized crime, not worth to study in its own right. But how is it possible that organized crime has been present in Mexico for almost a century without ever being so violent. And why does it escalate since 2006 with every year outstripping the previous one in terms of intensity, scope and atrocity?

A special issue of *Crime, Law & Social Change* (2009) can be considered as the first collective and multidisciplinary effort to challenge the conventional understanding of the relationship between illicit markets and violence (Andreas & Wallman, 2009; Williams, 2009a; Snyder & Duran-Martinez, 2009; Friman, 2009; Reuter, 2009; Naylor, 2009). In particular Snyder & Duran-Martinez (2009) theory of state-sponsored protection rackets can be seen as the first attempt to explain the variation of drug related violence across time and space. As interesting Snyder & Duran-Martinez' theory of state-sponsored protection rackets is, it focuses merely on the relationship between the Mexican state and the DTOs, but ignores many other factors, e.g. the dynamics within DTOs themselves and in particular the dynamics of violence itself.

I consider Kalyvas theoretical model of civil war violence therefore as the most promising approach to explain the variances of drug-related violence (Kalyvas, 2000; 2002; 2006; 2008a). Kalyvas' theory aims at explaining the dynamics of civil war violence as well as its variation across time and space. Even though the theory primarily focuses on violence in a civil war setting, Kalyvas understands the theory as first step in a broader research program. Kalyvas (2006, p. 208-209) explicitly encourages further testing, in particular across various types of violence from organized crime to terrorism and genocide.

The empirical part of my research will focus on general trends on drug-related violence between 2006 and 2011 with a special focus on the state of Michoacán in 2009. I decided to illuminate both because Kalyvas call for disaggregated data was sometimes difficult to meet. I hoped thereby to compensate the lack of data that sometimes existed for one research unit and to cross-check if the trends in Michoacán match up with general trends of drug-related violence. Furthermore, I believe that drug-related violence in Michoacán cannot be understood without showing general trends and vice versa.

For the general trend analysis the year 2006 was selected as a starting point because that year can be considered as the beginning of the escalation of violence. The focus on Michoacán and the year 2009 has several reasons. I consider Michoacán as an interesting case because it was the first state to which Calderón launched his offensive against the DTOs and has since been an epicenter of the “war on drugs”. Furthermore, most research analyzing Mexico’s struggle with the DTOs has focused exclusively on the U.S.-Mexico border region (cf. Campbell, 2009; Payan, 2006). Michoacán in 2009 is particularly interesting because there has been a sharp increase in drug-related violence and this year turned out to be a relatively “data-rich” period. Another reason is that I have been in Michoacán by myself in the summer of 2009 (in the period of June to August). Personal circumstances allowed me to talk with a mayor of one of the municipalities, as well as with other interesting people which allowed me insights I would not have obtained otherwise.

1.1 Scope conditions

This thesis will focus on drug-related violence, that is to say “*violence related to criminal activity by drug-trafficking organizations*” (Shirk, 2010, p. 1). As drug-related violence does not refer to a specific legal category of criminal activity, it is usually conflated into the broad category of homicide. Lacking a general agreement on how to define drug-related violence, different classifications and methodologies have been used for data collection, resulting in significant differences among the different sources.

This thesis therefore defines drug-related violence on the base of Goldstein (1985, 1986). He was one of the first scholars who examined the casual linkage between drugs and violence. In his tripartite conceptual framework he labels this type of violence “systemic violence” which is defined as “[...] *the traditionally aggressive patterns of interaction within the system of drug distribution and use*” (Goldstein, 1985, p. 497).¹ As examples Goldstein mentions “(...) *“wars” over territory between rival drug dealers, assaults and homicides committed within dealing hierarchies to enforce normative codes, robberies of drug dealers and the usually violent retaliation by the dealer or his bosses, elimination of informers, punishment for selling adulterated or phony drugs or for failing to pay one’s debts*” (Goldstein, 1986, p. 513). Goldstein’s two other classifications, violence that results from the psychopharmacological effects of drug

¹ The term “systemic violence”, however, has rarely been used. Most scholars, policy makers, and journalists usually refer to “drug violence”, “narco-violence”, “cartel-related violence”, etc. As there is no widely accepted terminology, I will use the terms “drug-related violence” or “drug-related killings” throughout this thesis.

consumption (psychopharmacological violence) or from the addict's need to finance his/her drug dependence (economically compulsive violence) is excluded from the analysis.

This suits well to the classification system used by the Mexican newspaper Reforma which is also the most commonly used source of data on drug-related violence. Reforma tries to avoid the conflation of other homicides by taking into account the style of the killing, that is to say the weapons involved or the circumstances of the killing (indicative markings, written narco-messages, etc.).²

It is important to note that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible to draw a line between violence perpetrated by governmental forces and DTOs. The governmental forces have been accused for having committed various human rights violations. There are thousands of complaints against them about disappearances, torture and other abuses. The New York Times, for instance, reports the case of a young man who was taken by the marines and has disappeared since then. His family believes that he fell under suspicion because he is a taxi driver, many of whom work as cartel lookouts (The New York Times, 2011). There are also some claims that the government's forces are using the "war on drugs" as a pretext in order to get rid of political opponents, members of human rights organizations, and many other innocent people. As far as possible this type of violence will not be covered in this thesis. The focus is on violence perpetrated by DTO members. Violence perpetrated by governmental forces will only be mentioned when they are in league with the DTOs. Many policemen have been accused of working hand in hand with some DTOs. In August 2011, several policemen were arrested for being involved in the killing of two women in the northern Mexican town of Allende. They had handed the women out to los Zetas, who horribly murdered them (Borderland Beat, 2011c). It is also said that many DTO hitmen are dressed as police or soldiers (The New York Times, 2011).

It is important to mention that most DTOs are also engaged in other criminal activities. This thesis, however, covers only drug trafficking and therewith a criminal activity in which "*violence is attendant or supportive but not essential to the activities themselves*" (Williams, 2009a, p. 324). Violence linked to certain types of criminal activities in which violence or the threat of violence is "inherent", such as kidnapping for ransom, extortion or human trafficking is excluded from the analysis (Williams, 2009a). The mass kidnapping of Central American migrants is such an example in which Los Zetas are mainly involved. According to the Mexican National Human Rights Commission, more than 11,000 migrants have disappeared (Wilkinson, 2011). El Universal

² Why the data of Reforma are preferred over other sources is explained in detail by the Trans-Border Institute (TBI). For further information, see Shirk, 2010.

even speaks about a holocaust against migrants (El Universal, 2011a). This type of criminal activity will not be covered.

While recognizing that violence can be extended far beyond physical violence and include other forms of violence (such as torture, rape, psychological violence, etc.), I will mainly concentrate on violence that takes the form of homicide. This has practical reasons. Considering the fact that about 75 % of crimes go unreported (Shirk, 2011), statistics on homicides provide the most reliable picture, even though this reliability also has to be put in question (Beittel, 2011). As the Geneva Declaration (2008, p. 1) puts it: *“Violence has political implications (even when the violence itself may not be politicized) and is seldom random. Different groups often have an interest in understating or concealing the scope of lethal armed violence, making the collection of reliable data and impartial analysis particularly challenging”*.

1.2 Research Question

The central aim of this research project is to explain variances in drug-related violence across time and space. I will therefore use Stathis Kalyvas’s theoretical model on selective violence on the Mexican case and Michoacán in particular and test its applicability to explain these differences.

The main question derived from this aim is:

Can Kalyvas’s theory of selective violence explain the variances in Mexican drug-related violence across time and space?

To answer this question the thesis is divided into two parts. The first part focuses on Kalyvas’s theoretical framework with the following main question:

How does Kalyvas’ theory explain the variances of selective violence across time and space?

For this part it will be crucial to identify the key element and main hypotheses of Kalyvas’ theory of selective violence.

The second part, that entails the empirical analysis, will first explore the variations of drug-related violence by looking at various dimensions. Afterwards the main propositions and hypotheses of Kalyvas’ theory will be tested by using data on the Mexican case and Michoacán in 2009 in particular. The questions of this part will be guided by the main findings of the theoretical part.

Finally, it will be concluded whether the Mexican case confirms or disproves the correctness of Kalyvas’ theory. The question of the third part will therefore be:

Does Kalyvas' theory of selective violence correctly explain the variances in Mexican drug-related violence across time and space?
And if not, what might have hampered its applicability?

1.3 Scientific & Social/Societal Relevance

This research is both theoretical and practice oriented. This case study can be understood as part of a broader research program. As mentioned before, Kalyvas considers his theoretical approach as a first step and stimulus for future research. The theory needs to be further tested, refined and expanded to derive “robust hypotheses about the variation of violence across wars, as well as across several types of violence” (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 208-209, 248).

Furthermore, organized crime has been a neglected subject in Peace- and Conflict studies and used to be under the almost exclusive domain of criminology and sociology. Organized crime has increasingly attracted the interest of other disciplines, such as anthropology, economics, history, international relations, law and political science. Most of these interdisciplinary accounts, however, focus on specific aspects, such as the link between organized crime and corruption (Shelley, 2005; Buscaglia & van Dijk, 2003; Center for the Study of Democracy, 2010), the reasons for joining organized crime groups, etc. (cf. von Lampe, 2006b). Violence linked to organized crime per se has been absent in most scholarly research (with the exception of Geis, 1966). In the light of the enormous death tolls created by criminal violence that often kill more people than in a civil war, the Geneva Declaration of 2008 rightly puts that this type of violence has deserved more focus.

Peace and conflict research should therefore go beyond its traditional focus on interstate or intrastate war and include organized crime into their analysis, in particular the violence produced by it. I hope that this thesis will contribute to shed some light on this neglected issue and might serve as a starting point for further research.

The empirical goal of this research is to contribute for a better understanding of the dynamics that underlie drug-related violence. How to explain the escalation of violence since 2006 or its concentration in certain periods? How to explain the unequal distribution of violence in certain areas whilst others remain largely unaffected? These questions have been ignored in the policy-making process so far. The logical answer to violence seemed to be simply more violence. The “war on drugs”-approach that was first declared by U.S. President Nixon in 1971 is a reflection of this assumption. Several decades of hardline policy on narcotics have past and the only result has been a worsening of the situation in many countries worldwide. Calderón’s “war on drugs” that

started in 2006 seems to join the ranks of it and has been answered by the DTOs with an escalation of violence. A deeper understanding of the mechanisms of violence could also bear a practical contribution. Its incorporation into the policy process could help produce more subtle approaches how to cope with DTOs while avoiding the escalation of drug-related violence.

1.4 Mexico's "nameless conflict"

Mexico's current security crisis has attracted many researchers from various disciplines, taking along their own beliefs and assumptions. There is, however, much confusion on the question what kind of conflict is taking place in Mexico at all. As Clausewitz once recommended, before dealing with a conflict, first one has to figure out what kind of conflict is actually taking place. How to understand the escalation of drug-related violence in Mexico? Is it a war? An insurgency? Terrorism? Or a totally new kind of conflict? (cf. Haddick, 2011; Williams, 2009, April)

The opinions of journalists, policy makers and scholars differ widely. Mexico's "drug war", "war on drugs" or simply "war" are terms commonly used when referring to Mexico's current security crisis.³ Even the word "civil war" was used (CNN, 2009). What at first glance may seem to be a typical armed conflict indeed, is, however, not understood as one. Mexico's "conflict" with a casualty count of 15,273 people in 2010 alone (Shirk, 2011, p. 8) is, for instance, not captured in databases on armed conflict (e.g. the Correlates of War (COW) database) (Sambanis, 2004; Gates, 2002; Gates & Strand, 2004). U.S. Foreign Secretary Hillary Clinton even compared Mexico's drug-related violence with an insurgency and said that it is *"looking more and more like Colombia looked 20 years ago"* (BBC, 2010; Booth, 2010). This comment caused a diplomatic row with the Mexican government who denied any resemblance with Colombia and considers Mexico's drug-related violence merely as a law enforcement problem.

These are just a few examples that show how much disagreement exists when trying to classify and categorize this conflict. A Foreign Policy article (2011) put this dilemma in a nutshell by claiming that a „conflict without name“ is taking place in Mexico. It therefore remains an open debate whether criminal violence should be included into the databases on armed conflict (cf. Sambanis, 2004; Gates, 2002), obtain a category of its own in crime and conflict analysis (SIPRI, 2010, p. 5), or not be categorized at all. The Geneva Declaration (2008), for instance, suggests to stop *"drawing clear distinctions between different forms of armed violence"* for practical as well

³ The Google search engine, for instance, finds about 26,100,000 articles when typing Mexico and "drug war" into it (2011, October 20).

as analytical reasons.⁴ In 2010, the Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) of the U.S. Army War College organized a conference to clarify this issue, but did not come to a final conclusion (Metz & Cuccia, 2010, p. 43). As Miall et al. (2005, p. 63) put it: *“Unfortunately the overall state of current conflict typology is in a state of confusion. There are as many typologies as analysts, and the criteria employed not only vary, but are often mutually incompatible.”* This is particularly true for Mexico which makes it extremely difficult to grasp and study the situation adequately.

Robert Bunker (2011), a researcher at the University of Southern California, has made the effort to illuminate the different ways how Mexican drug-related violence has been conceptualized so far. He identifies five conflict models within the field of security studies which will be briefly presented in the following. These five classifications are: the *“gang model”*, *“organized crime model”*, *“terrorism model”*, *“insurgency model”*, *“future warfare model”*. Each model has its own key assumptions, concerns, preferred responses, and authors. All of them have somehow influenced public and governmental perceptions, as well as U.S. and Mexican policy makers.

The first classification, the *“gang model”*, is an area of expertise of the disciplines of sociology, criminal justice and law enforcement practitioners with a focus on street, drug or prison gangs. Scholars supporting this view assume that the current events in Mexico are „low intensity crime“ activities that have to be considered as a local law enforcement problem (Bunker, 2011, p. 2).

The second category, the *“organized crime model”*, is a conflict model that dominates Calderóns' administration and its strategy. It is a specialty of the disciplines of political science, history, and criminal justice and specializes on organized crime and illicit markets. Scholars within this field of security studies assume that the goals of organized criminal groups are purely economically driven, not politically driven. Even though it may come to the creation of „zones of impunity“, *“such criminal entities are viewed as solely money making endeavors, are not politicized, and have no intention of creating their own shadow political structures or taking over the reigns of governance”* (Ibid, p. 2, Longmire & Longmire, 2008, p. 40).

The third classification is *“terrorism studies”*, an interest of academics of political science and international relations departments. According to this model, the Mexican drug cartels use terror techniques to force the government to change policies or confront official activities that negatively affect its businesses. According to this model, the alarming levels of drug-related

⁴ The Geneva Declaration (2008, p. 3) argues that in the view of alarming levels of criminal violence in Mexico, Central America and elsewhere, where sometimes more people are killed than in many contemporary wars, the separate treatment *“impedes the development of coherent and comprehensive violence prevention and reduction policies at the international and local level”*.

violence are considered as a law enforcement problem, a homeland security problem, and/or a military problem (Bunker, 2011, p.2f.; Longmire & Longmire, 2008, p. 37f.).

Bunker's fourth model is *"insurgency studies"*, a focus of academics and military planners. It assumes that Mexican DTO's could eventually form a shadow government by seizing control of the government by indirect and irregular means and/or alliance with it. According to this model, Mexico's current situation is regarded as a national security threat (Bunker, 2011, p.3; Longmire & Longmire, 2008, p.39).

The last model is the *"future warfare studies"*. It is a specialization of various disciplines such as political science, international relations, military history, and military and strategic studies. This model assumes the emergence of a new war making entity that is transnational in nature and could seize control of territories, population centers, and sovereign governments (Bunker, 2011, p. 3f.).

These examples reveal that there are many ways to conceptualize the events in Mexico. But, as Bunker emphasizes, all conflict models are ideal types and grasp only one part of reality. The situation in Mexico can only be completely understood after considering all of them and not by insisting on inflexible and rigorous classification systems.

1.5 Methodology

The following sections will first present the research strategy and afterwards describe what kind of data is available as well its strengths and weaknesses.

1.5.1 Research strategy

As research strategy the single case study was selected as the most appropriate one to answer my research question. According to Yin (2003, p.1) case studies are *"the preferred method when "how" or "why" questions are being posed"* and when the researcher has little control over events (Yin, 2003, p.1). Yin (2003, p. 13-14) defines the case study research method as *"an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident"*.

Such a case study approach has both strengths and weaknesses. Advocates highlight case studies' ability to examine multiple sources of evidence, its flexibility and the temporal coincidence of collection and analysis. Furthermore, case studies produce comprehensive and detailed information about a particular case and can therefore overcome the gap that often exists between abstract research and concrete practice. On the other hand, opponents point out that case studies lack in rigor, objectivity and reliability. As a consequence, results are often not

generalizable (Hartley, 1994; Kohlbacher, 1996; Writing@CSU, 2011; Johnston/Leach/ Liu, 1999). Bearing these objections in mind, I still believe that the single case study approach is the most adequate. The reliability and validity of the case study is enhanced through the process of triangulation by using a mix of qualitative and quantitative data. Such a combination allows to capture the strengths of both approaches, as well as to avoid or overcome some of the pitfalls a single approach often entails (Hulme, 2007, p. 13). Triangulation was achieved through using a wide variety of sources and datasets. These are books, government publications, reports from NGO's and international organizations, academic publications, newspaper articles, blogs, different datasets on drug-related violence and some personal interviews. These sources have been used to provide a comprehensive picture of drug-related violence and to verify and complement findings. In many cases triangulation led to contradictory information which resulted in the revision of the sources and information.

Research on organized crime faces many constraints due to its illicit and clandestine character. It is difficult to obtain reliable information on OCGs because information is often based on speculations and rumors which sometimes results in contradictory, if not mutually incompatible statements by the different sources.⁵ This also makes it difficult to rigorously test hypotheses on organized crime. Von Lampe (2006a, p. 413) therefore argues that the aim of research on organized crime can only be to make plausibility considerations. I therefore decided to conduct the case study as a plausibility probe because it was not possible to conduct systematic research. Eckstein (1991, p. 147f.) defines a plausibility probe as a preliminary test of hypotheses that is used to determine if a theoretical construct is worth considering at all or explore the suitability of a particular case for testing a theory through a large-scale case study.

1.5.2 Data collection and analysis

The theoretical part is based on Stathis Kalyvas' book "The Logic of Violence in Civil War". It can be considered as the most important source. The main propositions and hypotheses of Kalyvas' theory were derived on base of this work. The findings have been further enriched by various other articles of Kalyvas (2000, 2002, 2005, 2008).

For the background information as well as the empirical part various sources have been used. Among them are books, government publications, reports from NGO's and international

⁵ There are many examples where information is contradictory and full of speculations. In June 2011, it was rumored by various sources (e.g. The Brownsville Herald, 2011) that "El Lazca", the leader of Los Zetas, had been killed in a shootout between Los Zetas and the Gulf Cartel. His body, however, has never been found and neither Mexican nor U.S. authorities confirmed his death (Borderland Beat, 2011b; Longmire, 2011c). Alliances between the different DTOs or information about the internal structure and organization of the DTOs are another example where the sources are often contradictory.

organizations, academic publications, newspaper articles and blogs, different datasets on drug-related violence and some personal interviews. Due to the recency of events most books are already out of date. Two books are, however, worth to emphasize: First, George W. Grayson's book *"Mexico: Narco-Violence and a Failed State?"* which was published in January 2010 and offers a very current and extensive study on the Mexican DTOs. Second, Howard Cambell's (2009) *"Drug War Zone: Frontline Dispatches from the Streets of El Paso and Juárez"* who offers an ethnographic perspective on the subject.⁶ Some scholarly articles are relevant to the subject of this thesis, such as the already mentioned special issue of *Crime, Law & Social Change* (2009) that offers a critical view of the link between violence and illicit markets, as well as various reports published by the Trans-Border Institute (TBI) of the University of San Diego. Their reports provide an illuminating trend analysis of drug-related violence with many useful figures and graphics. Furthermore, there is a large amount of U.S. government publications, as well as reports from non-governmental and international organizations, most notable the Congressional Research Service (CRS), the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), the Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) of the U.S. Army War College, *Small Wars Journal* (SWJ), Grupo Savant, the International Crisis Group (ICG), Stratfor, the International Relations and Security Network (ISN) of the ETH Zürich, and the United Nations Office of Drug and Crime (UNODC). They offer a profound coverage of the events and represent another important pillar for the background information and the empirical analysis (in particular the general trends).

For the micro level analysis that focuses on Michoacán in 2009 the following sources have been used: first, the articles of Grayson (2009, 2010a, 2010b) and Finnegean (2010) have been very useful because they offer in-depth reports on La Familia Michoacana, a DTO that has its home base in Michoacán. Second, various Mexican and international newspapers and media reports served as another important pillar, such as *El Proceso*, *El Universal* or *La Jornada*, as well as the *New York Times*, the *LA Times*, *BBC* or *Esmas.com*. In particular *Esmas.com* – the online portal of Televisa⁷ – allowed the complete collection of all articles published on Michoacán in 2009 which served as important starting point for further investigation. Third, another important source comes from the Mexican DTOs themselves. The cartels have been very active in disseminating so-called "narco-propaganda" via the media, blogs, and youtube (see Section 5.2.3). Fourth, quantitative data was also used for the empirical part focusing on Michoacán. Two types of

⁶ The book is full of personal stories of people involved in drug trafficking itself or in counter-drug efforts. The book focuses merely on El Paso/ Juárez region, but allows a small glimpse into the way of thinking of the criminal underworld and the symbolic meaning of drug-related violence.

⁷ Televisa is Mexico's biggest television network and largest producer of Spanish language media worldwide (Crescendo Networks, 2010).

sources are available that measure drug-related violence: media accounts and official figures. Media accounts used to be the only source of information publicly available over the last few years as the Mexican government refused to release theirs. The level of drug-related violence is covered by the Mexican newspapers Reforma, El Universal and Milenio. Their results, however, differ a lot from each other due to different methodologies and definitions of “drug-related violence” (Shirk, 2010, p. 1-2).⁸ Another problem is that their database can only be accessed after a paid subscription. The Trans-Border Institute (TBI) of the University of San Diego, however, has published some of their data by offering figures and maps on drug-related violence which has been useful for showing general trends. As I have only access to the data published by the TBI, data on drug-related violence are only distinguished at the state level and measured in years. Furthermore, it is not distinguished between the different types of drug-related violence, such as drug related executions, violent confrontations, or aggression directed against state authorities.

The second source, official data, has been publicly released in January 2011.⁹ There are three types of official data. The first is based on police records which are provided by the “*National System of Public Security*” (“Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública” (SNSP)) as well as the *Statistical Yearbooks*. The second is the Vital Statistics from Mexico’s National Statistics Institute (the “Instituto Nacional de Geografía, Estadística e Informática” (INEGI)), which is based on death certificates in each municipality. Both sources, however, do not distinguish between “regular” murders and those related to drug-trafficking activities. INEGI also drags behind in terms of compilation and release of their statistics. The last recent data available of INEGI is for the year 2009.¹⁰ Despite these limitations, the database of INEGI is very useful because it allows a comparison of the homicide level between the different municipalities on a monthly base. The third source comes from a platform provided by the National Security and Investigation Center (CISEN), Mexico’s primary intelligence agency that directly works for the Mexican President. The platform is a jointly product of experts, civil society and the Mexican Federal Government. It allows a focus on the municipality level like the database of INEGI. Furthermore the conflation of

⁸ For the year 2009, Reforma, for instance, reported 6,576 drug-related killings, whereas El Universal reported 7,724 and Milenio 8,281. The Trans-Border Institute (TBI) has gathered and reviewed the databases of the three media sources and considers the one offered by Reforma as the most adequate because it tries to avoid the conflation of other homicides.

⁹ Before the data was only sporadically released by the Mexican government and was not commonly accessible to the public (Shirk, 2010). This changed in January 2011 after increased pressure had forced the Mexican government to release their database (Shirk & Ríos, 2011).

¹⁰ Even though the amount of the total homicide rate differs widely between INEGI, SNSP and the newspaper Reforma (INEGI’s estimations are generally much higher than the ones of SNSP or Reforma), a comparison between the three sources reveals that they agree on the general trends concerning drug-related violence which indicates a certain degree of validity across each of these sources (Shirk, 2011, p. 6).

other homicides is avoided. The platform even distinguishes between two types of drug-related violence: executions and aggressions & confrontations.¹¹

Keeping the limitations of the different datasets in mind, I will use data delivered by Reforma via the Trans-Border Institute to show general trends in drug-related violence, the intentional homicide database of INEGI (though laborious and impractical sometimes) and the platform of CISEN will be used for the focus on Michoacán in 2009.

Finally, my findings will be enriched by various unstructured interviews I was able to conduct during my stay in Mexico from June to August 2009 as well as afterwards. It is important to highlight that no scientific sampling technique was used. It turned out to be extremely difficult to talk with people about organized crime. I was often warned that I should be careful when asking people about this issue. *“You never know who they really are and asking the wrong questions can cost your life”*, I was told once. Most of the interviews I was able to conduct based on friendship and trust, in some cases on lucky coincidences. But even when talking to close friends I sometimes felt a wall arisen when I asked about their personal experiences with organized crime. One friend whose family has been threatened from organized crime groups explained me that she prefers not to know about what is going on and to pretend as if nothing has ever happened because it is so terrible to feel threatened all the time, even at your own house. *“The less we know, the better for us”*, said her father who is mayor of a small municipality in Michoacán. Most Mexicans I have met seemed to share this view, except for those living abroad. They have been more open to tell me their personal stories. However, as interesting and enriching most of their stories have been, the interviewees have only a limited insight into the issue as their knowledge and information is often based on second-hand, if not third-hand.

1.6 Structure

In order to answer the research questions, this thesis is divided into 6 chapters. In this chapter I have introduced the research goal, important scope conditions, the central research question, as well as the scientific and social/societal relevance of this thesis. Furthermore, I clarified the different ways how Mexico’s “nameless conflict” can be conceptualized and interpreted, as well as the research methods used in this thesis. The second chapter presents the background information. The significance of the global and Mexican drug trafficking will be illuminated, as well as the historical and structural background that have led to the rise of the Mexican DTOs. Furthermore, various alternative explanations for the escalating levels of drug-related violence

¹¹ For further information about their methodology see <http://200.23.123.5/Documentos.aspx>.

in Mexico will be elaborated. The second chapter closes with a presentation of the most important DTOs that have been active during the period of question. The third chapter covers the theoretical foundation of the thesis and therewith Kalyvas theoretical model of civil war violence in which the key element that explains the variances of violence, as well as the main findings and hypotheses will be identified and presented. Kalyvas' theory of selective violence will guide the structure of the fourth and fifth chapter. In the fourth chapter I will follow Kalyvas' call and disaggregate data on drug-related violence on various dimensions. In the fifth chapter I will test the central propositions and hypotheses of Kalyvas' theory on selective violence by using data on the Mexican case and Michoacán in particular. The aim is to show whether or not the theory correctly predicts drug-related violence in Mexico. The final chapter will present the main findings of my research, and major impediments that complicated the use of Kalyvas theoretical model. I will finally conclude with some recommendations.

2. Background information

2.1 Illicit drug market

International drug trafficking is one of the world's biggest and most profitable illicit business. However, it is extremely difficult to estimate the value of the illicit drug market. In the following, the significance of the global and Mexican drug trafficking will be illuminated.

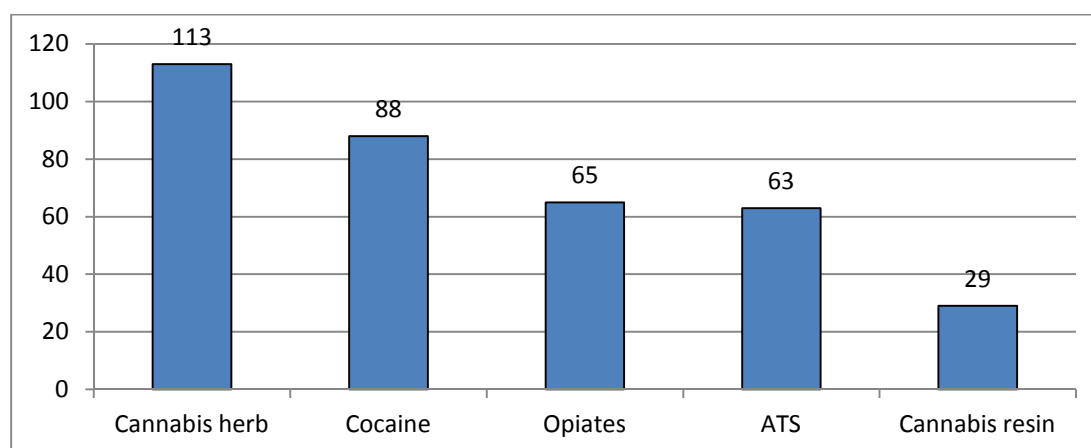
2.1.1 Global drug trafficking

Only a few serious attempts have been made that focused exclusively on the global level. The last attempt has been made in 2005 by the UNODC (2005, p. 16) stating that *„the value of the global illicit drug market for the year 2003 was estimated at US\$13 bn [billion] at the production level, at \$94 bn at the wholesale level (taking seizures into account), and at US\$322 bn based on retail prices and taking seizures and other losses into account“*.

In 1998, the UNODCP even estimated that the global drug trade may run up to \$400 or \$500 billion annually (UNODCP, 1998, p. 55). Thoumi (2005) dismisses these figures as being far too high. They rather resemble “wild guesses” than calculated estimations. However, these figures have willingly been quoted by journalists, policy makers, government agencies or analysts (Thoumi, 2005, p. 187). According to Thoumi (2005), the most serious attempt has been done by Peter Reuter on behalf of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an inter-governmental body focusing on anti-money laundering activities and legislation.¹² According to Reuter, the estimated size of the world illegal drug market ranges between \$45 and \$280 billion (Ibid). The most important proportion of the global drug market is estimated to be cannabis herb (also known as grass or weed) with a retail market size of \$113 bn (UNODC, 2005), followed by cocaine (US\$88 bn), the opiates (US\$65 bn (including heroin (US\$55 bn))). The ATS markets together (methamphetamine, amphetamine and ecstasy) amount to US\$63 bn (UNODC, 2008b) and cannabis resin (also known as hash) to US\$29 bn (UNODC, 2010a).

¹² Peter Reuter is a well-known economist who has done extensive work on illegal drug markets. Unfortunately, the report is not available anymore due to political pressure.

Figure 1: *Estimations on the global value of the illicit drug market*



Source: Author of this thesis with data of UNODC (2005); UNODC (2008b); UNODC (2010a).

Unfortunately, it is not possible to estimate the possible amount of revenues generated by drug trafficking in Mexico generally or the particular drugs.¹³ But the estimations on a global level make clear that drug trafficking is a highly profitable business, if not one of “the” most profitable businesses in the world (Rios, 2008; UNODC, 2007).

2.1.2 Mexican drug trafficking

Since the 1990s, Mexico can be considered as “the” major producer and supplier of heroin, marijuana and (since 2005) methamphetamine to the U.S. market. Mexico is also the leading transit country for cocaine coming from South America to the United States (UNODC, 2008; Beittel, 2009). It is estimated that about 70 % of all drugs consumed in the U.S. come through Mexico (Rios, 2008; Meyer, 2007). In the following, the role of the particular drugs in the U.S. market (and therewith the main consumption market for Mexican DTOs) will be presented, as well as Mexico’s possible involvement in drug trafficking.

The most important and most consumed drug in the U.S. (with about 30 million users) is cannabis, in particular marijuana (UNODC, 2010a).¹⁴ Even though there are no reliable figures about the exact source of the marijuana sold in the U.S., it is estimated that most marijuana is cultivated in the U.S. itself. However, Mexico seems to be the primary foreign source of marijuana (NDIC, 2009; UNODC, 2010a). Despite the high demand, marijuana sales only generate a small profit compared to other illicit drugs. Marijuana is bulky and difficult to transport in high-profit quantity and the risk of getting discovered by the law enforcement authorities is high

¹³ Limitations of measuring the size of the Mexican illegal-drug industry has been described in detail by Ríos (2008, p.4 ff.).

¹⁴ There are 3 types of drug products that can be produced from cannabis: “herbal cannabis” (also known as „marijuana“), most popular in North America and many other countries worldwide, “cannabis resin” (also known as hashish), most popular in much of Europe and a few traditional resin-producing regions, and “cannabis oil” (UNODC, 2006).

(President's Commission on Organized Crime, 1986). Even though the cocaine market has declined significantly since the early 1980s, the United States remain the single largest national cocaine market worldwide with 41% of the global cocaine-using population (with 6,2 million users in 2008) (UNODC, 2010a). According to the UNODC's 2010 World Drug Report, about 90% of the cocaine entering the United States transits through Mexico. The profit margins are extremely high, even though the Mexican DTOs not take part on the whole cocaine production chain (e.g. cultivating or processing).¹⁵

The third Mexican drug product are opiates, in particular methamphetamines and heroin (with 1,3-1,4 million users).¹⁶ Even though most of the poppy is cultivated in Afghanistan (about 89% in 2009), the Americas are a largely self-sufficient market for opiates. Most of the opiates consumed in the Americas have been produced in Latin America and particularly Mexico (UNODC, 2010a; UNODC, 2010b; NDIC, 2009).

The third most consumed illicit drug in the U.S. are Amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) which have increased remarkably since 2003 (with amphetamines-group users 3,1-3,2 million and ecstasy users 2,5 million people). However, it is extremely difficult to give a precise trend analysis about the ATS market. The methamphetamine production is a relatively recent phenomenon in Mexico. It started in 2005 in response to stricter controls over precursor chemicals enacted in the United States. As a result, the methamphetamine production shifted from the U.S. towards Mexico. Since then, Mexican DTOs evolved as the primary suppliers of methamphetamine to the U.S. market. It is speculated that increasing controls over the key precursors for methamphetamine in 2007 resulted in a new shift further south towards Central America (UNODC, 2010a). The ATS market is a highly profitable business. The ATS manufacture only needs little initial investment and there are various legal (!) precursor chemicals that can be used for ATS manufacture. If one traditional precursor chemical becomes forbidden and therefore unavailable, it can be easily replaced by another one. In addition, its production is not bound to a particular geographic region which makes the ATS market extremely difficult to track (UNODC, 2010a).

In sum, Mexican DTOs seem to be involved in the cultivation, manufacturing and trafficking of a variety of drugs with cocaine and meth as the most profitable narcotics.

¹⁵ Cocaine is derived from the coca plant which is mainly cultivated in the Andean countries Colombia (43%), Peru (38%), and Bolivia (19%) (UNODC, 2010a, p. 16). The profit margins for Mexican DTOs come exclusively from transshipment services (Rios, 2008, p.4).

¹⁶ Opium poppy is the plant from which opiates such as morphine and heroin are derived. Heroin is the most widely consumed illicit opiate in the U.S. (and worldwide) (UNODC, 2010a, p. 14, 139f.).

2.2 Historical and structural preconditions

This chapter aims to give an overview of the historical and structural development of Mexico's drug trafficking groups, as well as Mexico's rise as the most important supplier of the U.S. drug market.

2.2.1 Historical development of Mexican drug trafficking

Mexico's involvement in drug trafficking is longstanding and started with the Prohibition in the U.S. in the early twentieth century. The first organized criminal groups were family-based who smuggled drugs and other contraband across the U.S. border. Violence was rarely used (Astorga, 1999; Freeman & Sierra, 2005). From the 1930s on, these contraband groups increasingly engaged in drug-trafficking with marijuana and heroin, but only on a small-scale level. It remained a locally and regionally based activity (Grayson 2010a; Brophy, 2008).

The nature of drug trafficking started to change with the boom in U.S. marijuana and cocaine consumption during the 1960s and '70s, creating more quick fortunes than ever before. This resulted in the evolvement of the first large-scale drug trafficking organization, the Felix Gallardo organization (later known as the Guadalajara OCG) (Astorga, 1999; Salazar & Olson, 2007). This criminal group named after its founder and leader, Miguel Angel Felix Gallardo, rooted in the state of Sinaloa and can be seen as precursor of most of Mexico's current major criminal organizations (Salazar & Olson, 2007). The Felix Gallardo organization successfully integrated diverse smuggling organizations. Their monopoly position made them very powerful. But compared to the Columbian Cali and Medellín DTOs that were dominating the drug business throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Mexico only played a minor role. They primarily acted as middleman between Columbian traffickers and American consumers. Most Columbian cocaine was instead shipped via the Caribbean (Salazar & Olson, 2007).

This started to change in the mid-1980s when US anti-drug operations began to focus on the Columbian-Caribbean drug-trafficking connections. The closing of the cocaine trafficking routes through the Caribbean and South Florida from Colombia reduced the ability of the Colombian DTOs to traffic cocaine directly to the United States. It forced them to shift their smuggling route towards the Mexican territory to supply U.S. demand by subcontracting Mexican smuggling organizations (Beittel, 2009). With the demise of the Medellín DTO (in 1993) and the Cali DTO (in 1996), the Mexican DTOs finally had pushed aside the Colombians. These changes elevated Mexico's position in drug trafficking enormously. However, increased U.S. pressure had forced the Mexican Government to crack down on Mexican drug trafficking which resulted in the arrest

of Félix Gallardo. In the following, the Guadalajara organization dissolved and the remaining factions established their bases in various parts of Mexico (Ibid).

2.2.2 Structural preconditions

There are also some structural circumstances that contributed to Mexico's role as ideal transit route and most important supplier of the U.S. drug market. First, Mexico's geographical position, located between the Andean region (the most important cocaine producing countries) and the United States (the world's largest illicit drug consuming country). This "location curse", as Williams (2009b, p. 325) puts it, has predestined Mexico to be the key transshipment state of cocaine (q.v. Thoumi, 2009). Second, the nature of the U.S.-Mexican border with its almost 3,144 km long border offers perfect prerequisites for contraband activities. It is almost impossible to protect the whole border as most passages are insufficiently secured or only by natural barriers (e.g. rivers, deserts) (Meyer, 2007). Third, another contributing factor for Mexico's role in drug trafficking has been the increase in free trade and globalization. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), implemented in 1994, was designed to increase and ease trade between the U.S., Mexico and Canada. However, it did not only facilitate the trade with legitimate products, but also with illegal ones (Mares & Cánovas, 2010; Ranitzsch, 2010).¹⁷

2.3 Causes of drug-related violence

The following section aims to investigate various alternative explanations for the escalating levels of drug-related violence in Mexico in order to better understand Mexico's current security. First it will be illuminated whether violence has to be considered as an intrinsic feature of illicit markets or not. Afterwards several contributing factors, as well as specific drivers that have lead to the rise in drug-related violence will be identified and presented. This chapter will be useful for the empirical part to eventually integrate it into Kalyvas' theory.

2.3.1 Violence - an intrinsic feature of illicit markets?

The conventional understanding of the relationship between violence and illicit markets is that violence has to be considered as an intrinsic feature of illicit markets and drug trafficking in particular. This view is supported by claims that the only solution is to legalize drugs because *"when there is demand, there will always be a supply"* (Thoumi, 2009, p. 38). Scholars supporting this opinion argue that the prohibition strategy only resulted in the creation of *"a large black*

¹⁷ Ranitzsch (2010) highlights that the U.S.-Mexican border can be considered as one of the most frequented borders worldwide: about 78,8 million passenger cars, 266,414 buses, 4,8 million trucks with 2,9 million containers, as well as 10, 262 trains with about 332,578 containers crossed the border in 2008 (U.S. Department of Transportation, 2008). Despite highly sophisticated border control systems it is therefore impossible to control all vehicles and persons crossing the border (Ranitzsch, 2010).

market where violence and corruption are the coin of the realm” (Freeman, 2006, p.2; q.v. Marcy, 2010). The legalization of drugs (at least of some less harmful ones) might indeed weaken the power of organized crime groups, but the question remains why in some periods or countries violence is used and in others not. Various scholars therefore put the assumption of violence as a typical by-product and intrinsic feature of illicit markets in question. Instead *“the relationship is far more ambiguous and complex”* (Andreas & Wallman, 2009, p. 228; q.v. Williams, 2009; Reuter, 2009; Friman, 2009).

Violence is an omnipresent course of action in illicit markets, but not necessarily integral to the criminal activity (Williams, 2009, p. 324). Violence is only one form of risk management for OCGs. There are many nonviolent mechanisms available for conflict prevention and conflict resolution as violence is generally costly and perilous (Friman, 2009; von Lampe, 2006a; Reuter, 2009).¹⁸ OCGs also try to avoid using violence against each other, and against the state. OCGs prefer to cooperate and form alliances, even though these alliances are generally weak and constantly shifting. Von Lampe (2006a) therefore believes that violent rat-races are rather a sign of lacking “organization”, therewith “dis-”organized crime. Bribery is a particularly popular strategy when dealing with governmental forces. Due to its discreetness it does not endanger the illicit activities of organized crime. Violence is only used when it is neither possible to *“operate under the radar”* of the state, nor to cooperate with them (Williams, 2009, p. 325). These two options are commonly referred to as “plomo o plata” (literally lead or silver) (Lessmann, 1996; Dal Bó et al., 2002).

Hence, violent conflicts and disputes - whether within the organization itself, with rivals or the state – are rather exceptional than a norm (William, 2009b). The question, however, remains: what are the reasons that drug-related violence in Mexico has escalated so much within the last few years.

2.3.2 The context matters: Contributing factors

Instead of focusing on the nature of commodity—whether prohibited or not -, some scholars suggest that it is more important to look at the political, social-economic and cultural context that have allowed DTOs to arise and contributed to the rise in drug-related violence (Williams, 2009, p. 324; and Naylor, 2009, p. 231f.; Geis, 1966). Mexico’s institutional weakness and high levels of corruption that plague all government institutions, agencies and political parties are

¹⁸ Within an organization OCGs rely on different strategies to maintain internal discipline and punish betrayal, such as the building of trust, measures to create or strengthen emotional or material dependencies, or the termination of a working relationship. With competitors or state officials, strategies such as financial accommodation or temporary alliances of convenience are used.

factors often highlighted by U.S. policy makers.¹⁹ Media reports and policy makers highlight factors such as poverty, inequality, economic insecurity because they produce a ready pool of recruits for the DTOs (Beittel, 2011; Proceso, 2011).²⁰ Williams (2009a) also highlights factors such as the emergence of a “culture of lawlessness” and anomie where social norms and values have broken down, or machismo and a desire for revenge.²¹ Other contributing factors are the easy availability of specialists in violence (in particular in form of deserted military men)²², as well as of sophisticated weaponry purchased legally in the U.S. and trafficked to Mexico (Williams, 2009a; Astorga, 2010).²³ It is important to emphasize that these are all contributing factors to violence and illegal drug trafficking, but none of them is either necessary or sufficient for violence and organized crime to appear (Thoumi, 2009; Astorga, 2010).

2.3.3 Regime change

Several scholars argue that the main cause for drug-related violence is closely related to the regime change that started in the late 1980s and became most evident in 2000 with the election of President Fox, the National Action Party (PAN) candidate. This ended 71 years of one-party rule in Mexico by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and with it the historical complicity

¹⁹ Police corruption, for instance, was the reason why Calderón put so much emphasis on the military and deployed them in various parts of the country. It is said that about 75% of crimes go unreported due to mistrust in Mexico's justice sector, allowing drug traffickers to do whatever they want without fearing any sanctions (Shirk, 2011; Beittel, 2011). Police forces are even suspected to be in league with the DTOs, and in many cases they are indeed (Michaud, 2011). Most of the Mexicans I talked to shared this view. One told me that her friend's cousin, who is an architect in Lázaro Cárdenas (Michoacán), was arrested along with some drug traffickers that lived in the same house. All of them came free except for him. Now he is faced with charges of child abuse. The same friend told me about a bank robbery that resulted in the killing of two clients. The security camera showed a woman next to the victims, which lead the police conclude that she was part of the set-up. The next day, they arrested a woman that resembled the woman on the video and accused her of murder. Now she has to prove that she was innocent. These are just two examples revealing Mexico's slide into lawlessness in which the culprits (with money) get free and those without get charged with infringements they have not even committed.

²⁰ According to the National Institute of Statistic and Geography (INEGI) about 46 % of Mexico's population lives in poverty. This affects about 52 million people (INEGI, 2011). Of those 8 million (10.4 %) live in extreme poverty and have an estimated income of 68.46 pesos a day which is about \$ 4. However, there are many poor people living in unequal societies, affected by high rates of unemployment and economic insecurity, but these factors do not automatically make them drug traffickers or gang members (Thoumi, 2009, p. 38). This objection can be confirmed by looking at the state level of Mexico. The poorest states are Chiapas, Guerrero, Oaxaca, Tabasco and Durango. Whereas Guerrero and Durango are indeed affected by high levels of violence, Chiapas, Oaxaca and Tabasco are not. Hence, factors such as poverty, inequality or economic insecurity are contributing factors, but insufficient to explain violence.

²¹ Geis (1966, p. 95) calls this the values of society itself. If violence has become an accepted form of social interaction, the more likely OCG will resort to it. Or as Naylor (2009, p. 241) puts it: “*violent societies produce violent criminals and violent police and military forces.*”

²² High levels of defection of military personnel that work for the DTOs has given rise to dangerous enforcer gangs. It is estimated that about 150,000 military men have deserted in the last 7 or 8 years and a reported 20,000 in 2008 (Williams, 2009, p. 328). The most prominent one are Los Zetas. They were founded in the late 1990s as a drug enforcer gang by the Gulf Cartel leader, Osiel Cárdenas Guillén. They can be considered as one of the best armed, most disciplined, and tactically experienced armed paramilitary groups, consisting of mainly disaffected military, and law enforcement personnel (Williams, 2009, p. 328; Astorga, 2010). They are trained in counterinsurgency, urban warfare tactics, the use of assault weapons and explosives, and other military techniques (Longmire, 2010c). This trend heralded a process of professionalization in drug-related violence in Mexico as other DTOs followed suit by forming their own paramilitary group to confront Los Zetas, such as Los Negros by the Sinaloa Cartel (Carpenter, 2010, p. 408).

²³ The U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) estimates that 90% of the traced firearms originate from the U.S. generating an estimated annual revenue of U.S. \$22 million (Williams, 2009, p. 329). Most of the firearms are bought legally in gun shows and flea markets at the border states and are sold to smugglers who traffic them into Mexico (Williams, 2009, p. 328f.; Astorga, 2010; Sullivan & Beittel, 2009). According to the ATF, the greatest proportion of firearms seized in Mexico (about 69 %) originate from U.S. states in the southwest, namely Texas (39%), California (20%), and Arizona (10%) (GAO 2009; s.a. Sullivan & Beittel, 2009).

that existed between the PRI and the DTOs on various levels of the government (Freeman, 2007; Astorga, 2009; Williams, 2009b; Chabat, 2010b).²⁴

An illuminating theory on this link has been developed by Snyder & Duran-Martinez (2009). In their comparative case study including Mexico and Burma, they claim that the relationship between regime change and drug-related violence can best be explained by focusing on so-called “state-sponsored protection rackets”. They argue that the existence of institutions of protection have a pacifying effect on illicit markets, whereas their breakdown are likely to result in increased violence. This explains the relatively low levels of violence from the 1940s until the 1980s, when Mexico used to have a state-sponsored protection racket. This “history of collusion” between the Mexican state and organized crime ended with Mexico’s regime change. An upsurge in violence followed and will probably continue as alternative relationships have still not been institutionalized (Williams, 2009, p. 326). The reasons for the breakdown of “institutions of protection” in Mexico are first, Mexico’s transition to democratic government after decades of authoritarian rule. The increase in political competition resulted in different parties being represented on various levels of the government. This in turn led to the erosion of PRI’s political monopoly position. Second, administrative reforms aimed at reducing corruption among state officials (Snyder & Duran-Martinez, 2009, p. 262).²⁵

2.3.4 Enforcement-and-suppression strategy

Carpenter (2010) further illuminates this link by arguing that the enforcement-and-suppression strategy of the Mexican government has to be considered as the triggering factor of drug-related violence. He argues that the incarceration and killing of key druglords has opened an intercartel power vacuum which resulted in an escalation of violence. This started with the Fox administrations that replaced government compliance by a more confrontational position (Williams, 2009, p. 327; Lake et al., 2010). When President Felipe Calderón (of the center-right PAN party as well), came into office in December 2006, he made combating the DTOs even a top priority. Immediately after assuming the presidency he declared the “war on drugs” and launched the “Joint Operation Michoacán” (Operativo Conjunto Michoacán), the first of several military-dominated counter-drug operations. He deployed around 6,500 soldiers and police in his home state of Michoacán in order to combat drug trafficking (Meyer, 2007). Calderón claimed

²⁴ The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) emerged out of the Mexican Revolution and ruled Mexico uninterruptedly from 1929 to the mid-1980s. Mario Vargas Llosa, a Peruvian writer and politician, therefore described Mexico’s political system as “the perfect dictatorship”.

²⁵ First, the increase in political competition resulted in different parties being represented on various levels of government, which in turn led to the erosion of PRI’s political monopoly position. Second, administrative reforms aimed at reducing corruption among state officials, resulted in a sharp increase in violence.

that it was to regain control of territories lost to the DTOs, but the high-visibility militarized offensive also served Calderón to assert his authority and gain public support after his slim victory and the fact that the changing party system dynamics had diminished presidential power (Michaud, 2011). Other military-dominated operations followed, involving 45,000 soldiers and thousands of Federal Police to combat the DTOs along the U.S.-Mexico border and some other drug trafficking “hot spots” (Beittel, 2011; Sullivan & Beittel, 2009).²⁶ However, the increased reliance on the Mexican armed forces has not only done little to reduce the power and reach of the drug trafficking organizations or the violence associated with them. In contrary, the situation has even exacerbated (Astorga, 2010; Meyer, 2007).

Carpenter (2010) explains this link with the incarceration and killing of several important DTO leaders which left an intercartel power vacuum. In the following, the different DTOs started to fight against each other in order to fill the gap. Once drug markets are consolidated in the hands of a DTO, violence is likely to decrease. The successful enforcement strategy also affects the internal structure of the DTOs and often results in the phenomenon of splintering or “fractionalization”. The use of harsher and more militant tactics can also be considered as an attempt of the DTO leaders to avoid being perceived as weak and therewith intimidating would-be challengers. Hence, instead of weakening the DTOs by the military enforcement strategy, *“the organizations have merely transferred power to new and sometimes more violent leaders”* (Beittel, 2011, p. 18; q.v. Lessmann, 1996; Friman, 2009; Reuter, 2009; Andreas & Wallman, 2009; Williams, 2009).

2.4 The Mexican drug trafficking organizations

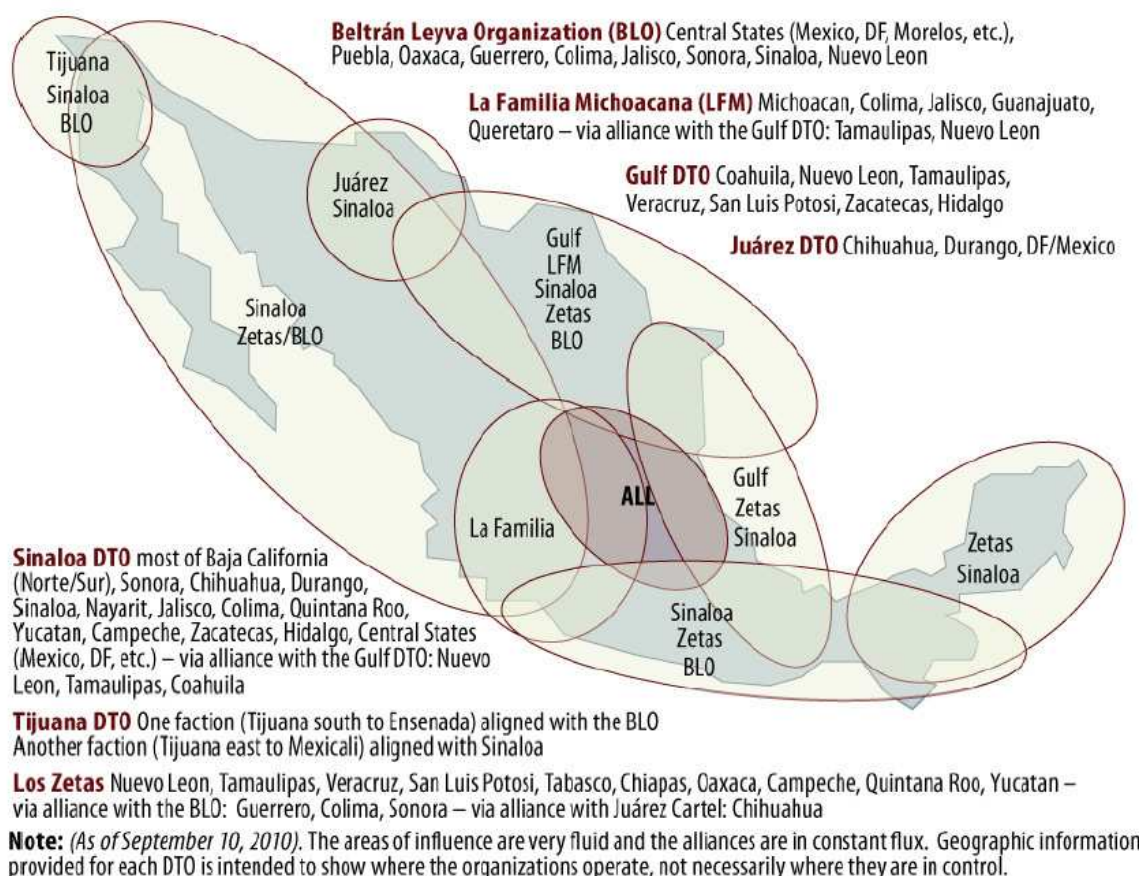
In order to better understand drug-related violence in Mexico, it is essential to provide background information about the most important DTOs that are primarily responsible for the extent of drug-related violence. There are also some smaller DTOs, such as the Colima, Milenio or the Oaxaca DTO, but they are closely tied with (and partly dependent from) the dominant DTOs and will not be treated separately. I also acknowledge that many DTOs hire gangs or so-called sicarios (hitmen) to fulfill some task (e.g. murder for hire, drug dealing, etc.), but in order

²⁶ This militarization strategy is primarily supported by the U.S. Government, most notably through the Mérida Initiative, a U.S.-funded \$1.5 billion program designed to help Mexico and other Central American states to fight against organized crime, DTOs, and other criminal gangs. It is important to note that the U.S.-Mexican cooperation on security matters is a relatively new “phenomenon”. The cooperation between both countries has traditionally been a delicate matter since the U.S.-Mexican war (1846-1848). The relationship is therefore marked by deep mistrust. Furthermore, both countries often have divergent priorities which are difficult to reconcile. The cooperation on Drug Enforcement first improved during the administration of Vicente Fox and Felipe Calderón in particular (Beittel, 2011; Seelke, 2009; Seelke & Finklea, 2011; Shirk, 2011).

to keep this analysis as simple as possible, I will not further subdivide the DTOs to the street level, instead regard them as one entity.

Within the time frame of my analysis (2006-2010), the following DTOs have been active and will be presented in the following: Sinaloa, Tijuana/AFO, Juárez/CFO, Beltrán Leyva organization, Los Zetas, Gulf, and La Familia Michoacana (Beittel, 2011, p. 6).²⁷

Figure 2: DTOs Areas of Influence



Source: Graphic from Beittel (2011, p. 7).

2.4.1 Tijuana DTO

The Tijuana DTO was found in 1989 after the arrest of Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo and the split-up of the Guadalajara OCG. The Tijuana DTO was formed by the nephews' of Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo, the Arellano Félix brothers. The group is therefore also known as the Arellano Félix organization (AFO). The Tijuana DTO used to be one of the most powerful DTOs. About 40 % of the cocaine consumed within the U.S. was supplied by them (Cook, 2008; Salazar & Olson, 2007; Astorga/Shirk, 2010).

²⁷ It is important to mention that the Tijuana/Arellano-Felix organization (AFO), the Sinaloa DTO, the Juárez/Vicente Carrillo Fuentes organization (CFO), and the Gulf DTO were considered to be the most dominant DTOs in 2006. This changed as a result of Calderón's anti-drug war strategy which resulted in many fractionalizations. For the year 2007-2009, Gutiérrez (2011) counts 8 DTOs and 11 in 2011.

Since 2002, arrests and killings of several key members weakened the Tijuana DTO. As a result the organization presumably had some difficulties with the transport of Colombian cocaine as part of their transporting network was destroyed. To compensate these losses they expanded into various other criminal activities, such as the expansion of the local drug production, kidnapping, and extortion (Grayson, 2007, p. 4; Ranitzsch, 2010). After the arrest of Eduardo Arellano Félix in 2008, the Tijuana DTO broke up into several factions. The remnants of the Tijuana organization are currently led by Luis Fernando Sánchez Arellano (“El Ingeniero”), a cousin of the Arellano Félix brothers. Teodoro Garcia Simental (“El Teo”), who was head of one of the AFO’s subsidiary smuggling operations, formed his own faction. It is said that El Teo’s faction was supported by the Sinaloa DTO, whereas the remnants of the Tijuana OCG made an alliance with los Zetas. The rise of the death tolls in Tijuana in 2008 can be attributed to this split-up in which both factions were fighting against each other for the dominion over Baja California and Tijuana particularly (Grayson, 2010a; InSight Crime, 2011d; Astorga & Shirk, 2010). “El Teo” was arrested in January 2010. In July 2011, the Mexican government claimed in a youtube video that they captured “El Ingeniero”. However, there has been no further confirmation since then (Salazar & Olson, 2007).

Despite the fact that the Tijuana DTO has been weakened enormously and can be considered as only *“a shell of what it was in the 1990s and early 2000s”* (InSight Crime, 2011g), it still remains an important force in the Tijuana-San Diego corridor and continues to operate in 15 Mexican states (Cook, 2008).

2.4.2 Sinaloa DTO

The Sinaloa DTO is often described as the most powerful drug trafficking organization in Mexico. It operates in about 17 Mexican states, in particular Mexico’s northwestern region (Cook, 2008). It is said that the Sinaloa OCG controls drug-trafficking routes in Central America and is the biggest purchaser of Peruvian cocaine (Logan, 2008). It is estimated that the Sinaloa DTO operates in about 50 countries (InSight Crime, 2011e).

The Sinaloa DTO is led by Joaquín Guzmán (alias “El Chapo” (the Shorty)). Guzmán is considered as one of the most powerful drug lords.²⁸ Guzmán’s closest associates are/were Ismael Zambada García (alias “El Mayo”) and Ignacio Coronel Villareal (alias “Nacho” Coronel, or “King of Crystal”). The latter was shot by the Mexican military in July 2010 (Salazar & Olson, 2007;

²⁸ The Time Magazine nominated him to one of the most influential persons (Stephey, 2009). Within the same year he made it to Forbes’ list of “The World’s Billionaires” (Forbes Magazine, 2009).

Stratfor, 2008). In 2005 and 2006, the Sinaloa DTO founded its own enforcer gangs called the Negros and Pelones in response to the Zetas, an extremely violent and sophisticated enforcer gang of the Gulf DTO (Cook, 2008).

The Sinaloa organization used to be in an alliance, called “La Federacion”, which included the Juárez and Valencia DTO (or Milenio DTO). In 2004, this alliance broke up due to the killing of Rodolfo Carrillo Fuentes who was one of the heads of the Juárez DTO. Guzmán Loera was accused of being responsible for this killing which sparked off a turf war between the Sinaloa DTO and the new formed Vicente Carrillo Fuentes (or Juárez) Organization. Since then the conflict between both DTOs is centered in Ciudad Juárez which has become one of the most dangerous cities worldwide (Martínez, 2008; Salazar & Olson, 2007). In 2008, the Sinaloa DTO suffered another setback with the split-up of the Beltrán Leyva brothers along with parts of the armed wing “Los Negros”. The Beltrán Leyva brothers accused Guzmán Loera of being responsible for the arrest of their brother Alfredo Beltrán Leyva and ordered the killing of Guzmán’s son in revenge resulting in an increase in violence at various places (Stratfor, 2009; La Jornada, 2008).²⁹ In early 2010, the Sinaloa DTO formed a new alliance with its former rivals, the Gulf DTO and La Familia Michoacana, called “La Nueva Federación” (The New Federation) in an effort to get rid of their common enemy “los Zetas”. This alliance did not last long and broke up in December 2010. Since then, it is not clear who has taken the charge (Grupo Savant, 2011). Despite these breakups, the Sinaloa OCG is still considered as one of the most powerful DTOs (Stratfor, 2009). There are even rumors that the Sinaloa DTO is protected by the Mexican government.³⁰

2.4.3 Beltrán Leyva Organisation

As mentioned before, the Beltrán Leyva Organisation (BLO) is a split-off of the Sinaloa DTO. It is headed by the Beltrán Leyva brothers: Marcos Arturo, Carlos, Alfredo, and Héctor. Since its foundation the organization is in conflict with the Sinaloa DTO fighting for control over territory in the central and western states of Morelos and Guerrero as well as certain drug trafficking routes (Grayson, 2010a). It is assumed that BLO formed an alliance with Los Zetas and the Juárez DTO which allowed them to move cocaine from Guatemala to the U.S. (Salazar & Olson, 2007; Longmire, 2010b). The BLO became extremely powerful in 2008 and 2009. It did not only

²⁹ There is speculation that the intelligence leading to his arrest came from Sinaloa leader Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzmán Loera, and that the death of Edgar Guzmán Beltrán, Guzman Loera’s son, in May 2008 was retribution for the arrest

³⁰ The Sinaloa OCG has been the major beneficiary of Calderón’s anti-drug war strategy so far and suffered only a few arrests compared to other DTOs. The Mexican government, however, dismissed these charges. The perception that the Sinaloa OCG is privileged by the PAN Government has been so strong that Mexican justice officials published a press release in 2010 contesting this claim (InSight Crime, 2011e).

successfully infiltrate Mexico's political, judicial and police institutions, but even the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the U.S. Embassy in Mexico (Goddard, 2008).

In December 2009 the BLO, however, suffered a heavy setback with the killing of its top leader, Arturo Beltran-Leyva, by Mexican authorities. This resulted in the group's split-off. In the following, Edgar "La Barbie" Valdéz Villareal formed his own organization, Arturos' brother Hector assumed control of the main faction renaming it the South Pacific DTO (DTO Pacifico Sur (CPS)). This split-up left them both vulnerable and resulted in the arrest of Carlos Beltran Leyva in January, Valdéz Villareal and some other key members (Longmire, 2010b; InSight Crime, 2011d).

2.4.4 Juárez DTO

The Juárez DTO is another organization tracing its origins back to the Guadalajara OCG. The DTO has been found in the Mexican state of Chihuahua in the midst of 1970s. It became the most powerful drug trafficking organization during the 1990s under the leadership of Amado Carrillo Fuentes (aka "Lord of the Skies,") who had positioned the Carrillo Fuentes family at the head of the upcoming organization (Salazar & Olson, 2007). It traditionally controls the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez trade corridor and therewith one of the primary drug trafficking routes. The group is responsible for smuggling tons of narcotics from Mexico into the United States (Astorga & Shirk, 2010).

In July 1997 Amado Carrillo Fuentes mysteriously died following complications from plastic surgery. His death considerably weakened the DTO -and can be seen as the beginning of the decline of the Juárez DTO. An internal struggle erupted over leadership of the DTO. Amado's brother Vicente Carrillo Fuentes assumed power in close collaboration with other family members, Ricardo García Urquiza, and Juan José "El Azul" Esparragoza and the Beltran Leyva brothers. However, the Juárez DTO couldn't regain the influence it once possessed (Astorga & Shirk, 2010; InSight Crime, 2011b).

In 2004, Gúzman Loera allegedly ordered the killing of Vicente's brother. In response, Vicente assassinated Gúzman's brother in prison, sparking a turf war between both DTOs since then. Ciudad Juárez has been the main arena of this rivalry, turning Juárez into one of the most violent places in the world, with 2,738 deaths registered in 2010 alone (Latino Fox News, 2011, June 24). According to a government report, 23,8 % of Mexico's total drug-related killings between 2006 and 2010 can be attributed to this conflict (Shirk & Ríos, 2011).

2.4.5 La Familia Michoacana

La Familia Michoacana (or La Familia) is a relatively new and particularly violent DTO. According to Grayson (2009, February 19), the organization first emerged in 2004. The DEA even date its foundation back to the 1980s (DEA, 2009). The group presumably evolved from various currents, amongst others a criminal organization called “La Empresa” that was founded and lead by Carlos Rosales Mendoza. In 2000, “La Empresa” had allied itself with the Gulf DTO and its armed wing “Los Zetas” in an effort to get rid of “Los Valencia” (or “Milenio DTO”) - a close ally of the Sinaloa DTO - from the state of Michoacán. The alliance broke up after Gulf DTO boss Osiel Cardenas Guillen and Carlos Rosales Mendoza were arrested in 2003 and 2004 (Grayson, 2009a; Grayson, 2010).

Nazario Moreno González and Jesus Mendez Vargas (aka “Chango”/ “Chuy”) seized control of the organization calling themselves “La Familia Michoacana”. But it was not before September, 2006, that La Familia stepped into the public spotlight (Ibid). As its name suggests, La Familia Michoacana has its base and origins in the State of Michoacán. Its powerbase is in “Tierra Caliente” (meaning hot land), a mountainous and remote region in southwest Michoacán consisting of 7 municipalities with Apatzingán as the center of its operations. The group allegedly operates in 77 of the 133 municipalities of Michoacán where it controls distribution networks and ‘plazas’ (Grayson 2010, p. 201). La Familia has also expanded its drug trafficking operations to other Mexican states, such as Guerrero, Morelos, Guanajuato, Querétaro, Jalisco and Mexico City (InSight Crime, 2011f).

Lacking direct access to the U.S.-Mexico border, La Familia has to pay “taxes” to the organizations that control the border corridors through which La Familia traffics its narcotics. It is said that the reach of its distribution infrastructure extends from Central America to the US (Logan & Sullivan, 2009). La Familia is a powerful regional polydrug organization, heavily involved in marijuana, and cocaine trafficking, as well as in the production of meth.

Even though La Familia became adversaries of Los Zetas, they adopted many of their sinister techniques, such as hit-and-run ambushes of adversaries; torturing and beheading; human trafficking, kidnappings, extortion, murder-for-hire, loan-sharking, and dominating contraband sales by street vendors (Grayson, 2009c).

Unlike other DTOs, La Familia exhibits a strong religious zeal. Grayson (2010) therefore considers La Familia as “Mexico’s strangest and most grotesque drug DTO”. The DTO often refers to its assassinations and beheadings as “divine justice” or “orders from the Lord” and highlights

religion and family values in their recruitment campaign. Its pseudo-religious ideology is based on a quasi-Christian fundamentalist ideology that of the American author John Eldredge and his book “salvaje de corazón”, a required reading of La Familia. Nazario Moreno González, the ideological leader of La Familia, even published an own “religious” pamphlet: “the Sayings of the Craziest One”, a code of conduct for members that prohibits using hard drugs or dealing them within Mexican territory (Grayson, 2010a; Longmire, 2010c). La Familia has a strong rivalry with los Zetas, as well as the Beltrán-Leyva group. La Familia allied with the Sinaloa and Gulf DTO in early 2010 to expel Los Zetas from Michoacán.

Several successful military and law enforcement efforts have weakened the organization. Many key members have been arrested. In December 2010, Nazario Moreno González had been killed by Federal Police. In the following, La Familia officially announced its intention to “completely dissolve” itself which probably was an attempt to gain some time by stopping the government from pursuing them (Quinn, 2011; InSight Crime, 2011f).

Instead it came to an internal fighting between Enrique Plancarte Solís, alias “La Chiva,” and José de Jesus Mendez Vargas, alias “El Chango Mendez. “La Chiva” and Servando Gómez Martínez, alias “La Tuta”, split up from the group and formed their own DTO, “Los Caballeros Templarios” (Knights Templar). In June 2011, El Chango was arrested by Mexican authorities. Some analysts believe that either the Knights Templar or Los Zetas will absorb the remnants of LFM (Longmire, 2011a).

2.4.6 Gulf DTO

The Gulf DTO is one of the oldest criminal groups. Some date its origin back to the 1920s and 1930s in the northern state of Tamaulipas. The Gulf DTO used to be one of the biggest and most powerful DTOs in Mexico, but has suffered many setbacks in recent years in which they lost territory and influence to its rivals. They used to control large parts of the Gulf of Mexico Region with important areas of operation in Nuevo Laredo, Miguel Alemán, Reynosa and Matamoros, as well as Monterrey and Morelia. Its primary interests lies in drug-trafficking, in particular the trafficking of cocaine (Brophy, 2008; Cook, 2008).

In the late 1990s, the then-leader Osiel Cárdenas Guillén created a drug enforcer gang called Los Zetas, consisting of former Special Forces soldiers who had abandoned the Mexican military (see 2.3.2). Los Zetas did not only serve the Gulf DTO as so-called sicarios (hit men) which is a common practice among DTOs, they also operated as a private army for the Gulf DTO. They provided protection from government forces and other DTOs, defended the Gulf DTO’s most

important sections of turf (in particular in Northern Mexico), and expanded the drug trafficking routes at the expense of other DTOs. The Gulf DTO was therewith the first DTO owning an own paramilitary force (Ibid).

In 2003, Osiel Cárdenas Guillén was arrested. Despite his incarceration he continued to command the DTO's operations (Brophy, 2008). When he was extradited to the United States in January 2007, the organization was presumably split between Eduardo Costilla Sánchez (aka "El Coss"), Antonio Ezequiel Cárdenas Guillén (aka "Tony Tormenta" (Tony thunderstorm)) and Heriberto Lazcano Lazcano. Since 2010, Eduardo Costilla Sanchez is believed to be the Gulf DTO's current leader (Salazar & Olson, 2007). After the arrest of Osiel Cárdenas Guillén, the Sinaloa DTO tried to take advantage of the Gulf DTO's weakness by snatching control away from the Gulf's territory, in particular Nuevo Laredo (Salazar & Olson, 2007). In order to defend themselves against the Sinaloa, the Gulf OCG made an alliance with the AFO.

The Gulf DTO suffered several heavy blows. In November 2010, Antonio Ezequiel Cárdenas Guillén - one of the 3 presumably leaders of the Gulf DTO - was killed during a shootout in Matamoros, Tamaulipas, and in 2010, Heriberto Lazcano Lazcano, the leader of the Zetas broke apart from the Gulf DTO. A spike of violence followed. The Northeastern corridor of Mexico has been particularly contested since then. The conflict also expanded to states like Nuevo Leon, Hidalgo, and Tabasco (Beittel, 2011; Grayson, 2010a). In 2010, the Gulf organization allied with its former rivals, the Sinaloa OCG and La Familia Michoacana to eliminate the Gulf's former enforcer wing, Los Zetas. In December 2010, the alliance broke up. Since then, it is not clear who has taken the charge. According to Grupo Savant (2011), the Gulf DTO, is currently falling apart and may use the new organization to stay together.

2.4.7 Los Zetas

Los Zetas are believed to be one of the most dangerous and powerful Mexican DTOs. The organization was found in the late 1990s as a drug enforcer gang of the Gulf DTO. The group consists of mainly disaffected military, and law enforcement personnel and are therefore considered to be one of the best armed, most disciplined, and tactically experienced paramilitary groups (Williams, 2009b; Astorga, 2010).

Los Zetas originally consisted of a group of 31 lieutenants and sublieutenants who deserted from the Mexican Special Forces known as the Grupo Aeromovil de Fuerzas Especiales (GAFES) to the Gulf DTO. They were intelligence specialists and experts with highly sophisticated weaponry and operational tactics, allowing them to carry out more complex operations (Cook, 2008; Logan,

2009).³¹ Most of the “original” members and about 300 members working for them have either been killed or arrested. The “legacy of the Zetas”, however, still lives on because (Logan, 2009; Carpenter, 2010).³² The “new” Zetas are regular men with little military training. Even though they may be less professional than the previous generation, a U.S. special agent believes that the new generation carries a “*more brutal mindset*” as they have nothing to lose “*no future and no job to speak of*” (Logan, 2009).

Los Zetas have a vertical structure. They impose their will primarily by force and not – as other DTOs often do - by bribe (Dudley, 2010, May). It is said that los Zetas have a working relationship with the extremely brutal street gang Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13), and that they employed former Kabiles, Guatemala’s Special Forces, to train new recruits (Manwaring, 2009; Brophy, 2008; Thompson, 2005; Marcy, 2010). Their criminal activities include drug trafficking, money laundering, trafficking and smuggling of arms and persons, hijacking, extortion and racketeering (Salazar & Olson, 2007; Manwaring, 2009). After the arrest of Osiel Cárdenas Guillen, Heriberto Lazcano Lazcano assumed control of Los Zetas. The organization became increasingly powerful and finally split-up from the Gulf DTO in early 2010. In the following, they formed an alliance with the Beltrán Leyva brothers and the Juarez DTO (Stewart & Posey, 2009).

Los Zetas already control large parts of the areas once under control of the Gulf DTO. They increasingly expanded their presence and smuggling routes throughout Mexico, Central America and the U.S. (Salazar & Olson, 2007; Brophy, 2008). According to Manwaring (2009) they are even developing their own access to cocaine sources in South America.

³¹ It is rumored that many of the original Zeta members have been trained in the U.S. and were specialized in combating Mexican DTOs. This has been strongly denied by the DEA (Brophy, 2008, p. 251).

³² According to Carpenter (2010, p. 408), this heralded a process of professionalization in drug-related violence in Mexico as other DTOs followed suit by forming their own paramilitary group to confront Los Zetas, e.g. Los Negros by the Sinaloa Cartel.

3. Theoretical framework

Kalyvas' theory has received a lot of attention and positive reviews in peace and conflict studies as well as in various other disciplines. Reviewers described it enthusiastically as "groundbreaking" as it provides *"the first comprehensive framework for analyzing civil war violence"* (Rožič & Verovšek, 2008), *"a guide for how future research in the field is likely to develop"* (Ziemke, 2007). Kalyvas proves convincingly that violence is not product of madness or illogical behavior, but has its own rationale and logic.

The theory aims at explaining the dynamics of civil war violence as well as its variation across time and space and is tested rigorously on the case of the Greek civil war from 1943–1944 by using data from across the country and in particular on the region of Argolid in southern Greece.³³ Even though the theory primarily focuses on violence in a civil war setting, Kalyvas explicitly encourages further testing, in particular across various types of violence from organized crime to terrorism and genocide (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 208-209).

3.1 Conceptual Issues

In the following, the definitional and conceptual framework of Kalyvas' theory will be presented, as well as important scope conditions he has made.

3.1.1 Civil war

Kalyvas defines civil wars as an "armed combat within the boundaries of a recognized sovereign entity between parties subject to a common authority at the outset of the hostilities" (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 17). In a later study, Kalyvas adds two criteria to this definition. First, the involvement of at least two warring factions. Second, *"a domestic challenge directed against the authority of the current holder of sovereign authority"* (Kalyvas, 2007, p. 417). Hence, the actors involved have all been subject to one common sovereign or authority at the beginning of the war. This broad definition allows to include many other types of armed conflicts that are usually excluded from conventional definitions (e.g. most revolutions, sustained peasant revolts, ethnic insurgencies, anticolonial uprisings, amongst others). Excluded are, however, all forms of violence by which

³³ Kalyvas work received almost exclusively positive reviews and for good reason. One of the few points that have been criticized is his choice of Greece during World War II and therewith an internal conflict involving a foreign occupation. Rožič & Verovšek (2008) argue that Kalyvas is therewith *"pushing an already broad definition of civil war to the extreme"*. Both, however, acknowledge that he has made a convincing case for why this conflict should be considered as a civil war. Kalyvas legitimize his choice by arguing that personal circumstances had allowed him to collect extensive data in a rural context as well as to complement these findings with archival research. This allowed him to cross-check facts between the different sources which were necessary to accurately disaggregate the data and code the key variable of territorial control in order to test his theory (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 414).

sovereignty remains intact. These are violent protests, communal riots, terrorism, low-scale crime, and genocide (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 17f.; Kalyvas, 2007, p. 417).

3.1.2 Violence

According to Kalyvas, “violence” is a term lacking conceptual autonomy. It can be defined very broadly and extended far beyond physical violence, including rape or starvation. This type of violence is extremely difficult to measure quantitatively. Kalyvas therefore uses a very restricted definition of violence by concentrating primarily on intentional and direct physical violence directed against noncombatants, such as homicide or violent death (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 20).

Violence is often used synonymously with “conflict” or “war”. As Hannah Arendt already suggested in 1970, violence is *“a phenomenon in its own right”* (Arendt, 1970, p. 19, in: Kalyvas, 2006, p. 20). It has to be regarded autonomously as *“the causes of violence in civil war cannot be subsumed under the causes of civil war; hence a theory of civil wars cannot be a theory of violence in civil wars – and vice versa”* (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 20). Kalyvas therefore argues that violence has to be analytically decoupled from these related phenomena by placing it at the center of the analysis.

Kalyvas argues that it has to be distinguished between “violence as an *outcome*” and “violence as a *process*”. There is a general tendency to focus merely on the act of violence itself, but not on the *“complex, and often invisible, nonviolent actions and mechanism”* that have made such violence possible in the first place or that follow them (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 21). Instead it is important to move beyond the ‘victim/perpetrator’ dichotomy. Victims are not necessarily innocent and the act of violence is often the final stage of a long process of violence in which many more people have participated. Thus, violence is a dynamic process and has to be approached that way (Ibid.).

A further distinction has to be made between “violence in times of peace” and “violence in times of war”. Civil war violence differs fundamentally from violent collective action (such as riots and pogroms) where the state still has a monopoly of violence because *“war structures choices and selects actors in radically different ways than peace-even violent peace”* (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 22; Kalyvas, 2000, p. 3).

On the one hand, war entails far more limitations than consent. On the other hand, people have more to lose in times of war than in times of peace. *“It is one thing to vote for a political party but quite another to fight for it”* (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 38).

3.1.3 Scope conditions

Kalyvas (2006, p. 23f.) distinguishes between four types of mass political violence: State terror, genocide & mass deportation, reciprocal extermination, and civil war violence. The four different categories of violence are based on the intersection of two main criteria: the *aims* and the *production* of violence.

Kalyvas acknowledges that the motivation and goals behind the use of violence can be diverse, overlapping, and inconsistent; in some cases violence may even have no goal at all. However, to simplify the analysis, Kalyvas roughly distinguishes between two aims of mass political violence: violence that intends to exterminate a group or to control it. If the purpose is *extermination* (physical or spatial), “*violence (...) is an end*”, “*the final product*” and has no instrumental purpose (Kalyvas, 2000, p. 4 f.). If instead *compliance* is sought, violence becomes a “resource” or a “means” (Ibid). In this case violence is used as a deterrent. The purpose is to obtain control. This is done by punishing particular course of actions of the targeted population. The aim is to shape “*individual behavior by attaching a cost to particular actions*” (Kalyvas, 2000, p. 4). This type of violence, Kalyvas terms “coercive violence”, is used tactically as well as strategically. For example, the killing of a person that may leak information to the rival group is tactical because the targeted person represented a particular risk; it is strategic because this act of violence might prevent others from engaging in similar behavior (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 27f.). With the *production* of violence, Kalyvas means that mass political violence can be either produced unilaterally (by one actor which is usually the state), or bilaterally/multilaterally (by two or more actors). According to Kalyvas, the main distinction between both categories is that “*strategic interaction is more critical in the latter*” (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 28). When the civilian population can choose a side – which is only possible when at least two actors are present in a certain area - violence plays an important role because the reaction of the population towards its use is consequential for the outcome of civil war (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 28-31).

The intersection of these two key features results into four different categories: state terror, genocide, reciprocal extermination, and civil war violence (see table 1). While acknowledging the existence of the three other categories of mass political violence, Kalyvas’s theory aims at explaining “civil war violence”. He defines civil war violence as mass political violence “produced by at least two political actors who enjoy partial and/or overlapping monopolies of violence” (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 31). This violence is produced bilaterally or multilaterally. In contrary to “state terror” or “genocide”, the population has the choice to shift their support and resources to one of the two rival actors.

Another important feature of civil war violence is that “compliance” and therewith control over the population is sought, a feature that is missing in “reciprocal extermination” or genocide. It is important that “at least one actor intends to govern the population against whom it is using violence” (Kalyvas, 2002, p. 4; q.v. Kalyvas, 2006, p. 28-31; Kalyvas, 2004, 98f.)

Table 1: A Typology of Mass Political Violence

Production of Violence	Aims of violence: Political Actor Intends to Govern the Population Targeted	
	Yes (compliance)	No (extermination)
Unilateral	State terror	Genocide & mass deportation
Bilateral (or multilateral)	Civil war violence	Reciprocal extermination

Source: Kalyvas (2006, p. 29).

3.2 Barbarism and civil war

After reviewing a vast body of research, Kalyvas identifies four different theoretical approaches that aim at explaining the link between civil war and barbarism – breakdown, transgression, polarization, and warfare. In the following they will be briefly presented.

The first theoretical approach is the *breakdown* argument. It is inspired by the Hobbesian tradition. According to this approach, civil war violence tends to be barbaric because of the breakdown of social and political order which allows human nature to be unconstrained and results in anarchy. This argument emphasizes the “medievalization” or criminalization of war where violence is privatized. Kalyvas identifies four mechanisms that explain this relationship: first, breakdown unfolds or establishes a culture of violence; second, high levels of impunity result in a never-ending spiral of retaliation; third, breakdown produces security dilemmas, resulting in mass preemptive violence because of security fears; and, fourth, it generates undisciplined armed groups that primarily target civilians (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 55-62).

The second argument, *transgression*, inspired by the Foucaultian tradition, considers civil war violence as transgressive of established norms because it includes the involvement of nonsovereign actors challenging the state. Behind this perception is the belief that the state holds the monopoly on violence and is therefore the only one allowed to use violence, whereas nonsovereign actors are considered as being less “lawful” (Ibid, p. 62-64).

The *polarization* thesis, inspired by the Schmittian tradition, emphasizes deep ideological or social divisions between groups as explanation for the link between civil war and barbarism. According to this view, differences in levels of violence might be linked up with the depth of prewar cleavages (Ibid, p. 64-66).

The last thesis, the *technology of warfare thesis*, is inspired by the Clausewitzian tradition. This approach assumes that most civil wars are fought as irregular wars (see...), in which three causal mechanisms between irregular war and barbarism may play a role: first, irregular war as revolutionary war (a variant of the polarization thesis, in which warfare and violence are considered as expression of deep prewar divisions and conflicts); second, irregular war as “medieval” war (a variant of the breakdown thesis; warfare tends to be barbaric due to a lack of military discipline); and finally, the *security thesis*, that identifies “vulnerability” as the causal mechanism. According to this approach, security considerations that arise out of the vulnerability combatants are exposed to make violence so brutal. This link can be formulated in either a psychological version, such as frustration and fear, or a rationalist one where violence can be considered as the result of the army’s inability to distinguish between civilians and enemies. In such an environment it pays to be violent (Ibid, p. 66-70, 83-85).

Kalyvas acknowledges that all four theoretical approaches have their strengths in explaining the possible link between civil war and barbarism, but they also have their weaknesses and discrepancies concerning the empirical record.³⁴ According to Kalyvas the biggest problems of most of the presented arguments is that they are difficult to operationalize and test empirically. Some turn out to be unfalsifiable. Kalyvas (2006, p. 70) argues that “priority must be given to conceptual clarification and theoretical development” which explains why Kalyvas considers the last thesis, the security version of the technology of warfare, as the most promising one on which to build his theory of civil wars violence.

3.3 Warfare

There are many ways to classify civil wars and many scholars have tried to do so, but “*the conceptual foundations of our understanding of civil wars are still weak*” (Kalyvas, 2008a, p. 397; q.v. Kalyvas, 2005; Kalyvas, 2007). Kalyvas claims that analytical criteria based on dimensions of the conflict are needed that combine origins and dynamics. Kalyvas believes to have found this

³⁴ He particularly disagrees with the Hobbesian tradition. According to Hobbes, the absence of the state in particular regions signify that these areas are ruled by anarchy, and that anarchy necessarily results in mass violence. Kalyvas believes instead that “civil wars are political contexts where violence is used both to challenge and to build order” (Kalyvas, 2008, p. 401).

by incorporating the dimension of warfare into the analysis; an issue that –according to Kalyvas (2005, p. 89) – has been overlooked by social science so far.³⁵

He disaggregates civil wars into three types of warfare or so-called “technologies of rebellion”: conventional, symmetric nonconventional, and irregular warfare (or insurgencies) (Kalyvas, 2010, p. 415-428).³⁶

“Conventional warfare” is a type of warfare fought by equally strong armies using heavy weaponry such as field artillery and armor. The balance of power between both warring factions (whether real or just perceived) and the relatively high degree of resources forecasts large-scale direct military confrontations, across clearly defined frontlines. Examples include the American Civil War (1861-1865), the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) or the Croatian and Bosnian wars in ex-Yugoslavia (1992-1995) (Kalyvas, 2011, p. 5-7; Kalyvas, 2010, p. 418-419; Kalyvas, 2005, p. 90-92, 94-95).

“Symmetric nonconventional warfare” can be conceptualized as a combat between two irregular armies following a process of state implosion. Both rival actors are similarly weak. As a result of this mutual weakness indiscriminate violence is predominantly used by both sides. This explains why symmetric nonconventional warfare is often described as “primitive” or “criminal” war (Kalyvas, 2005, p. 91). This type of warfare displays clear frontlines like conventional warfare, but lacks regular armies and set battles. The civil wars in Tajikistan (1992-1997), Liberia (1999-ongoing), and Somalia (1991-ongoing) are typical examples (Kalyvas, 2011, p. 5-7; Kalyvas, 2010, p. 418-419; Kalyvas, 2005, p. 90-92, 97-98).

“Irregular warfare” (also known as guerilla warfare) is conceptualized by Kalyvas as a manifestation of military asymmetry between states and rebels concerning their particular power and their subsequent willingness to fight against each other. In contrary to conventional war, the two rival armies lack parity. The weaker side (usually the insurgents) lacks the capacity to confront the stronger one (usually the incumbents) in a direct and frontal way. This type of warfare is therefore characterized by indirect and low-level engagement, often dominated by

³⁵ Kalyvas (2005, p. 89f.) argues that it is crucial to distinguish between type of war and type of warfare (see Section 3.3). The failure of equalizing both has severe consequences. The collaboration of the civilian population with an insurgent group could, for instance, be falsely interpreted as *“an indicator of civilian preference and support for this actor”* while neglecting that this cooperation is actually a strategy of surviving as any non-collaboration is highly linked with risk. Kalyvas (2005, p. 90) therefore believes that *“a focus on warfare is essential in understanding how civil wars endogenously affect (and even transform) the strategies and identities of the political actors as well as the individuals involved in the war.”* Hence, *“disaggregating civil wars in terms of the warfare that characterizes them carries theoretical and empirical weight”*. There are also strong indicators suggesting that the different types of warfare might be linked to various outcomes of civil wars (e.g. causes, duration, violence, etc.). However, Kalyvas admits that it needs future research to verify this assumption (Kalyvas, 2007, p. 24).

³⁶ However, in an unpublished draft paper of 2007, Kalyvas adds another category, that of “urban warfare” that is defined as *“confrontations in an urban context entailing such diverse tactics as urban terrorism, urban uprising, and riots and protests”* (Kalyvas, 2007, p.7).

ambush and raid. Another characteristic is that insurgents often hide among civilian population. The difference between civilians and fighters is blurred. Incumbents are mainly affected by this “identification problem”, that is to say the inability to distinguish friend from foe (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 89; Kalyvas, 2005, p. 101). In contrary to conventional warfare, there are no frontlines. Instead irregular wars appear as “messy patchworks” where the lines of demarcations are blurred (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 88). As example Kalyvas mentions the civil wars in El Salvador (1979-1992), Peru (1980-1996), and Nepal (1996-2006) (Kalyvas, 2011, p. 5-7; Kalyvas, 2010, p. 418-419; Kalyvas, 2005, p. 90-92, 95-07).

Kalyvas believes that disaggregating civil wars by the type of warfare allows scholars to incorporate the nature of the war’s internal characteristics, and the consequences that these features can have on the outcomes. Kalyvas assumes, for instance, that the duration and severity of civil wars is linked to the type of warfare used. Whereas civil wars fought by irregular means tend to last longer than the other types of warfare, symmetric nonconventional wars tend to be more brutal than irregular wars (Kalyvas, 2005, p. 90, 92ff.; Kalyvas, 2010, p. 416).

It is important to mention that these three categories of warfare are ideal types. Most civil wars actually “*combine different types of warfare, either simultaneously or sequentially*” (Kalyvas, 2007, p.6). Some wars that started as an irregular war may switch to a conventional one because of external assistance or intervention in favor of the insurgent’s side (e.g. the Chinese Civil War and the Vietnam War), or the other way around (e.g. Sierra Leone).

Kalyvas believes that irregular warfare is the dominant type of warfare within civil wars (with 54 %), whereas conventional warfare accounts for about 24% of all civil wars, and symmetric nonconventional warfare is a more regional type (Kalyvas 2005; Kalyvas, 2006).³⁷ Irregular war is also the type of warfare on which Kalyvas’ theory of civil war violence is build.

3.4 The logic of civil war

In the following, the main findings and hypotheses concerning civil war violence will be identified and presented. The first part covers the relationship between irregular war and geographical space and its consequences for the nature of sovereignty. The second part is about the particular role of the actors involved. The third part analyzes the relation between control and

³⁷ Kalyvas’ classification into different types of warfare is based on an own coding system. He emphasizes, though, that it is an extremely difficult task to code types of warfare and that the results should be considered provisional (Kalyvas, 2007, p. 7). Kalyvas, for instance, adjusted his previous position towards conventional warfare as a rather uncommon type by stating that “conventional warfare is not as exceptional as previously thought”, accounting for about 24% of all civil wars (Kalyvas, 2007, p. 24).

collaboration and will elaborate the decisive factors for achieving control, as well as how control impacts on the extent of collaboration?

3.4.1 Five zones of control

Kalyvas argues that irregular wars change the nature of sovereignty significantly. Irregular wars usually arise out of peripheral or rural insurgencies in which insurgents challenge the state monopoly in certain areas of the country. In the following, incumbents try to regain the control they have lost over these areas. They also fear the spread of insurgents' control over other parts of the state. This leads to the fracturing of the state's monopoly along territorial lines and alters the nature of sovereignty in a dramatic way in which both political actors exercise varying degrees of control over different areas. Whereas one actor's control is strong in some areas, it is weak in others. According to Kalyvas, sovereignty in irregular wars is therefore either *segmented* or *fragmented*: It is "*segmented when two political actors (or more) exercise full sovereignty over distinct parts of the territory of the state. It is fragmented when two political actors (or more) exercise limited sovereignty over the same part of the territory of the state*" (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 88-89; Kalyvas, 2008a, p. 405-406).

Kalyvas conceptualizes this division of sovereignty in countries undergoing civil war by distinguishing between five zones of control. These are: zone 1 - total incumbent control; zone 2 - dominant incumbent control; zone 3 - contested control; zone 4 - dominant insurgent control; and zone 5 - total insurgent control.

In zone 1 and 5 either incumbents (zone 1) or insurgents (zone 5) exercise total control over a particular area, whereas the other side has no access to it or only a very limited. Zone 2, 3 and 4 are areas of fragmented control. In zone 2 incumbents have dominant, but incomplete control, whereas in zone 4 it is the other way around. In zone 3 both actors equally share control.

The type of sovereignty or control that predominates in a certain area determines the type of strategies used and the decisions made by the actors involved. The goal of all actors involved is to achieve the best possible outcome for themselves.

3.4.2 Civilian support matters

A key feature of irregular war is its "triangular" character, that is to say that this kind of war does not only involve two (or more) competing actors – usually the incumbents and the insurgents – , but also civilians. They all play particular roles within the process of civil war, and their strategies used, as well as the choices they make affect the outcome of civil war. The role of civilians – who

Kalyvas defines as all those “*who are not full-time members of an armed group, thus including all types of part-timers and collaborators*”– is crucial for the outcome of a civil war (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 19). It is important to note that within civil war sovereignty usually remains fragile, is often incomplete and changes quickly. The civilians find themselves in a difficult situation in which they have to deliberate which side to support with their loyalty and resources. Their decisions have a major influence on the outcome of the civil war.³⁸ “Civilian” or “public support” is therefore the key for political actors to establish a monopoly of power in one particular area and to defeat one’s opponent.

The strategic importance of civilian’s role on the outcome of war forces both rival sides to think about military or non-military actions, how to obtain their support or deter noncollaboration (Kalyvas, 2008a, p. 406). Thus, it is each actor’s goal to obtain the exclusive and complete collaboration of all the civilian population. In practice, it is sufficient to get active collaboration only from a few civilians, and passive but exclusive collaboration from the rest of the population.

The following proposition can be formulated:

Proposition 1: *Civilian support matters for the outcome of a conflict. Political actors are therefore keen to obtain civilian support.*

3.4.3 It’s about control

The key to obtain civilian support (“collaboration”) and deter noncollaboration (“defection”) is control. Kalyvas defines control as “*the extent to which actors are able to establish exclusive rule on a territory*” (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 111). In the following, the factors that are responsible for establishing and maintaining control will be elaborated and the mutual relationship between control and collaboration analyzed.

3.4.3.1 *The distribution of control: geography matters*

Kalyvas believes that initial patterns of control depend on a combination of prewar preferences and military resources. The latter, however, turns out to be more decisive in producing control. Military effectiveness in turn is often defined by geography (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 111-113). Kalyvas asserts that certain types of terrain tend to be associated with either incumbent or insurgent

³⁸ According to Kalyvas, there are two ways to conceptualize popular support: “attitudinal support” (preferences) and “behavioral support” (actions). Kalyvas argues that both conceptualizations have to be taken with a pinch of salt. First, it is extremely difficult to deduce preferences from observed behavior because they are open to manipulation and falsification. Second, if actual behavior in civil war settings can reliably be observed at all, one has to bear in mind that “*support is the outcome of a dynamic, shifting, fluid, and often inconsistent confluence of multiple and varying preferences and constraints*” (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 101). Kalyvas’ framework therefore “*makes no assumptions about the underlying preferences of the vast majority of the population and only minimal assumptions about behavioral support, in which complex, ambiguous, and shifting behavior by the majority is assumed*” (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 87).

control. Incumbents tend to control cities, lowland, and accessible terrain in general (such as villages located near central road). These areas are easier to tax and monitor than hundreds or thousands of small villages in a large rural area (Ibid, p. 136). Insurgents, in contrast, usually control remote rural areas, such as mountains, jungle, swamps, or deserts; areas that only have little infrastructure, are far away from provincial military bases and difficult to access. Effective policing is often restricted in these areas. Furthermore, rurality offers insurgents the ability to hide without the risk of being denounced. Kalyvas (2006, p. 136) explains this with rural norms of solidarity and honor, as well as the fact that people from rural areas are more tolerant towards threats of violence. Border areas are another powerful predictor of insurgent control as insurgents can hide more easily by simply crossing the border. Hence, the degree of control is also influenced by geographical conditions (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 132-133).

The following proposition can be derived:

Proposition 2: *Certain types of territory tend to be associated with either incumbent or insurgent control (see 3.4.3.1).*

3.4.3.2 *The role of violence*

Military resources can influence the distribution of control because the more present a military force is, the more credible are their sanctions for defection. However, it is almost impossible to establish full and permanent control over all areas of a country within civil war because the military resources are usually insufficient to do so (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 138). Or as Toolis (1997, p. 70, in: Ibid, p. 139) accurately puts it: *“No army can patrol all of the roads all of the time”*. In the light of limited resources violence turns out to be a *“key instrument for establishing and maintaining control – and thus for generating collaboration and deterring defection”*, but only if this violence is effective (Ibid, p. 111, 141).

As the war develops, violence becomes such a significant political resource that even political actors who would have preferred to use other incentives (such as material benefits, or the like), are forced to use violence in order to keep up with the rival’s violence.

Even though the civilian population may be more sympathetic towards their opponent, individual survival becomes the main priority for most of them. Civilians are likely to collaborate with the political group that is most capable of guaranteeing them their survival. As *“civilians would rather side with the (expected) winner than loser”* (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 126f.; q.v. p. 116f.), it becomes increasingly important for the political actors to shape public perception via actions and words,

and make them believe (whether it is true or not) that they are the winning party. This also explains the increased reliance on violence as it fosters the perception of strength. Furthermore, violence directed against civilians may undermine trust in the government and its ability or willingness to protect them. As a consequence civilians may believe that the insurgents are winning the war which ironically creates the conditions necessary for insurgents to acquire civilian support because it breaks down the expected relationship between the state and civilians (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 127f.).

The following proposition can be formulated:

Proposition 3: Violence is a *“key instrument for establishing and maintaining control – and thus for generating collaboration and deterring defection”*, but only if this violence is effective (Ibid, p. 111)

3.4.3.3 Control & collaboration

In contrary to what is generally believed, prewar political and social preferences may only influence initial patterns of collaboration. As the war develops, control turns out to be the most decisive factor for generating collaboration and deterring defection. It is the key to defeat the opponent.

This assumption is supported by the fact that collaboration is subject to the *“spatial variation”* and the *“temporal variation”* in control. *“Gaining control over an area brings collaboration, and losing control of an area brings much of that collaboration to an end.”* (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 118-119)

Kalyvas summarizes the points with the following proposition:

Proposition 4: *“The higher the level of control exercised by an actor, the higher the rate of collaboration with this actor - (...) and, inversely, the lower the rate of defection”* (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 132)

Besides violence as the key mechanism for obtaining control and therewith collaboration (but only as long as this violence is effective (see 3.5)), there are several non-violent mechanisms that convert control into collaboration. These are:

1. *Shielding*: The political actor is able to protect the population from reprisals by rival actors which decreases the cost of collaboration with them (Ibid, p. 124f.).
2. *Mechanical ascription*: Mechanisms of control are socialized in the respective population. Collaboration is accepted within society as it appears as a *“natural cause”* (Ibid, p. 125f.).

3. *Credibility of rule*: Control signals credibility, in the short term, through immediate sanctions and, in the longer term, through sanctions and benefits. This fosters the perception of “winning”, which in turn results in increased support for the controlling force (Ibid, p. 126f.).
4. *Provision of benefits*: Control allows the provision of benefits obtained from collaborating with the winning side (Ibid, p. 128).
5. *Monitoring*: Control facilitates direct monitoring and population control which then results in sophisticated administration that reinforces control (Ibid, p. 128).
6. *Self-reinforcing by-products*: Control generates a “self-reinforcing dynamic” because some areas that are controlled by one political actor for a long time may gain the reputation of being particular loyal to this faction (Ibid, p. 129).

These six additional mechanisms can be considered as separate and mutually reinforcing instruments that translate control into collaboration, but they only work in zones where political actors already enjoy a high degree of control and therewith obtain the monopoly of violence (zone 1 and zone 5). In the other zones violence turns out to be the key mechanism which will be further explained in the following.

3.5 Selective versus indiscriminate violence

Political actors have two coercive options: selective violence and indiscriminate violence. Both are instrumental forms of violence that intend to produce compliance and punish particular course of actions, in particular the collaboration with the enemy.

The distinction is based on the level at which “guilt” (and therewith targeting) is determined. *“Violence is selective when targeting requires the determination of individual guilt; it is indiscriminate when targeting is based on guilt by association or collective guilt”* (Kalyvas, 2007b, p. 188). Thus, selective violence entails “personalized targeting” based on specific information about individuals’ behavior. Whereas indiscriminate violence implicates the targeting of individuals based on their group affiliation (e.g. family, village, region, ethnic or religious group, etc.) regardless of their actions or preferences (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 142).

3.5.1 The logic of indiscriminate violence

According to Kalyvas, indiscriminate violence is *“a way to come to grips with the identification problem”* (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 147). As it is not possible to identify and capture the “guilty”, innocent people get targeted that are somehow associated with them. Indiscriminate violence is therefore a means of *“shap[ing] civilian behavior indirectly through association”* (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 150). The logic behind the use of indiscriminate violence is the assumption that the “guilty”

would change his/her behavior either because “the guilty” is forced to do so by the “innocent” or because the “guilty” gets aware of the negative impact upon “innocent” civilians they care about. Another reason to use indiscriminate violence is the assumption that the targeted population would collaborate with the ones whose sanctions they fear the most (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 150).

In practice, though, indiscriminate violence often turns out to be counterproductive. Kalyvas argues that the very use of indiscriminate violence produces defection instead of repressing it. If civilians are threatened with death no matter what they do, “*many people prefer to join the rival actor rather than die a defenseless death*” (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 160). When one side only generates indiscriminate violence, civilians who are interested in their own survival will be likely to collaborate with the rival on condition that this actor is able to protect them from violence. If this is the case, civilians will likely shift their support (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 157).

Kalyvas believes that incumbents can only be indifferent about the type of violence they use, when the insurgents are weak and incapable of protecting the civilian population (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 167). Otherwise indiscriminate violence is at best ineffective, in most cases counterproductive.

Kalyvas therefore derives the following proposition:

Proposition 5: “*Indiscriminate violence is counterproductive in civil war*” (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 144)

Despite its counterproductive effects, indiscriminate violence is still used. Whether an actor resorts to indiscriminate or selective violence largely depends on the quality of information available. Without information whom to target it is not possible to use selective violence. Indiscriminate violence is therefore likely to occur “*where and when resources and information are low*” (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 147). Indiscriminate violence is also much cheaper than its selective counterpart because it does not need the complex and costly infrastructure of selective violence in order to identify, locate, and “neutralize” rivals and their civilian collaborators. Kalyvas argues that there is a tendency to believe that indiscriminate violence is more prevalent than its selective counterpart (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 147). Most violence is therefore coded as indiscriminate violence which can result in an overestimation of this type of violence.

Another reason why indiscriminate violence still occurs despite its counterproductive effects might be that the actor resorting to it suffers from organizational incompetence or institutional distortions, e.g. unprofessionalism, lack of preparation, personal interests, ignorance, amongst others (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 161-163).

Kalyvas assumes that indiscriminate violence is more likely to be used at the beginning of civil war. As the war advances, political actors start realizing the counterproductive effects of indiscriminate violence. After overcoming institutional distortions, or the like - that have enabled the use of indiscriminate violence in the first place - they tend to replace indiscriminate violence by selective violence (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 171-172, 146-147)

Kalyvas main hypothesis about indiscriminate violence is therefore:

Hypothesis 1: *“Political actors are likely to gradually move from indiscriminate to selective violence”* (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 169)

3.5.2 A theory of selective violence

Selective violence results in the “personalization of violence” which means that the targeting of individuals is based on specific information about their actions. Thus, the premise of selective violence is the ability to gather private information about individuals. Without such information political actors are not able to target selectively. This information is primarily delivered from individual non-combatants via denunciation.

The fact that denunciation is primarily delivered by civilians reveals the intimate character of denunciation. Denouncers and denounces usually know each other because it is only possible to denounce someone who is familiar to the denouncer. Hence, the information is *“asymmetrically distributed among political actors and civilians: only the latter may know who the defectors (...) are – and they have a choice: to denounce them or not”* (Kalyvas, 2008a, p. 406).

Kalyvas distinguishes between two types of denunciation: those provoked by “political” motives (such as loyalty to a cause or a group) and those by “malicious” (or personal) motives (such as revenge, retaliation, family feud or material gain). Kalyvas assumes that malicious motives are particularly common because civil wars offer them the opportunity to “settle private and local conflicts without directly “bloody” their hands (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 173, 178f., 194).

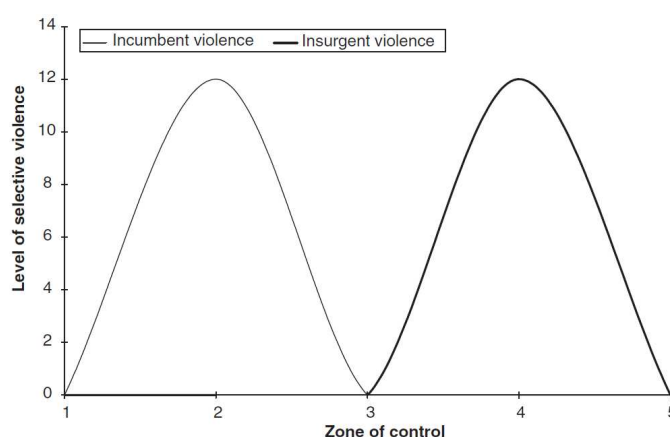
Kalyvas believes that this kind of collaboration between civilians and political actors needs an institutional setting which is a relatively unexplored phenomenon in irregular war. Kalyvas assumes that there are two forms of institutionalization: militias and committees. Political actors seem to use both with a preference towards militias, whereas insurgents rely primarily on committees. The difference between both types of institutions is that militias are allowed to use violence directly, whereas committees often have a veto power over the use of violence which allows the local community a degree of control (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 106ff, 176-181).

Nonetheless, there is a great potential for abuse in such a system. Violence, however, only needs to be perceived as selective in order to be effective and avoid the counterproductive effects of indiscriminate violence.

Denunciation is also associated with risks. Whether people denounce or not depends on the likelihood of retaliation. Retaliation often takes the form of “counterdenunciation” which Kalyvas defines as “*the denunciation of the initial denouncer to the rival political actor*” (Ibid, p. 195). The risk of retaliation is particularly high in small rural communities where everybody knows each other. In these areas it is relatively easy to track the denouncer who in turn has to fear revenge of the victims’ relatives and friends (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 194).

Hence, the willingness of civilians to denounce depends on a risk-benefit calculation. If the costs (e.g. counterdenunciation) outweigh the benefits (e.g. to get rid of a personal enemy), denunciation is unlikely to happen. Individuals only want to denounce when they perceive the political actor as capable to offer them protection from retaliation; that is where either the incumbents (zone 1) or the insurgents (zone 5) have complete control and where the risk of retaliation is low due to the absence of the rival actor (see 3.4.1). In areas of low control, denunciation is unlikely to happen due to the lack of alternatives as the supported political actor is either outnumbered or absent. In zone 3 where both political actors share sovereignty, individuals are insecure which side to support as the balance of power is likely to shift. Therefore they prefer not to denounce at all. Political actors, however, do not need their information in zones where they already enjoy high levels of control. But they do need it in areas of low or equal control where civilians are most unlikely to deliver it.

Figure 3: Predicted levels of selective violence as a function of territorial control



Source: Graphic from Kalyvas (2008a, p. 408).

Thus, Kalyvas' theory predicts that selective violence only takes place *"where and when the incentives of local and supralocal actors converge. No violence takes place where political actors alone want it most or where local actors alone are most willing to provide the information necessary for its production"* (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 204). This illustrates clearly that selective violence has to be considered as a *"joint process (...) produced by political actors seeking information and individual civilians trying to avoid the worst – but also grabbing what opportunities their predicament affords them"* (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 388, 351; s.a. Ibid, , p. 176; Kalyvas, 2008a, p. 406). The theory makes clear that civilians – who are usually treated as objects (in particular by macro-oriented researchers) – are rather subjects, *"agents in their own right"*. Civilians are not only *"used"* or *"manipulated"* by the political actors. It is also the other way around that they use political actors to settle their own conflicts. This also makes clear that civil war violence does not reflect the politicization of private life; instead it privatizes politics (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 14, 389).

3.6 Five zones of control & violence

Based on these results, Kalyvas formulates the following hypotheses that predict variances of violence dependent on the level of control actors have over a territory:

Hypothesis 2: *"The higher the level of an actor's control, the less likely it is that this actor will resort to violence, selective or indiscriminate. Therefore, no incumbent violence is likely in zone 1 and no insurgent violence is likely in zone 5"* (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 204).

In areas of complete control (zone 1 for incumbents and zone 5 for insurgents) there is unlikely to be violence; and if there is violence, it is unlikely to be perpetrated by the group in power.

Hypothesis 3: *"The lower the level of an actor's control, the less likely that this actor will resort to selective violence and the more likely that its violence, if any, will be indiscriminate. Therefore, insurgent violence in zones 1 and 2, if any, is likely be indiscriminate and incumbent violence in zones 4 and 5, if any, is likely be indiscriminate"* (Ibid).

In areas of low control (zone 1 and 2 for insurgents and zone 4 and 5 for incumbents), political actors are more likely to use indiscriminate violence due to the lack of information.

Hypothesis 4: *“Under fragmented control, violence will be exercised primarily by the political actor enjoying an advantage in terms of control: incumbents in zone 2 and insurgents in zone 4” (Ibid).*

Political actors are most likely to use selective violence in areas, where they exercise dominant, but incomplete control (zone 2 for incumbents and zone 4 for insurgents) as they are lacking the resources for monitoring the population.

Hypothesis 5: *“Parity of control between the actors (zone 3) is likely to produce no selective violence by any of the actors” (Ibid).*

The most contested areas, where control is evenly divided between the two political actors (zone 3), are likely to be “oases of peace”. Neither selective violence nor indiscriminate violence is likely to be used by either side due to the lack of information and the risk of encouraging mass defections to the other side (Ibid). The last hypothesis is also the most astonishing one. In contrary to conventional war where all violence takes place on the front line, the most contested areas turn out to be peaceful in irregular war (Ibid; Kalyvas, 2008a, p. 406 f).

Kalyvas’ theory also explains why civil wars differ so much from another, that is to say why some civil wars are much more violent than others or why the absence of violence does not necessarily imply the termination or reduction of a conflict (Kalyvas, 2008a, p. 402). He assumes that those civil wars affected by high levels of violence are likely to show the following features: areas of parity (zone 3) and areas of total control (zone 1 and 5) are limited; there are high levels of indiscriminate violence; and there are frequent control shifts (from zone 2 to 4 and the other way around) (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 206). Kalyvas assumes that these shifts are often caused by external intervention because it allows the weaker side to regain lost territory.

3.7 Summary

In sum, Kalyvas considers irregular wars as a dynamic process in which the nature of sovereignty alters significantly. Sovereignty is either segmented or fragmented. It usually remains fragile and changes quickly. He conceptualizes this division of sovereignty by distinguishing between five zones of control: Zone 1 and 5 are areas of segmented control where either incumbents (zone 1) or insurgents (zone 5) exercise total control over a particular area, whereas the other side has no access to it or only a very limited. Zone 2, 3 and 4 are areas of fragmented control. In zone 2 incumbents have dominant, but incomplete control, whereas in zone 4 it is the other way around. In zone 3 both actors equally share control.

The type of sovereignty or control that predominates in a certain area determines the type of strategies used and the decisions made by the actors involved. The goal of all actors involved is to achieve the best possible outcome for themselves. For incumbents and insurgents the aim is to establish a monopoly of power in particular areas of the country, and to defeat the opponent. To achieve this goal civilian support turns out as the key mechanism. Civilians, in contrast, are likely to support the political actor that is most capable of guaranteeing them their survival. Hence, in contrary to general belief, prewar political and social preferences only influence initial patterns of collaboration. As the war develops, control turns out to be the most decisive factor for generating collaboration and deterring defection. It is the key to defeat the opponent.

But how do the political actors obtain control? Kalyvas believes that military resources turn out to be more important than prewar political and social support. Military resources, in turn, are best proxied by geography. Cities tend to be associated with incumbents, whereas rural or mountainous areas that are difficult to access tend to be a stronghold of insurgents. The military resources are, however, often limited. Violence therefore turns out to be a *“key instrument for establishing and maintaining control – and thus for generating collaboration and deterring defection”* (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 141), but only as long as this violence is effective.

Kalyvas distinguishes between two types of violence: selective violence and indiscriminate violence. Selective violence entails *“personalized targeting”*, whereas indiscriminate violence implicates the targeting of individuals based on their group affiliation regardless of their actions or preferences. Kalyvas claims that indiscriminate violence often turns out to be counterproductive which leads political actors to gradually move from indiscriminate to selective violence. Selective violence is also the main focus of Kalyvas’ theory. He argues that selective violence has to be considered as a *“joint process” “produced by political actors seeking information and individual civilians trying to avoid the worst – but also grabbing what opportunities their predicament affords them”* (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 388, 351). Kalyvas explains this assumption by arguing that collaboration and defection are a function of control a political actor has over an area because civilians only want to denounce when they perceive the political actor as capable to offer them protection from retaliation (zone 1 and 5). Political actors, however, do not need information in these areas, but they do need it in zones of contested areas (zone 2, 3 and 4). As civilians are most unwilling to denounce in zone 3, selective violence is most likely to happen in zone 2 and 4. Indiscriminate violence, in contrary, is most likely to occur *“where and when resources and information are low”* (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 147). Territorial control is therefore the main explanatory variable in Kalyvas’ theory that predicts variation in the level of violence.

4. Drug-related violence: Disaggregation of data

4.1 Pathologies and biases in research on violence

Kalyvas claims that the literature focusing on the microdynamics of civil war violence suffers from several “pathologies” which have resulted in the misinterpretation of violence. In the following paragraphs I will briefly present these biases and afterwards elaborate which of these biases might also be present in the literature on drug-related violence in Mexico.

According to Kalyvas (2006, p. 32-35), the reason for these “pathologies” are on the one hand, a common misconceptualization Kalyvas calls “madness”– the perception that such violence is irrational rather than logical - and on the other hand, five common biases: *“the partisan bias”*, *“the political bias”*, *“the urban bias”*, *“the selection bias”*, and *“the overaggregation bias”*.

First, the *„partisan bias”* is responsible for the generation of polemic literature as journalists, scholars or policy makers tend to take sides with one of the warring factions. Whereas violence committed by the group they sympathize with is understated, violence of the other group is overemphasized. In some cases the groups even blame each other for the committed violence. The goal – whether consciously or unconsciously - is to present the „other” group as more violent (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 35-38). Second, *“political bias”* means that that *“politics of civil wars are often treated as if they were just “normal” peaceful politics where people make similar choices to those in normal electoral contexts—rather than situations deeply embedded in and shaped by armed combat”* (Kalyvas, 2003, p.5; cf. Kalyvas, 2006, p. 38). Third, according to the *“urban bias”*, scholars tend to focus merely on civil war violence taking place in urban areas, despite the fact that rural areas are actually most affected by violence. The reasons Kalyvas mentions are first, the common misperception of rural violence as a manifestation of primitivism and second, the difficulty to get access to rural areas resulting in a lack of information and data about (violent) events. Data and the conceptualizations of civil war dynamics are often distorted because of the urban bias (Ibid, p. 38-48). As Kalyvas (2006, p. 42) puts it, the urban bias *“tends to privilege written sources, “top-down” perspectives, ideological or normative motivations of participants, and fixed unchanging identities (such as “peasant”, “Catholic”, “Albanian”) and choices over oral sources, “bottom-top” perspectives, nonideological motivations of participants and fluid identities and choices”*.

Fourth, there are two forms of “*selection bias*” that often occur in micro-oriented studies. The reasons are that on the one hand, fieldwork is often conducted in the most violent places without comparing their results with areas or times less affected by violence. On the other hand, many researchers implicitly believe that incumbents primarily perpetrate violence against civilians and neglect the possibility that insurgents might use the strategy of “civilian victimization” as well (Ibid, p. 48). Fifth, another problem is that data on civil war violence are scarce and if they are available at all they tend to be highly biased and exorbitantly aggregated. It is also difficult to get further information on particular acts of violence such as place, time, the violence used, the perpetrator or the victim. This is particularly a problem for comparative studies because existing indicators on violence are often unreliable and inconsistent across nations and over time. Kalyvas subsumes these obstacles with the term “*overaggregation bias and data problems*” (Ibid, p. 48-51).

In Mexico many of the sources I am drawing on are biased. The partisan bias, for instance, is very present in the country. DTOs are influencing public opinion by either silencing the media or spreading their own propaganda (for more details see 5.2.3). The selection bias is another common bias in research focusing on the link between violence and illicit markets (Andreas & Wallman, 2009, p. 226-227). First, drug trafficking can be considered as one of the most violent sectors of illicit markets. Second, most research usually focuses on “hard” drugs (cocaine and heroin) that are usually connected with high levels of violence, in comparison to soft drugs (marijuana, cannabis or ecstasy) that are less affected by violence. Third, attention is mainly drawn to the most violent places and actors. Mexico and Colombia are such examples. Both countries have attracted a lot of scholarly attention as both countries are highly afflicted by violence in comparison to Bolivia or Peru. These countries are deeply involved in the coca/cocaine trade as well, yet with relatively low levels of violence (Andreas & Wallman, 2009, p. 226-227). But also within Mexico there is a tendency to look at the most violent places (e.g. the border region, etc.), and ignore the fact that many Mexican states remain largely unaffected (e.g. Baja California Sur, Yucatán, Campeche, etc.). The overaggregation bias and data problems will be one of the biggest challenges throughout this research. First, there is no doubt that drug-related violence has increased enormously within the last few years. But there is a tendency to depict Mexico’s drug-related violence as much more dramatic than it actually is. Compared to El Salvador or other Central American countries, Mexico can still be considered a relatively safe

country (cf. Ríos, January 3, 2011; Aguirre Botello, 2010a).³⁹ Second, compared to previous decades Mexico's homicide rate even decreased to its lowest level in recorded history (Aguirre Botello, 2010a).⁴⁰ These are factors often forgotten when dealing with Mexico's drug-related violence. According to Paoli (2006), the overaggregation bias and data problems are a typical problem when dealing with organized crime. As scholars it is therefore important to act on the assumption that official statistics rarely capture the real extent of offenses. They are rather an indicator of the capacity of national institutions to gather data and accurately record events. National statistics also depend on the willingness to report such abuses (Soares, 2004b, p. 851; cf. Paoli, 2006; Soares, 2004a). It is therefore important to consider the reported homicide rate only as the tip of the iceberg.⁴¹ However, as I am dependent on these data, it will be difficult to overcome all of them. The triangulation of data and the constant critical review and comparison between the different information is an attempt to overcome some of these biases, as well as an attempt to disaggregate data on drug-related violence.

4.2 Disaggregation of data on drug-related violence

Kalyvas argues that the disaggregation in both data collection and theory building is essential in order to overcome these biases. He explains this by emphasizing that violence is an inherently dynamic and interactive process: violence committed by one group has an impact on the violence used by the rival group and vice versa (Kalyvas, 2008a, p. 405).

According to Kalyvas (2008a, p. 404), at least three levels of disaggregation are essential for the analysis of the violence dynamic: (a) by actor (incumbent and insurgent violence), (b) by temporal period (e.g. monthly, yearly), and (c) by the type of violence (homicides versus other types of violence; combatant versus noncombatant fatalities; and selective versus indiscriminate violence).

³⁹ Typing "Mexico" and "El Salvador" in the search engine of *The New York Times* it turns out that for "Mexico" five out of ten newspaper articles talk about drug-related violence, whereas only one out of ten articles talk about violence in El Salvador (Vgl. Ríos, 2011, January 3). The interesting and ironic fact is that in 2009, El Salvador's homicide rate (with 71 per 100.000 people) was four times higher than Mexico's one (with 17.971 per 100.000 people). El Salvador was closely followed by Honduras with a homicide rate of 67, Jamaica with 60 and Guatemala with 52 per 100.000 people (Aguirre Botello, 2010b). This is not to say that the situation in Mexico wouldn't be alarming. But it is important to highlight that there is a tendency of journalists, policymakers and scholars (of which this thesis is part of) to focus on Mexico's security crisis, while neglecting that the situation in El Salvador, Honduras and other Central American states is much more worrisome than the one in Mexico. Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that these figures do represent the overall homicide rate, that is to say in these tallies both "ordinary" and drug-related violence is conflated.

⁴⁰ In 1940 Mexico had a homicide rate of 67,04 per 100.000 people. The homicide rate constantly decreased since then. In 2005 it was at its lowest level with 9,49 per 100.000 (Aguirre Botello, 2010a).

⁴¹ Considering the fact that about 75% of crimes go unreported due to a lack of citizen confidence in Mexico's justice sector, in particular in its police forces (Shirk, 2011), constant reportages about mass graves discovered (Vgl. Banderas, 2011, May 23), complaints about thousands of disappearances (La Jornada, 2011, July 31), it has to be assumed that the actual homicide rate is much higher than the reported one. This view I found supported when talking to Mexican friends who told me various cases in which the killings of friends or acquaintances were related to drug trafficking, but their deaths were not declared as such. In one case the death of a friend's boyfriend (a small-scale drug dealer who transported drugs from Lázaro Cárdenas to various other places within Michoacán) was reported as a car accident, even though his parents discovered several bullets in his body when they went to the autopsy. In another case the killing was declared as a suicide (see Section 4.2.2) or as a disappearance (Ibid).

In the following sections, data on drug-related violence will be disaggregated on four dimensions: the three dimensions proposed by Kalyvas (the category “by actor” and “by type of violence” was merged) and two other dimensions I have added myself. These additional dimensions are first, the *spatial dimension* and second, the *relational & motivational dimension*, that is to say the relationship between perpetrators and victims as well as the motivation for the killing. The five levels of disaggregation are: (1) by temporal dimension; (2) by spatial dimension; (3) by the relational & motivational dimension; (4) by actor and type of violence.

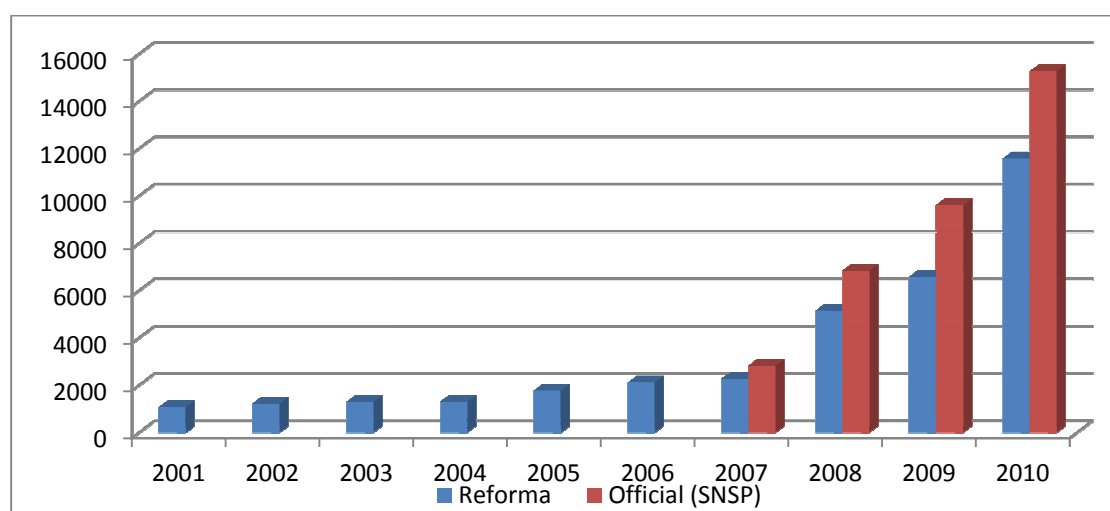
For the first two dimensions I distinguish between general trends in drug-related violence between the time period of 2006 and 2010 on the one hand and trends of violence in Michoacán for the year 2009 on the other hand. As it turned out to be particularly difficult to disaggregate data for the last two dimensions, the “*relational & motivational dimension*” covers both trends simultaneously. This allowed me to compensate the lack of information that sometimes existed for one research unit and thus complement my findings as well as to cross-check if the trends in Michoacán match up with general trends of drug-related violence or have to be considered an exceptional case. For the last dimension it was particularly difficult, and practically impossible to disaggregate data on general trends in drug-related violence. This dimension needed a closer look and examination on the micro level and therefore focuses merely on Michoacán in 2009.

4.2.1 Temporal & geographical trends in drug-related violence

4.2.1.1 Temporal patterns in violence: Mexico, 2006-2010

Since 2006, Mexico has experienced a dramatic escalation of drug-related violence under Mexican President Felipe Calderón which has reached a level of intensity and atrocity transcending previous periods of drug-related violence by far. From 2000 to 2006, 8,901 people died due to drug-related killings (Shirk & Ríos, 2011). Since then, the murder rate has escalated to extraordinary levels. From 2006 to 2010, Reforma data suggest that there were about 27,723 drug-related killings. Official data gathered by SNSP from 2007 to 2010, even suggest a much higher figure: about 34,550 drug-related killings. This figure doesn’t even comprise drug-related killings in 2006 (Shirk & Ríos, 2011, p. 21). Taking together the numbers by SNSP and those provided by Reforma for the year 2006, the total number would be 36,671 drug-related killings. The worst year to date was 2010 with a death toll ranging between 11,583 and 15,273, comprising 42 % of the total number accumulated during the Calderón administration (Shirk & Ríos, 2011, p. 21).

Figure 4: *Drug-related killings in Mexico, 2001-2010*



Source: Author of this thesis with data of Shirk & Ríos (2011, p.21).

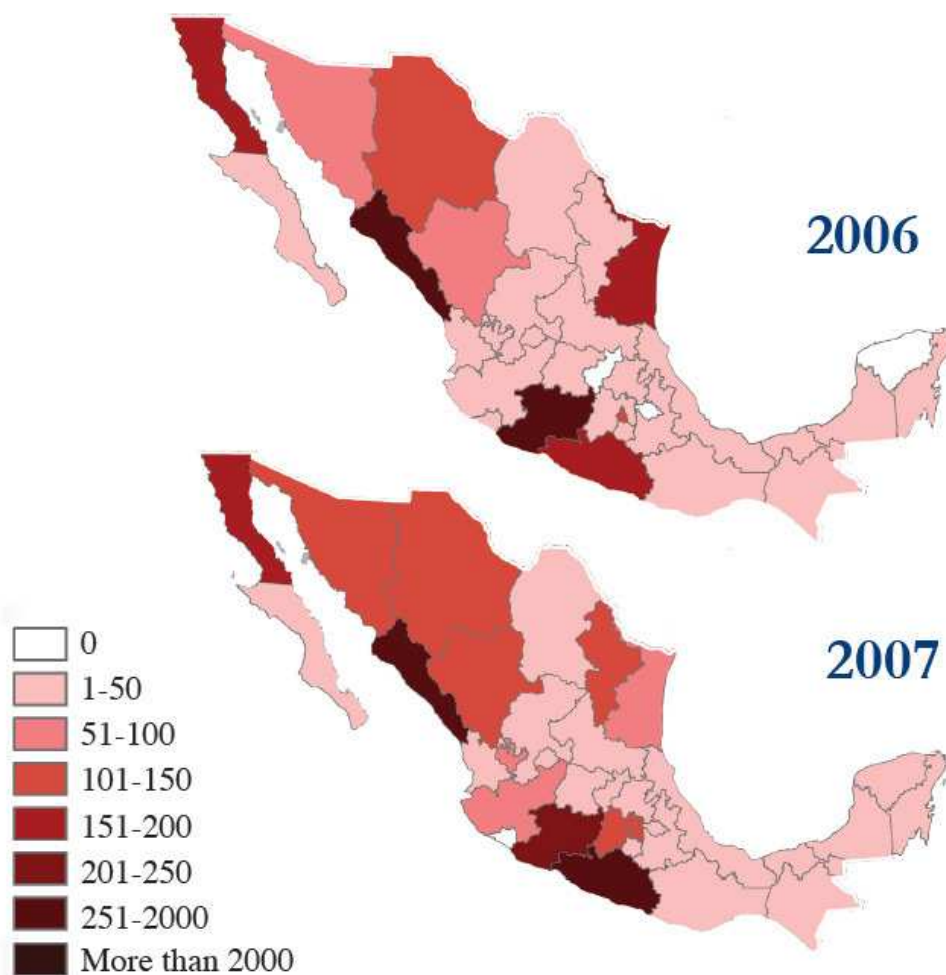
4.2.1.2 *Geographical patterns, Mexico, 2006-2010*

Besides this dramatic upsurge in the amount of drug-related violence, significant geographic dynamics in the distribution of drug-related violence can be observed (Shirk, 2010). In 2006 and 2007, the largest number of drug-related violence was geographically concentrated in the three states of Michoacán, Sinaloa, and Guerrero. In 2008, violence expanded to Chihuahua, Sinaloa and Baja California, accounting for more than 60 % of all drug-related killings (Ibid). In 2009, most violence was concentrated in the so-called “Golden Triangle” region consisting of Chihuahua (31 %), Durango (10 %) and Sinaloa (12 %), followed by the central Pacific states of Jalisco (3 %), Michoacán (6 %), and Guerrero (10 %) (Ibid, p. 7). In 2010, with the enormous upsurge of drug-related violence, violence expanded dramatically to four Mexican states that used to be relatively “peaceful”. These were San Luis Potosí (where violence increased from 8 homicides in 2009 to 135 in 2010), Tamaulipas (from 90 to 209), Nayarit (from 37 to 377), and Nuevo León (from 112 to 604). Still most of the violence (84 %) occurred in Chihuahua, Sinaloa, Guerrero and Baja California, therewith in states that are considered to be important zones of drug production and trafficking (Shirk & Ríos, 2011; Duran-Martinez et al., 2010). Looking at the municipality level, over 70 % of all drug-related homicides occurred in only 80 of about 2,450 municipalities with Ciudad Juárez (2,738 killings (!)), Culiacán (587), Tijuana (472), Chihuahua (670), and Acapulco (370) being the most violent municipalities in 2010 (32 %).

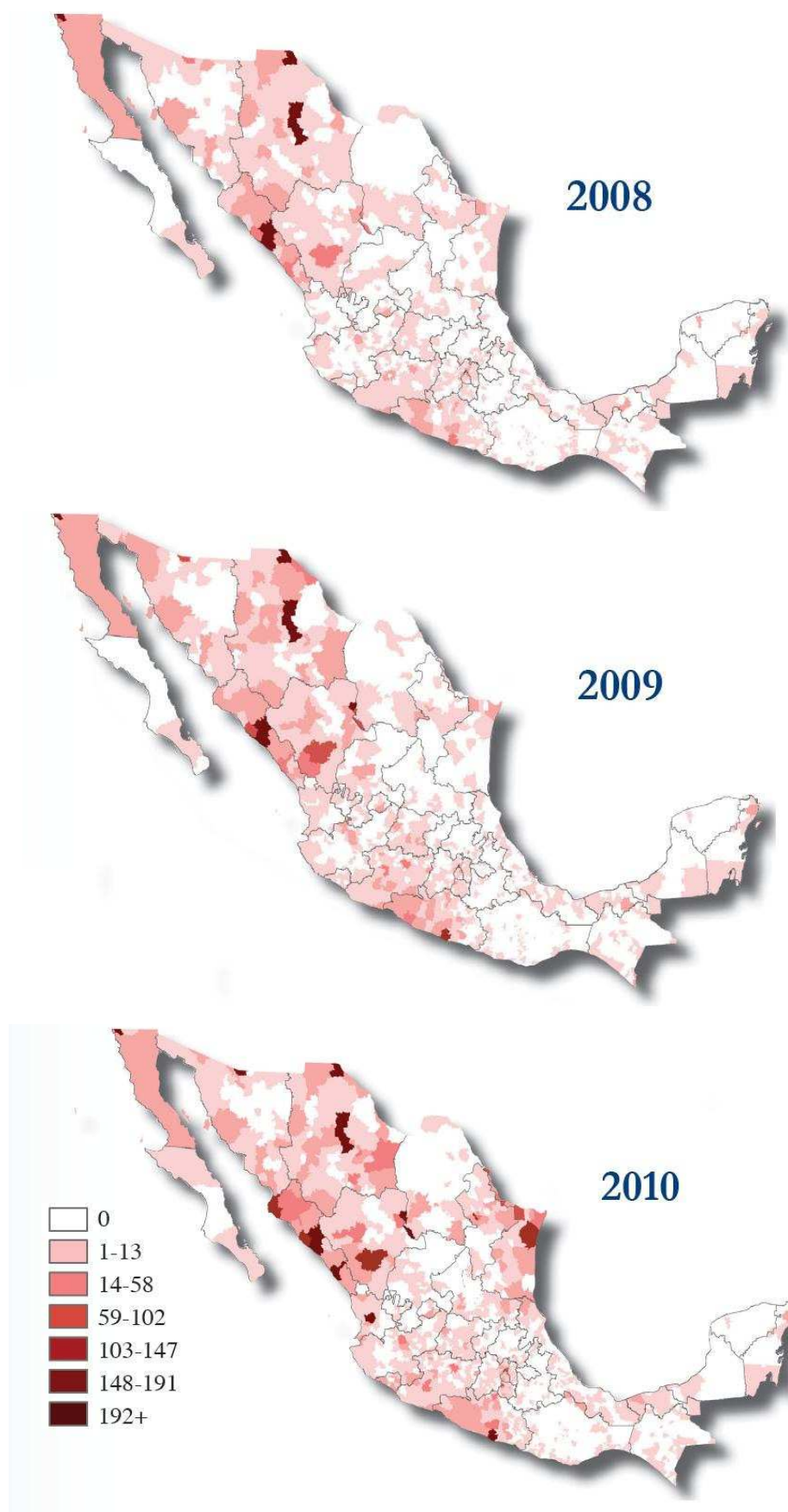
The following maps depict the geographic distribution of the total number of drug-related violence. The maps were generated by the Trans-border Institute (TBI) using data from the SNSP. Unfortunately, the maps for the first two years differ only at state level. From 2008 onwards, they

are more detailed and show important variations in the spread of violence at the municipality level.

Figure 5: Geographic distribution of the total number of drug-related violence at the state level (2006-2007) and at the municipality level (2008-2010)



Source: Maps from Shirk (2010).



Source: Maps from Shirk & Ríos (2011).

The fact that violence is geographically focused makes clear that the perception of a general epidemic of drug related violence is inadequate. Violence is most concentrated where the DTOs are competing for dominance which is often in areas of strategic importance, such as:

- the border towns of Matamoros, Nuevo Laredo, Ciudad Juárez, Agua Prieta, Nogales, Mexicali and Tijuana;
- Mexico's Pacific or Atlantic ports and coastline that serve as important entry point for cocaine or precursors for the production of meth;
- the southern border region with Guatemala (and therewith another important entry point of cocaine);
- airports (of Mexico City, Guadalajara, etc.);
- or other generally important drug trafficking routes.

Further affected are Mexico's drug-producing regions of the "Golden Triangle" and "Tierra Caliente", where poppy and marihuana are cultivated and many meth labs are located (Williams, 2009b; Meyer, 2007).

4.2.1.3 *Excursus: A profile of Michoacán – Background information*

Before examining the temporal patterns of drug-related violence in Michoacán for the year 2009, the state will briefly be presented, as well as its involvement in drug trafficking.

Michoacán is one of 32 states in the Mexican Federation and is located in west-central Mexico. It is divided into 113 municipalities with its capital Morelia. It borders the states of Colima (to the west), Jalisco and Guanajuato (to the north), Querétaro (to the northeast), the state of Mexico (to the east), Guerrero (to the southeast), and the Pacific Ocean (to the southwest) with a 213 km coastline (Schmal, 2004; Encyclopedia of Mexican States, 2011; OECD, 2009). As the map shows, its territory includes two large mountain ranges (the Transversal Volcanic Sierra and the Sierra Madre del Sur), plateaus, plains and coasts. The main economic activities are the sectors of agriculture, livestock, forestry and fishery (34%), mining and manufacturing sector (23%), and finally, the service and commerce sector (37%) (SEGOB, 2010).

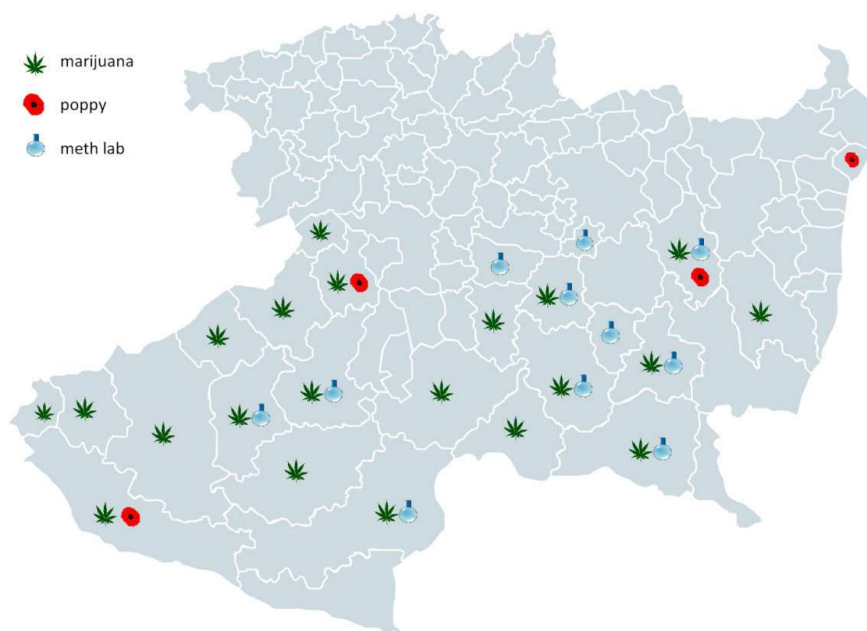


Politically, Michoacán was one of the first states that opposed the omnipotent Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). In particular since the late 1980s, the PRI has been increasingly challenged by the center-left Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) and to a lesser degree by the rightwing National Action Party (PAN) (Encyclopedia of Mexican States, 2011; Grayson, 2009b).

Michoacán is one of the states with the highest unemployment rates in Mexico (Coerver et al., 2004; Cambio de Michoacán, 2011, January 21) which has forced about 2,5 million “Michoacáños” to migrate to the United States in an attempt to find a job (OECD, 2010). This is remarkable as the state itself has a total population of 4,351,037 (INEGI, National Statistics Institute of Mexico, 2010).⁴²

Michoacán’s involvement in drug trafficking and in particular drug cultivation is long-standing (Astorga, 1999). The state is an important drug producer of marijuana and poppy opium (for the manufacture of heroin), as well as of synthetic drugs (in particular methamphetamine) (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Illicit cultivation of cannabis (marijuana), opium poppy and manufacturing of methamphetamine by municipality



Source: Author of this thesis with map from commons.wikimedia.org and data of Terra México (2009).

The state’s most dominant DTO is La Familia Michoacana. The group operates in 77 of the 133 municipalities of Michoacán (Grayson, 2010a, p. 201). Its powerbase is in “Tierra Caliente”, in

⁴² Hence, it becomes evident that La Jornada Michoacán (2007) is still right for claiming that more people from Michoacán are living in the U.S. than in the state itself (INEGI, 2011).

southern Michoacán with Apatzingán as the center of its operations (Grayson 2010, p. 201). Another important DTO in Michoacán is Los Zetas. The Sinaloa DTO, the Beltrán Leyva organization, the Milenio DTO, and the almost extinct Colima DTO are present as well, though to a lesser degree. It is said that the Beltrán Leyva organization is allied with los Zetas, and the Milenio and Colima DTO with the Sinaloa DTO. However, most of the sources I revised mention exclusively the two main DTOs, La Familia Michoacana and los Zetas.

The following map is taken from the National Institute for Federalism and Municipal Development (CEDEMUN, 2011). It shows the political party affiliation of the different municipalities. I also tried to depict which DTOs have been active in the municipalities in 2009. This has been extremely difficult due to the lack of data. My results are mainly based on Grayson (2010), as well as on various newspaper articles and blogs. The map is far from complete, but it clearly demonstrates that the presence of a DTO is not linked with the party affiliation of a particular municipality (for further information on the DTO presence see Section 4.2.1.5).

Figure 7: Political map of Michoacán and DTO presence



Source: Author of this thesis with map of CEDEMUN (2011) and data of Grayson (2010), Terra México (2009), and various other newspaper articles and blogs.

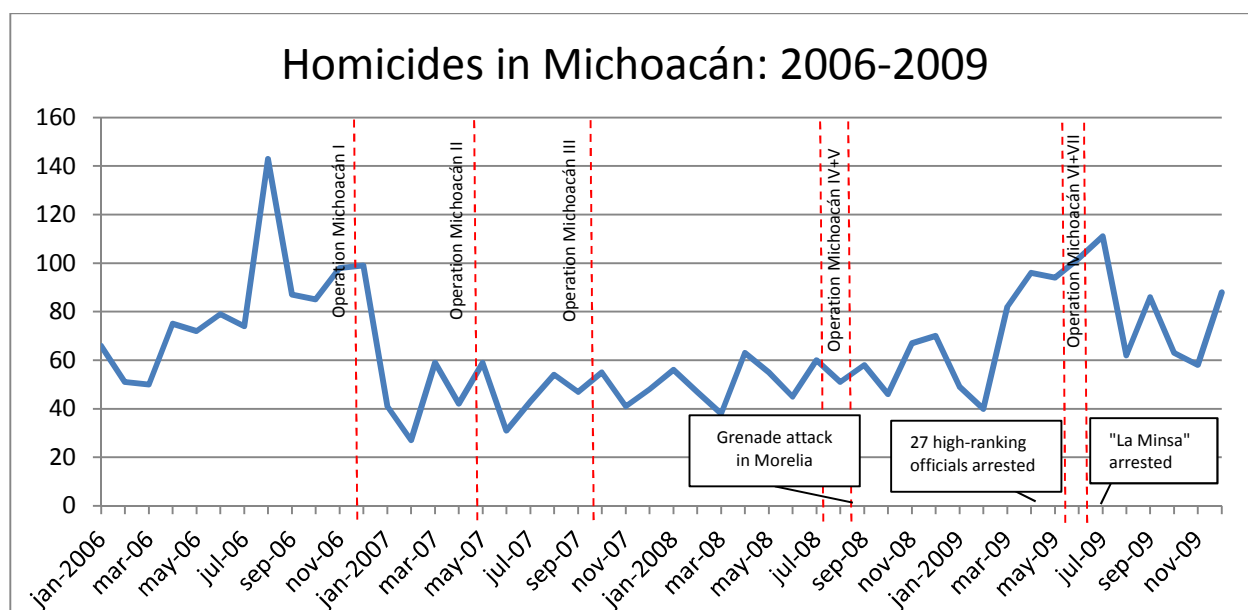
4.2.1.4 Temporal patterns in drug-related violence: Michoacán in 2009

Michoacán was the first Mexican state to which Calderón sent around 6,500 soldiers and police to combat the DTOs after taking office in December 2006. Calderón legitimized his offensive against the DTOs in Michoacán with the escalating levels of violence. Since then, Michoacán has

become one of the epicenters of the federal offensive against organized crime, even though violence did not remain at such high levels, ranging between 30 and 60 deaths annually. However, in 2009 there was a dramatic increase in drug-related violence.

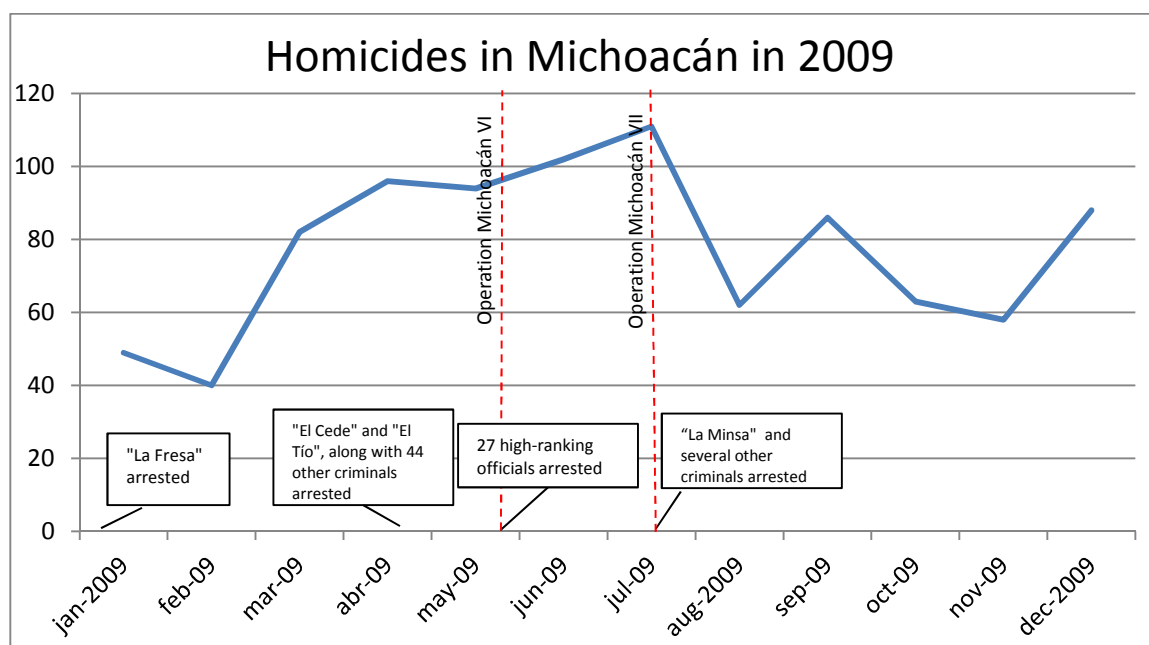
The following chart (Figure 8) shows the homicide rates from 2006 to 2009, as well as the most important events in this period.

Figure 8: Recorded homicides in Michoacán from 2006 to 2009



Source: Author of this thesis with homicide data from INEGI, and general data of Grayson (2010) and Esmas.com.

Figure 9: Recorded homicides in Michoacán in 2009



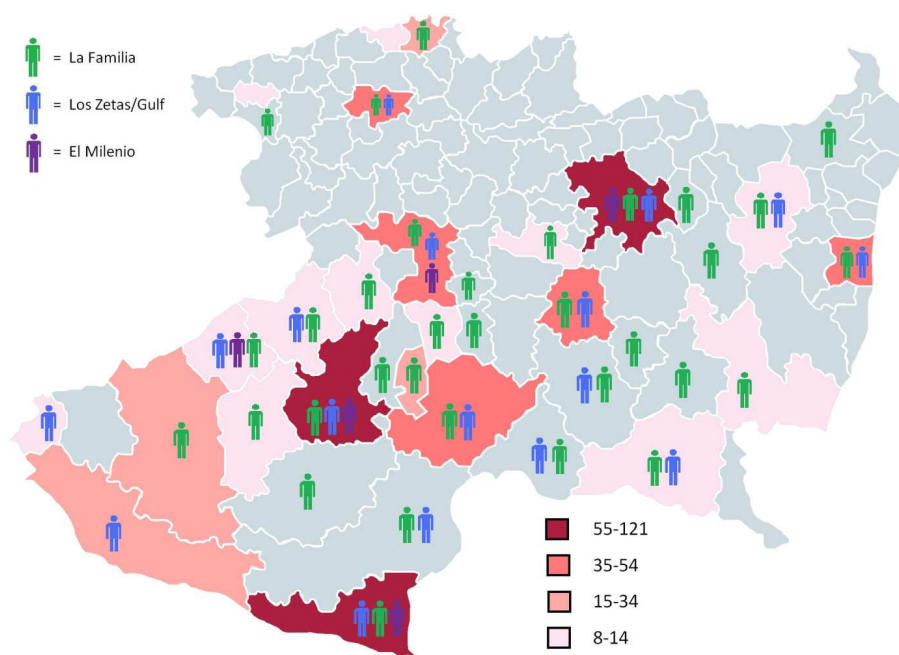
Source: Author of this thesis with homicide data from INEGI, and general data of Grayson (2010), Esmas.com.

This figure clearly shows that the rise of drug-related violence often coincides with the government's military operations against the DTOs (in particular arrests or killings of important key members of La Familia Michoacana) and decreases afterwards (except for the violence in September). The arrests of leading DTO members, such as "El Cede" and "El Tío" in April and in particular of "La Minsa" in June 2009, were followed by a series of gun and grenade attacks. The Federal Police was particularly eyed on by La Familia Michoacana.

4.2.1.5 *Geographical patterns in drug-related violence: Michoacán in 2009*

There have been significant geographic dynamics in the distribution of homicides which are depicted in the following map (Figure 10). I have also depicted in which municipalities a DTO (or DTOs) is (or are) present. Unfortunately it was not possible to reconstruct the complete DTO presence with the data I was drawing on (Grayson, 2010a; Grayson, 2010b; Terra México, 2009; Esmas.com, 2009 amongst others). Hence, blank fields do not necessarily mean that there is no DTO presence. Considering the fact that La Familia, for instance, operated in 77 of the 133 municipalities of Michoacán in 2009 (Grayson, 2010a), the actual DTO presence must be much higher. It is also possible that in some municipalities, where only one DTO is depicted, two or more DTOs are actually present. The map is therefore far from complete.

Figure 10: Geographic distribution of the total number of homicides at the municipality level in 2009

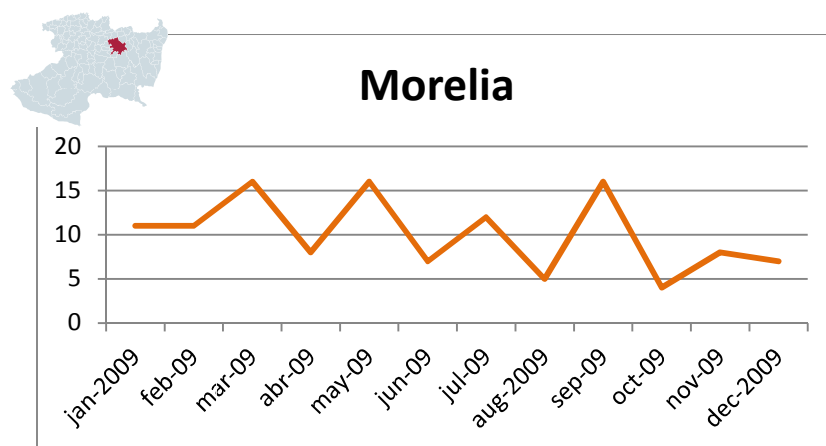


Source: Author of this thesis with data of INEGI (for depicting the geographic distribution of homicides at the municipality level), and data of Grayson (2010), Terra México (2009), and various other newspaper articles and blogs (for depicting the DTO presence).

Despite these limitations, the map clearly reveals that the municipalities of Morelia, Lázaro Cárdenas and Apatzingán were most affected by drug-related violence, followed by Uruapan, La Huanca, Tacámbaro, Zamora and Zitácuaro. It can also be observed that the most violent municipalities are the ones in which at least two DTOs are present (e.g. Morelia, Apatzingán, Lázaro Cárdenas, Uruapan, etc.), and that the main battle takes place between La Familia and los Zetas (Esmas, 2009).

The following charts depict the trends in drug-related violence in the municipalities Morelia, Lázaro Cárdenas, Apatzingán and Uruapan. I concentrated on these municipalities because, first, they were most affected by violence in 2009 and hence their trends in violence might allow interesting insights. Second, these municipalities were also most covered by the media.

Figure 11: Recorded homicides in Morelia in 2009

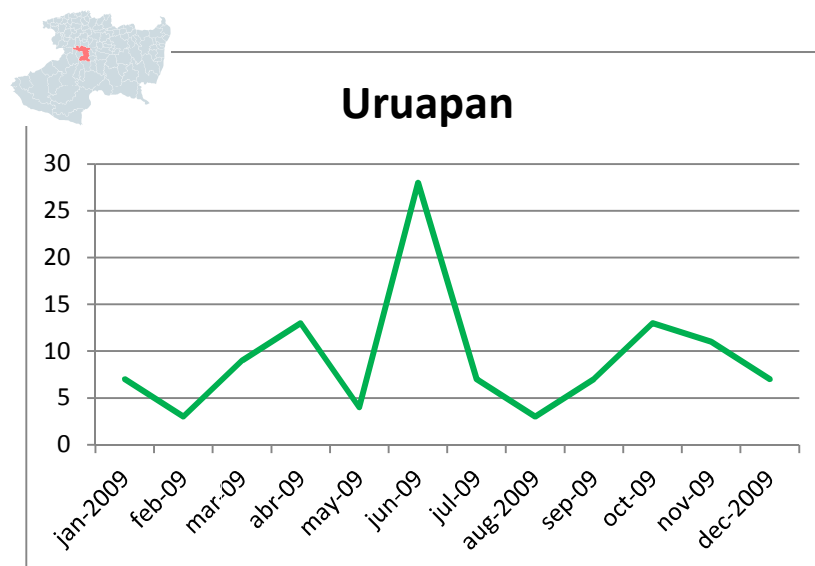


Source: Author of this thesis with data of INEGI.

Morelia, as the capital of Michoacán, has strategic importance for the DTOs and is a highly contested area between la Familia and los Zetas. According to the database released by the Mexican Government, about 86 executions, and seven aggressions and confrontations took place in Morelia in 2009 (Federal Government of Mexico, 2010). Esmas.com (2009) reports three confrontations in 2009, one on March 22nd, another one on June 10th, and the biggest one took place on June 10th between los Zetas and la Familia. On the same day “la Minsa”, one of the key leaders of la Familia, was captured (Ibid, June 10). A series of gun and grenade attacks followed his arrest which was probably an attempt to force his release (Ibid, June 11). The news coverage only partly agrees with the chart. For March, the reports cite the killing of three people and an armed confrontation leaving two dead persons which coincides with the increase of violence on the chart. For May and September, there has been no significant news

coverage, and for December, a relatively nonviolent month (see chart), Esmas.com (2009) reports an attack against policemen who were quartered in a hotel on December 10th.

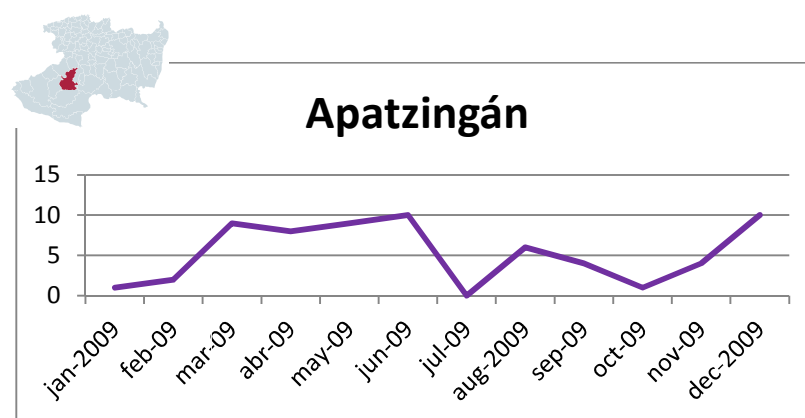
Figure 12: Recorded homicides in Uruapan in 2009



Source: Author of this thesis with data of INEGI.

La Familia first presented itself in Uruapan on September 6th 2006, by throwing decapitated heads onto a dance floor. The municipality has since been an epicenter of la Familia and a battleground between various DTOs. In 2009, the database of the Mexican Government reports 72 executions and 8 incidents of aggression and confrontation. There have been various grenade attacks against the police in Uruapan at the beginning of 2009. A police patrol was attacked on February 13th; the headquarter and house of the police chief suffered a grenade attack on March 2nd; and two weeks later, on March 17th, about 200 local policemen suspended their activities, leaving the city without police (Esmas.com, February 13; March 2; March 17). Another grenade attack against a policeman was reported on May 26th. Furthermore, various executions were reported, unfortunately without further information (e.g. the content of the narco-mensajes) (March 19; April 1; June 16; October 28). On May 26th, the mayor of Uruapan was arrested for alleged links with la Familia (Ibid, May 26). Uruapan was also affected by the grenade attacks that followed the arrest of “La Minsa” in June 10th (Ibid, June 10). Furthermore a violent confrontation between local police forces and an organized group was reported on November 13th. A month later, on December 14th, two criminal groups engaged in a violent confrontation in which four grenade attacks were launched (Ibid, November 13; December 14).

Figure 13: Recorded homicides in Apatzingán in 2009

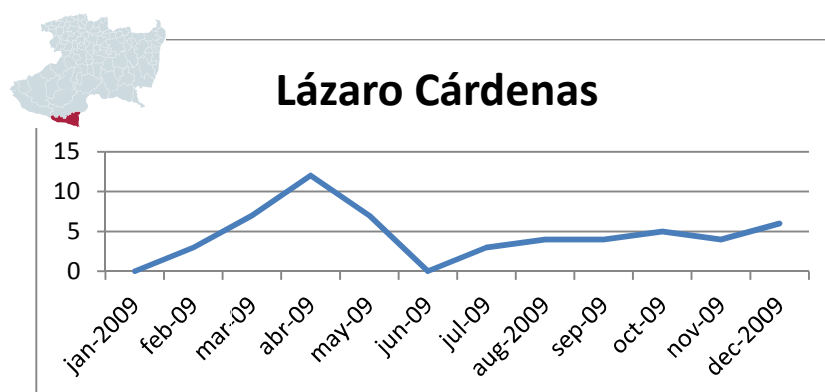


Source: Author of this thesis with data of INEGI.

Apatzingán is located in the Tierra Caliente valley and is the fourth-largest city in Michoacán. It is the birth place of La Familia's late leader, Nazario Moreno, and the center of la Familia's operations (Grayson, 2010b). About 35 executions and 10 aggressions and confrontations have been reported by the Mexican Government. In contrary to Uruapan and Lázaro Cárdenas, there are only a few newspaper articles on Apatzingán.

According to the newspapers (Esmas.com, 2009) the mayor of Apatzingán was also among the ones detained on May 26th for having alleged links to la Familia. Esmas.com reports various violent confrontations between police forces and OCG group(s): on March 30th (on the same day when four policemen were found dead on a ranch); one in June after the arrest of "La Minsa", and finally one on December 9th. Some executions have been reported as well. One in which four corpses were found in a car on April 4th with a message from la Familia directed at los Zetas, and another execution on June 30th left 5 dead people dead.

Figure 14: Recorded homicides in Lázaro Cárdenas in 2009



Source: Author of this thesis with data of INEGI.

Lázaro Cárdenas is Michoacán's largest port that handles about 11,5 million tons of cargo in 2009 and the second largest port after Manzanillo (18,2 million tons) on the Pacific Coast. It is also the main entry point of cocaine, as well as precursor chemicals for methamphetamine production. The port city's strategic location makes it a particularly contested place in which various DTOs are fighting for dominion (Grayson, 2010b). The Mexican Government reports 39 executions and 6 aggressions and confrontations in Lázaro Cárdenas. Esmas.com (2009) reports various cases in which people have been executed.⁴³ An armed confrontation between two rival groups was reported on March 25th that generated a confrontation with the military and local police as well. Furthermore, various grenade attacks were launched against the local police forces of Lázaro Cárdenas, as well as against the Federal Police. Two of them, for example, took place on February 13th after the arrest of "La Minsa". Moreover, a convoy of the Federal Police was attacked on August 7th, leaving one injured. Another attack against the Federal Police occurred on December 10th. And on June 29th the mayor of Lázaro Cárdenas was captured for alleged links with la Familia.

In sum, this reveals that there is not only a conflict between the Mexican government and the DTOs, but also one among the different DTOs themselves. It can also be observed that the levels of homicide depicted in the charts often do not coincide with the coverage of the newspaper articles. Furthermore, the background information on the killings or attacks, as well as the content of the narco-messages is often missing.

4.2.2 The relational & motivational dimension

The relational and motivational dimension can be best depicted by elaborating who the victims are and the possible motivation behind these killings. According to government officials, about 90 % of drug-related violence takes place between and among the DTOs (Lake et al., 2010, February 16). The Trans-Border Institute (TBI) (2010) confirms this result. By drawing on Reforma's data, the TBI estimates that in 2009, almost 500 police and 35 soldiers were killed, representing approximately 7% of all drug-related violence. TBI further assumes that innocent bystanders account for less than 3 % of the victims would confirm official claims that about 90 % of drug-related violence affects people that are involved in drug trafficking. I am, however, skeptical towards such assumption. In addition, these results do not shed much light on the

⁴³ On March 19th, a policeman was assassinated. On April 1st, four corpses with narcomensajes were found. Three days later the former mayor of Lázaro Cárdenas, Nicolás León Hernández (1984-1986; 2001-2003), was killed and left on a highway. Within the same week six other corpses were found at the same place. On May 18th, a cool box was found on a highway close to Lázaro Cárdenas with three human heads inside. In a car close by the location three decapitated corpses were found. In both cases narcomensajes were left. The content of the messages, however, remain unknown. The next day an advocate was killed in his house in Lázaro Cárdenas.

victims themselves. The very distinction between DTO members, military and policy forces, and innocent civilians is too simplistic and needs to be further subdivided. Interestingly, DTOs themselves offer the most valuable clues to their motivations behind the killing as they often leave notes with the cadavers. In these so-called *narcomensajes* they either give their own affiliation and/or the motive for the killing. Even though the analysis is necessarily speculative, the following victims can be identified:

(1) *Members of the same organized crime group:* As mentioned in Section 2.3.1, DTOs do not have the possibility to resolve conflicts and disputes by legal means. As violation against an employment contract or other “infringements” cannot be solved by courts, violence helps them to punish betrayal, deter others from doing similar acts and therewith maintain internal order and discipline (Reuter, 2009, p. 275-276; von Lampe, 2006a, p. 419-420). An example for this “disciplinary” violence is a note that was put next to the corpse of a bodyguard of the operations director of the Ministerial Police of Toluca: *“If you mess with the family, you should prepare the suit in which you are going to die”* (Grayson, 2010b, p. 22).

(2) *Rival DTO members:* It can be assumed that most violence in Mexico is a result of competition among the major trafficking organizations in order to protect or expand control over lucrative distribution networks and market share can partly be contributed to Calderón’s so-called “kingpin strategy” (see 2.3.4). Most areas that have seen a sharp rise of violence have been affected by intercartel fightings (e.g. Sinaloa versus Beltrán Leyva brothers; Sinaloa versus Juárez Cartel; Gulf DTO versus los Zetas; La Familia versus los Zetas). These violent conflicts can take the form of shootouts between rival members (e.g. the one between los Zetas and La Familia in Morelia on June 10th, 2009 (Esmas.com, 2009)) or of retaliatory acts against members of the rival group (e.g. the killing of a La Familia member by the Gulf DTO in Lázaro Cárdenas in October 2008 (Grayson, 2010b; El Universal, 2008)).⁴⁴

(3) *Government officials and the military:* Another important victim group comprises state officials (e.g. policemen, law enforcement officers, majors, etc.) and the military. Reuter (2009) distinguishes between “honest” and “corrupt” officials to better categorize violence against them.⁴⁵ The motivation behind the killing of “honest” officials is quite simple. They are potential

⁴⁴ The victim’s head was placed in an ice chest. The banner next to it claimed: *“Greetings Chayo, Rogaciano, and Chango [reference to La Familia’s leaders]. This is for the collection of queers who support the terrorists of La Familia; we do not kill innocent people; we kill terrorists like this one . . . [illegible] we don’t kidnap and we want neither to work with you nor to have contact with you and those you rely on . . . thanks for those who are supporting us. Sincerely: Gulf Cartel 100%.”* (Grayson, 2010b, p. 44; El Universal, 2008).

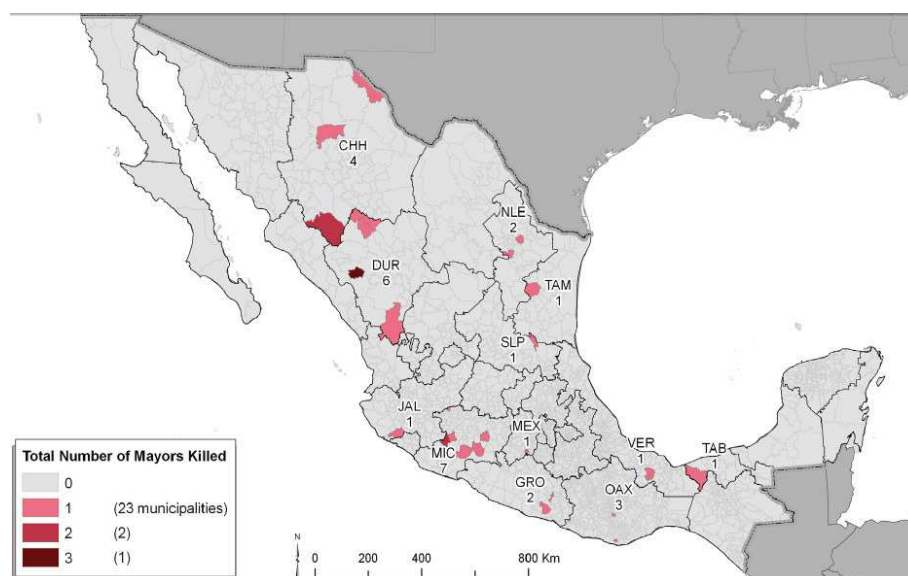
⁴⁵ This distinction, however, is highly speculative because it is difficult to determine in retrospect whether an official has really been corrupt or not. And the announcements of DTOs have to be taken with a pinch of salt. I further argue that the category “corrupt” has to be further subdivided into “voluntary” and “forced” corrupt officials. There is a tendency to condemn and punish all state officials that are somehow linked to DTOs. However, I believe that it makes a difference if someone gets bribed out of greed or if someone is threatened with death.

or actual opponents attempting to combat the DTOs and are endangering their illicit activities (Reuter, 2009; Friman, 2009). This violence can be understood as revenge against the government's success, as well as an attempt to browbeat the state from further efforts to interfere with their business (Williams, 2009a).

The arrest of Arnoldo Rueda Medina, one of La Familia's top bosses, on July 11, 2009, is such an example. It sparked off a series of retaliatory attacks against the Federal Police and the military in the states of Michoacán, Guerrero and Guanajuato. Several cities suffered a series of gun and grenade attacks, such as the port city Lázaro Cárdenas, the capital Morelia, Pátzcuaro, Zitácuaro, Apatzingán, and Taretan amongst others. The retaliatory attacks highlighted in the execution of 12 members of the Federal Police that were dumped along the side of a mountain highway. "So that you come for another. We will be waiting for you here" was the message next to the cadavers (CNN, 2009; q.v. Rocío, 2009; Justice in Mexico Project, 2009).⁴⁶

According to the TBI (2011), the killing of so-called "high-profile victims" (e.g. elected officials, police, soldiers, etc.) has increased compared to previous years. From 2004 to 2010, 27 mayors were assassinated, 14 alone in 2010. Even though the circumstances of some cases are not clear, TBI (2011) assumes that organized crime groups are responsible for most of them. The following figure depicts the location of these assassinations.

Figure 15: Number of Mayors Killed from 2004-2010, by Municipality



Source: Graphic from Shirk & Ríos (2011, p.13).

⁴⁶ A few days after these events, a man who claimed to be La Familia leader Servando Gomez, alias "La Tuta", called a Michoacan television station to offer a national pact with the Mexican Government. In the live interview he claimed to have deep respect for the President and the Mexican military and explained that the attacks are only a response to the use of "dirty war tactics" by the Federal Police and SIEDO agents against members of La Familia (Grayson, 2010b, p. 28f; Grayson 2009c; Rocío, 2009; Esmas.com, 2009, July 15). "What we want is peace and tranquility. We want to achieve a national pact. (...) We want the president, Mr Felipe Calderon, to know that we are not his enemies, that we value him, that we are conscientious people." (La Tuta in: BBC, 2009).

The map reveals that Michoacán is one of the states where the assassination of mayors is most concentrated. But not only mayors, also other high state officials have been popular targets in Michoacán, such as ex mayors, deputy mayors, etc. In 2009 alone, the mayors of Villa Madero and Vista Hermosa, as well as the ex mayors of Buenavista Tomatán, Santa Ana Maya and Lázaro Cárdenas (see below) were assassinated. The mayor of Tiquicheo and her husband also suffered an attack in which the mayor's husband was killed (Esmas, 2009; Rivera Corresponsal, 2009). Many state officials therefore resigned after receiving death threats from La Familia. On March 17th 2009, about 200 local policemen suspended their activities in Uruapan, leaving the city without police (Esmas, 2009). In December 2009, the mayor of Tancítaro and several other state officials resigned after the fathers of the deputy mayor and the secretary had been kidnapped by armed groups, leaving the city without government.⁴⁷

The second category, corrupt officials are either killed by the DTO they worked for (because they failed to deliver on their promises or because they betrayed them), or by the rival DTO to retaliate that they worked for their competitor (Reuter, 2009, p. 280). In April 2009, the ex mayor of Lázaro Cárdenas (1984 and 2001), Nicolás León Hernández, was killed by La Familia to retaliate that he had worked for los Zetas. This indicated a narco-mensaje that was left next to his corpse: *"This is for all who support Los Zetas. Sincerely FM [Familia Michoacana]"* (Grayson, 2011, p. 63). Another example is a banner that was published in Ciudad Juárez in 2009 directed at the police chief of the city: *"Public Safety Secretary. Roberto Orduña Cruz if you do not resign from your office, we will kill an agent every 48 hours. For being corrupt and supporting an organized crime group"* (Proceso, 2009b, p. 42, own translation).⁴⁸ After this threat and the killing of several officers, he resigned from office (Ellingwood, 2009).

These cases also reveal that it is not only about the killing of a potential rival, these murders also have a highly symbolic power in deterring other state officials turning against them. Their message is clear: "Don't fuck with us, or this will happen to you, too" (Campbell, 2009, p. 27).

At the same time, the killing may also increase the reputation of the DTO to be particularly brutal and violent. As a consequence "honest" officials may be tempted to target members of the least violent DTO in order to show some "success" and at the same time lower the risk of

⁴⁷ The governor of Michoacán, Leonel Godoy, tried to appease the citizens of Tancítaro by guaranteeing the governability and security of the municipality. He could not prevent that several local schools shut their doors in the following (Esmas.com, 2009, December 5; Esmas.com, 2009, July 12; Esmas.com, 2009, December 8; Esmas.com, 2009, December 9).

⁴⁸ "Secretario de seguridad. Roberto Orduña Cruz si no renuncia a su cargo vamos a matar a un agente cada 48 hrs. Por corrupto y apoyar a un grupo del crimen organizado"

retaliation.⁴⁹ Corrupt officials, in contrast, that have to decide which side to support might be even attracted to cooperate with the DTO they fear the most.

(4) *Civilians*: Mexican DTOs generally avoid the killing of innocent bystanders as the costs (e.g. increased risk of prosecution or retaliation from rival DTOs) generally outweigh the benefits (Friman, 2009, p. 286; Carpenter, 2009, p. 409). DTOs often claim on banners that they do not kill innocent people, only those who deserve to die (see Section 5.1), and if innocent civilians have been killed, they usually blame the rival DTO or the Mexican military for having committed these atrocities. Despite their rhetoric, civilians have been killed and seem to exceed the 3 % threshold number. After reviewing a large amount of newspaper articles, blogs, and conducting personal interviews, I identified the following types of motivations behind civilian victimization. First, according to the DTOs rhetoric, civilians are only targeted if they dared to denounce them to the government or rival DTOs. *“This is what happens to informants of the Z [Zetas], sincerely, La Familia”*, said a note next to a victims’ body in April 2009 in Lázaro Cardenas (Grayson, 2010b, p. 30). In Villahermosa a banner of los Zetas was found on the mutilated body of an older woman stating: *“For having made an anonymous call to the authorities this is happening to me: and they themselves did this to me.”* (Proceso, 2010, p. 54, own translation).⁵⁰

Second, another common target group are civilians belonging to professional groups that have a major influence on public opinion, such as journalists, radio broadcasters, or singers of so-called “narcocorridos” (drug ballads glorifying the lives of narco bosses) and even Catholic priests. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (Lauría/O’Connor, 2010), Mexico is considered as one of the world’s most dangerous countries for journalists. More than 30 journalists and media workers have been assassinated or disappeared since December 2006. In 2009 alone, a total of 11 journalists were assassinated in Mexico (Gibbons & Spratt, 2011, p. 14). In particular journalists that cover delicate inside information about a particular DTO or are endangering the perception of a particular DTO to be the most dominant one are likely to be killed. The assassination of María Esther Aguilar Cansimbe, a crime reporter in Michoacán state, in November 2009 might be such an example. In her reports she covered topics such as government corruption, police abuses, and the arrest of various members of La Familia (Lauría/O’Connor, 2010, p. 5).⁵¹ Narcocorrido singers are another popular target group. The

⁴⁹ According to Reuter (2009, p. 280), some of the killings are even arranged by corrupt official(s) in order to revenge the honest official(s) who had removed them from their post.

⁵⁰ Original text: *“Por hacer una llamada anonima a las autoridades me paso esto: y ellos mismos me pusieron, in Proceso.”*

⁵¹ It is important to note that DTOs are not the only ones targeting journalists. The International Human Rights Program (IHRP) of the University of Toronto has published a report in June 2011, arguing that several indicators suggest that most of the killings can actually be attributed to corrupt state officials who are in league with DTOs. Their result is based on the fact that most of the killed journalists (about

reason for their killings remain highly speculative whether they are/were killed by the rival DTO to revenge that they supported the other one or the DTO they were associated with because they revealed too much or had an internal dispute (Campbell, 2009, p. 28). Even Catholic priests have been targeted and therewith another group that has a major influence on public opinion, in particular in catholic Mexico. The Catholic Media Centre in Mexico estimates that in 2010 alone, among Mexico's 15,000 priests more than 1,000 priests were blackmailed, 162 menaced with death threats and two were kidnapped and assassinated (Kolb, 2011; Gibson, 2011; McDonald, 2009). It seems that Catholic priests do not necessarily have to talk "bad" about drug traffickers; in some cases it seems to be enough – at least to feel threatened – to deny paying protection rackets (Borderland Beat, 2011a), presiding funeral Masses (for fear of retaliation by rival DTO members) (Kolb, 2011) or denying "donations" of money or buildings from the DTOs.⁵² Family members or so-called "narco-novias" (girlfriends/wives of drug traffickers) are popular targets as well, even though some DTOs (e.g. Sinaloa DTO) claim not to do so (Grayson, 2010b, p. 45; see Section 5.1).⁵³ Civilians caught in crossfire or potential witnesses are another victim group. A young Ph.D.-student from Tijuana, I name Miguel, told me the story of a colleague who was caught in crossfire of two rival DTOs. He tried to escape by leaving his car and thereby was shot, but survived. After a few days of hospital treatment, he seemed to recover, but then the doctors discovered a knife in his body. Someone had come to kill him and therewith eliminate a potential witness of the shootout. He miraculously survived even this attack, even though he is severely disabled since then. After he had recovered, he first pressed charges, but then resigned them. He did not tell why, but Miguel didn't dare to ask him as he already knew the answer. In some cases the targeting of civilians also may be due to a mistaken identity. Miguel also told me about a friend, I call Pedro, who was killed at the beginning of 2008. Both had studied together, but Pedro couldn't find a job afterwards. He moved to his cousins' house after his mother had asked him to leave because she was annoyed of the fact that he was still

65 % in 2009) had not covered issues of DTOs, but on corruption or links between traffickers and state authorities (Gibbons/Spratt, 2011, p. 15).

⁵² It is a well-known fact that many Mexican priests have accepted "narcocolimonas", or drug-tithes from drug traffickers to fund church projects and in one case, to even build a new cathedral (Gibson, 2011). According to church officials, about 6,000 chapels have been built throughout Mexico where it is not clear who the sponsors really are (Cave, 2011). In 2009, a Mexican bishop even publicly defended this practice and thanked the DTOs for their generosity. However, some priests do not want to accept these kinds of offers. Columban Father Kevin Mullins, a pastor of the Corpus Christi Church outside Ciudad Juárez, is such an example. He told the Catholic News: "About three months ago, I had a woman associated with the Juarez cartel approach me offering an open checkbook to build our youth centre...Of course, I kindly declined her offer" (Kolb, 2011).

⁵³ In some cases narco-novias are also killed by the DTO member himself to take revenge after an internal dispute (e.g. betrayal, split-up, etc.). Such a case was reported to me by a close friend whose acquaintance works as a security guard in a wealthy residential area in Guadalajara. One day a woman who worked as a housekeeper and nanny came to him and told him that the children were not allowed to let her into the house. They told her through the door that their father -who was known to be a "narco" (a drug trafficker)- had shot their mum dead. The police was called and recorded the case. Nothing happened. The next day, there was a small article in the newspaper about a tragic incident in which a woman committed suicide by poisoning herself with an overdose of sleeping pills.

unemployed. His cousins were small-scale drug smugglers. One day neighbors observed armed groups entering various houses of their neighborhood and taking many people with them. Pedro and his cousins had disappeared since then. It is assumed that they were killed in a mopping up operation of “El Pozolero” (The Stew Maker). El Pozolero was arrested in January 2009 and became famous for having dissolved the remains of about 300 people in acid (Luz González, 2009).

4.2.3 Drug-related violence by actor and type of violence

Kalyvas understands violence as a dynamic process and believes that violence by one side influences the one used by the other group. I argue that in the case of Mexico not only violence, but also arrests of DTO members by the Mexican authorities have a major influence on drug-related violence.

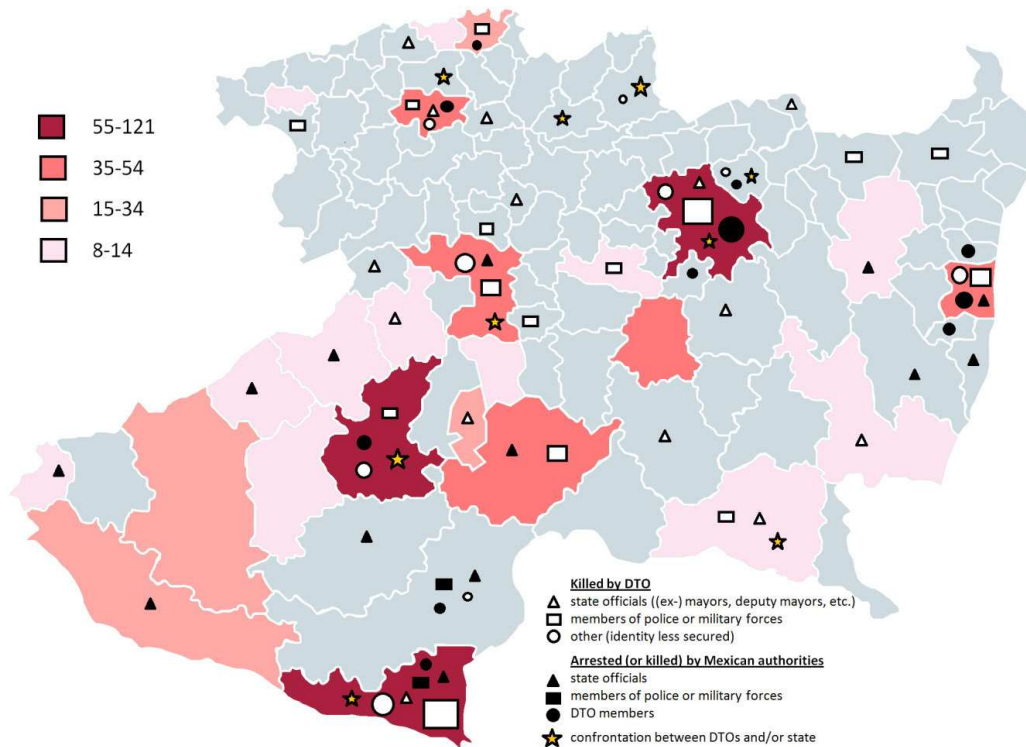
The following map therefore depicts both, violence perpetrated by DTOs, and violence or arrests committed by the Mexican government. Furthermore I tried to distinguish between four target groups: first, state officials (e.g. majors, ex-majors, deputy majors, etc.), second, members of police or military forces, third, DTO members, and fourth, people whose identity remains unknown. As main source Esmas.com was used (see Section 1.5.2 for the reasons of using this source) and complemented by various other articles or reports (El Universal, El Proceso, Blog del Narco, Grayson (2010)).

Unfortunately, Esmas.com and other newspaper articles often did not mention where the arrest took place. Hence, the symbol representing arrests or killings of DTO members by the Mexican authorities does not accurately illustrate the real amount. Grayson (2010) counts about 174 arrests and killings by the Mexican government in 2009, whereas the DTOs, in particular La Familia, assassinated about 19 law enforcement agencies and soldiers in the same year. Most of them were killed as act of retaliation for the arrest of it Chiefs of Operations, Arnoldo Rueda Medina (alias “la Minsa”), in a four-day period in July 2009 (Grayson, 2010b). Furthermore, they attacked and/or killed about 14 state officials, including 3 mayors (of whom one survived) and 3 ex-mayors (Esmas.com), and various other people whose identity remains unknown.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to reconstruct which particular DTO was responsible for a killing because the Mexican authorities often kept back information about the content of the narco-banners that were attached to the corpses. When the content of a narco-banner got public it was always of La Familia. I therefore assume that La Familia Michoacana was responsible for most of the killings.

Furthermore, it was not possible to distinguish between selective or indiscriminate violence as the background information of the killings was generally not illuminated. By looking at the targeted victim groups and the fact that many killings were accompanied by a narco-message, I assume that most killings have been selective. This assumption remains, however, highly speculative.

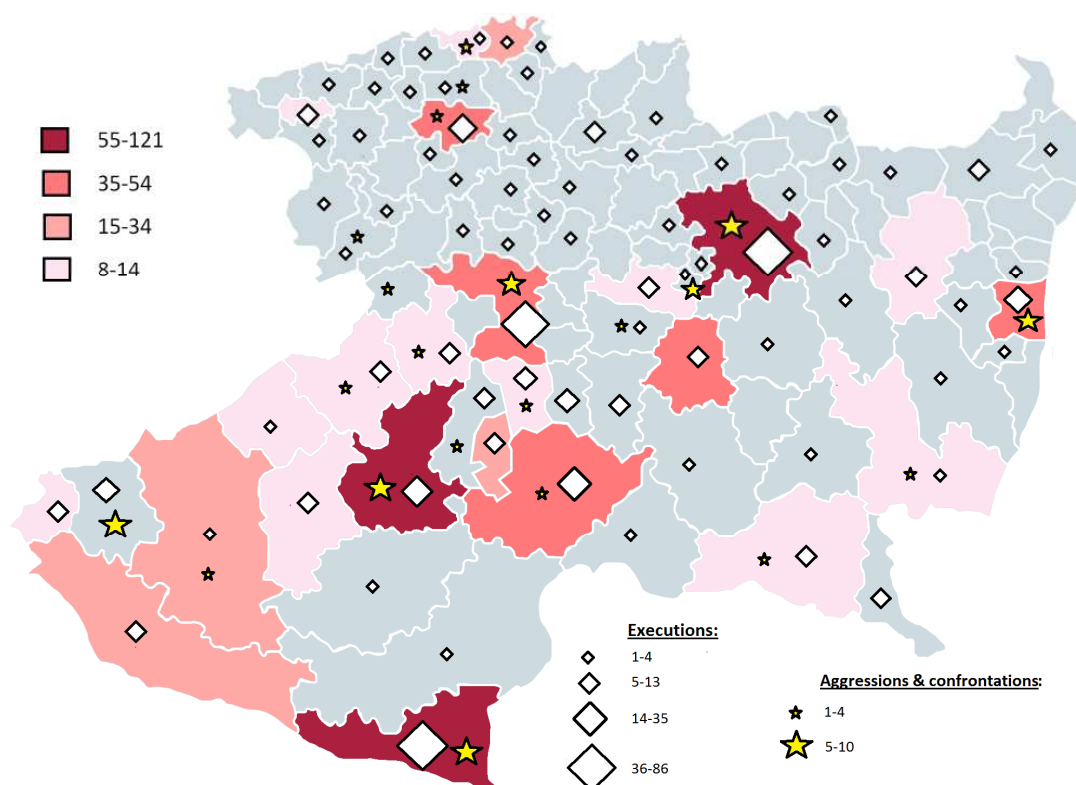
Figure 16: Violence/arrests by actor (DTO vs. Mexican government) and by targeted person (state officials, military or police forces, etc.)



Source: Author of this thesis with data of Esmas.com (2009); Grayson (2010a); Grayson (2010b).

The database of the Federal Government of Mexico complements the findings. The database tries to avoid the conflation between homicide and drug-related violence by merely focusing on violence perpetrated by DTOs. It further distinguishes between executions on the one hand and aggressions & confrontations on the other. The following depicts its results.

Figure 17: Drug-related violence (DTOs) distinguished between executions and aggressions & confrontations



Source: Author of this thesis with data of the Federal Government of Mexico (2010).

In total, 74 aggressions and confrontations, as well as 516 executions were registered for the year 2009. Most aggressions and confrontations were registered in the municipalities of Apatzingán (10), Morelia (7), Uruapan (8), and Lázaro Cárdenas (6). The five most affected municipalities by executions were Morelia (86), Uruapan (72), Lázaro Cárdenas (39), Apatzingán (35) and La Huacana (24) (Federal Government of Mexico, 2010). According to Grayson (2010), Michoacán is one of the states with most decapitations (18) after Guerrero (37), Chihuahua (33), and Baja California (24). The majority of victims were men (92.2 %) between the age of 21 and 40. More than 60 % of the cadavers were found in public places accompanied by a narco-message (82.4 %) (Federal Government of Mexico, 2010).

According to Grayson (2010b, p. 46), Michoacán has been one of the states with the highest decapitation rates (with 18 decapitations) in 2009 and was only placed behind Guerrero (with 37), Chihuahua (with 33), and Baja California (with 24). Michoacán was second in terms of torture (97) and only came after Chihuahua (101). Concerning the attachment of narco-messages, Michoacán was even number one and left all other Mexican states behind (99 messages were counted in 2009) (Grayson, 2010b, p. 46).

5. Kalyvas' theory of selective violence on the case of Michoacán: An Analysis

In the following chapter I will test the central propositions and hypotheses of Kalyvas' theory (see chapter 3) by using data on the Mexican case and Michoacán in particular. The aim is to show whether or not the theory correctly predicts drug-related violence in Mexico. Each subchapter starts with one or two propositions or hypotheses of Kalyvas' theory which will be tested afterwards.

5.1 Civilian support matters

Proposition 1: *Civilian support matters for the outcome of a conflict. Political actors are therefore keen to obtain civilian support (see 3.4.2).*

Kalyvas argues that "civilian support" is crucial for political actors to establish a monopoly of power in a particular region and to defeat one's opponent. It therewith affects the outcome of the war. Except for the fact that the terms "political" as well as "war" have to be put in question to describe DTOs (see Section 1.4), this statement is also true for the Mexican case. Civilian support is significant for both, the Mexican DTOs and the government.

DTOs are often embedded in local communities and are hiding in their midst. Most DTOs are therefore interested in good relationships with the civilian population (Carpenter, 2009, p. 409). Furthermore, they are dependent on civilian's support to deter defection, identify (and kill) rival group members or state officials that work against them. Without their information they wouldn't be able to target selectively. It is, for instance, well-known that DTOs recruit taxi drivers or food vendors as informants or lookouts who tell them when a foreigner is entering the areas under their control (Brophy, 2008; Finnegean, 2010). Even the police work for them. There are many cases in which (local as well as federal) policemen have been accused for working directly for the DTOs (see Section 1.1) which explains their bad reputation within civil society, as well as the fact that they are one of the main target groups of the DTOs (see Section 4.2.2).⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Such an example was reported by Esmas.com (2009, September 28). At the end of September 2009, three persons of the Federal Police were arrested in Lázaro Cárdenas for working with the DTOs. One of them, a Sergeant, confessed that he had worked as an informer for both, La Familia and Los Zetas. He told that at least 25 so-called "halcones" ("hawks" which means informers) worked for "La Tuta", one of the leading bosses of La Familia. They were responsible to guard all main roads of Lázaro Cárdenas and take care that no rival group members or authorities enter certain areas where they could endanger La Familia's activities, such as the "casas de seguridad" ("protection houses") where several group members of Los Zetas have been detained (Esmas.com, 2009).

La Familia Michoacana has been particularly eager to obtain civilian support. Their public relations battle can be understood as an attempt to cultivate their image as “good guys” and “crime fighters” that do not kill innocent people (Grayson, 2009a). In the very first message they left behind after they stepped into public limelight on September 6, 2006 by rolling five decapitated heads onto the dance floor of the Sol y Sombra nightclub in Uruapan (Michoacán), they claimed: *“The family doesn’t kill for money. It doesn’t kill women. It doesn’t kill innocent people, only those who deserve to die. Know that this is divine justice”* (Grayson, 2010b, p. 36; c.f. McKinley, 2006).⁵⁵

Two months later, La Familia Michoacana published their manifesto in two daily newspapers *El Sol of Morelia* and *La Voz de Michoacán* to inform the Michoacán community of their existence and goals (Logan & Sullivan, 2009). They presented themselves as average citizens born and raised in Michoacán: *“[We are] common workers from the hot lands region [Tierra Caliente region] in the state of Michoacán, organized by the need to end the oppression, the humiliation to which we have constantly been subjected by people who have always had power (...)”* (Grayson, 2010a, p. 212).

La Familia claimed that its alleged mission was to “bring order” and protect the local community from troublemakers, killers, and bad guys which are – according to their rhetoric - necessarily ‘outsiders’ (in the past el Milenio Cartel, now los Zetas and/or the Mexican military). When La Familia infiltrated a municipality, the members of the DTO usually would tell the mayor: *“We want to work here. There will be no trouble, no crime, no drunkenness, nothing.’ Then they would take over the town, and enforce their rules. If a boy hit his mother, they would punish him and dump him in the plaza for people to see. If he did it again, they would kill him”* (Lázaro Cárdenas Batel in: Finnegean, 2010, p. 9). A schoolteacher of Zitacuaro therefore stated: *“They’re a second law[,]’ ‘Maybe the first law.”* (Finnegean, 2010, p. 1). La Familia also declared that its goal is to combat certain ills of society, such as the use of meth within Michoacán or the exploitation of women and children, and to eradicate *“kidnapping, extortion in person and by telephone, paid assassinations, express kidnapping, tractor-trailer and auto theft, [and] home robberies”* (Grayson, 2010a, p. 212).

Furthermore, La Familia – but also other DTOs – runs social programs, provides jobs, constructs schools and churches, gives loans to farmers or finances several festivities. Veronica Medina, a regional official and supporter of La Familia, said: *“If you were sick and had no money, they’d take*

⁵⁵ The DTO legitimized the killings of these men by claiming that they had taken part in the rape and murder of a waitress/prostitute who worked in the bar and had been impregnated by one of the members of La Familia.

you to the hospital and pay for medicine. If you couldn't afford tortillas, they'd buy some for you" (Finnegan, 2010, p. 3). Rafael Pequeno Garcia, the Mexican Public Security Ministry chief of anti-drug operations, supports this view *"When you needed help, you didn't go to the government. You went to the narcos. (...) They are a parallel structure, and they have a way of satisfying the needs of the people"* (Fainaru & Booth, 2009).⁵⁶ There are, for instance, various reports in which some mothers even bring their own rebellious sons, who do not want to study or work (so-called *"Los Ni Nis"*) to La Familia for disciplining them. One mother praised that after a second talk with La Familia, she had no further problems with her son (Finnegan, 2010). These examples clearly reveal that La Familia made many efforts to establish social control over the population

Whereas most other DTOs also seem to be eager to obtain civilian support by running social programs, providing jobs or sponsoring festivities, los Zetas seem to be an exceptional case.⁵⁷ They are generally not interested in good relationships with the local community and prefer to impose their will primarily by force (Dudley, 2010; Pachico, 2011).

Information is also crucial for the Mexican government to carry out anti-drug operations, arrest drug traffickers and/or major drug pins, and confiscate drug loads. At the federal level, there are four main intelligence services that are responsible for this task. These are, first, Mexico's National Security and Investigation Center (CISEN) that can be considered as Mexico's primary civilian intelligence organization.⁵⁸ Second, the Public Security Secretariat (SSP) which includes the Federal Police (FP) and the Attorney General's Office (PGR). Third, the new Federal Police Intelligence Center (CIPF) that together with the SSP has more operational roles with access to multiple data-bases. Finally, the Secretariat of Defense (SEDENA) that administers Mexico's military intelligence.⁵⁹ Each of these agencies fulfills a distinct intelligence mission. In particular CISEN and SEDENA seem to play a leading role in combating drug trafficking and organized crime groups (Bailey, 2010; Vérut, 2007; El Universal Online, 2010). The role of civilian support and denunciation for the work of these intelligence agencies remain, however, unclear. But it can be assumed that civilian support is crucial for them as well. PGR and SEDENA, for instance, invite civilians to cooperate with them and offer anonymous ways that allow them to report

⁵⁶ Ricardo Ravelo, a Mexican journalist and specialist on organized crime, said that: *"It's a cartel, but it has a social component, as if to say: We're not that bad. We also worry about the people"* (Fainaru & Booth, 2009).

⁵⁷ In one case, however, even the leader of Los Zetas "El Lazca" might have tried to obtain civilian support by constructing a chapel in his mother's village of Pachuca, Hidalgo. A bronze plaque at the chapel reads: *"Donated by Heriberto Lazcano Lazcano, Lord, hear my prayer"* (Gibson, 2011; CNN México, 2011). But maybe even this case was only an attempt to launder money.

⁵⁸ The agency was found in 1989 and serves as an instrument of the executive branch that is subordinate to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (SEGOB). CISEN's main focus is on the collection and processing of intelligence, counterintelligence and security-related information (Bailey, 2010; Vérut, 2007).

⁵⁹ SEDENA is controlled by the Defense Secretariat. Its main goal is civil protection which includes protecting civil society, their goods and the environment, sustaining law and order, avoiding or minimizing the destructive effects of natural or man-made phenomena, amongst others (Vérut, 2007).

information about drug-related activities and other crimes (PGR online, 2011, August 08; SEDENA online, 2011, July). SEDENA also keeps records on received civilian denunciations and publishes them online.⁶⁰

Even though no further details are known, one has to act on the assumption that civilian denunciation has contributed significantly to the successful detention of various drug traffickers. Newspaper articles consistently mention that thanks to civilian denunciation the Mexican military was allowed to capture drug traffickers (Diario rotativo, 2011; Info 7, 2011). It remains, however, often unclear who these “civilians” really are. Several cases are reported in which DTOs have “helped” the Mexican Government to capture rival DTO members by delivering important information to them.⁶¹ According to Campbell (2009), it seems to be a common practice that law enforcement agents and DTO members work closely together in exchange for information. If this is true this would indicate that DTOs have used the Mexican government in various cases as extended arm to fulfill their own interests.

In sum, civilian support does matter indeed, and the Mexican DTOs as well as the Mexican government seem to be aware of this fact. In particular La Familia has made many efforts to obtain the support of the civilian populace by engaging in many statelike activities (e.g. providing security, social services and community development).

5.2 It's about control

This chapter will test various propositions of Kalyvas' theory related to the factor “control”. First, is the assumption that certain types of territory are likely to be in control of either incumbents or insurgents also valid for the Mexican case? Second, does the level of control exercised by the actors affect the degree of collaboration? Third, does violence really play a key role in obtaining control and collaboration?

⁶⁰ The list distinguishes between the different military zones that exist in Mexico and the particular number of received denunciations for this particular area. Unfortunately, the number of denunciations is only available for the full period (from 2006 to July 2011) and not for the particular year or month. In Michoacán three military zones are enlisted: Morelia (with 4.415 denunciations), Apatzingán (with 74) and Lázaro Cárdenas (with 132).

⁶¹ The case of the capture of Alfredo Beltrán Leyva in which his brothers held Gúzman, the leader of the Sinaloa DTO, responsible for having delivered important information, is such an example. Another case was the capture of the alleged responsible men for the grenade attacks in Morelia. La Familia Michoacana who was suspected to be behind these attacks, declared its innocence and promised to undertake its own investigation to find the real responsible persons. In the following, La Familia “arrested” two suspects in Lázaro Cárdenas. The two men were kidnapped and brought to a “security house” in Apatzingán. According to one of the detainees, they were tortured and forced to confess that they are members of Los Zetas and responsible for the attack. Otherwise they menaced one of them that they would slit his throat and those of his wife and brother. Afterwards they were handed over to Federal authorities (Carrasco & Castellanos, 2008). Another example even involves the U.S. Government. According to documents filed in an U.S. federal court, the U.S. was accused for having cut a deal with the Sinaloa DTO. In 2009, U.S. federal agents allegedly allowed the Sinaloa DTO to traffic several tons of cocaine into the United States in exchange for information about the rival DTOs. According to a “CIA insider” this was orchestrated by the CIA under the “Operation Fast and Furious”. The aim was to arm the Sinaloa DTO and therewith prevent Los Zetas from further expanding and posing a threat to the Mexican Government (Farago & Dixon, 2011; Valdez, 2011; Borderland Beat, 2011).

5.2.1 The distribution of control

Proposition 2: *Certain types of territory tend to be associated with either incumbent or insurgent control (see 3.4.3.1).*

Kalyvas argues that control depends primarily on military effectiveness, which in turn is often defined by geography. DTOs in Michoacán possess both, military effectiveness as their highly sophisticated troops are much better equipped than the local police forces, as well as optimal geographic conditions. Michoacán offers an ideal terrain for non-state groups. Large parts of Michoacán are remote mountainous or rural areas with little infrastructure and therewith difficult to access. Tierra Caliente (meaning hot land) in southwest Michoacán is such an example. The region is known as the powerbase of La Familia Michoacana, as well as a major cultivation zone for marijuana and poppy, and the manufacturing of meth (see Figure 6).

According to Kalyvas, cities and accessible terrain (e.g. villages located near central roads) tend to be in control of incumbents. The case of Mexico, however, reveals that DTOs are also active in these areas because they usually serve as strategically important key trafficking corridors. This might explain why these areas are that contentious and highly affected by violence.

5.2.2 Control & Collaboration

Proposition 4: *“The higher the level of control exercised by an actor, the higher the rate of collaboration with this actor - (...) and, inversely, the lower the rate of defection” (see 3.4.3.3)*

Kalyvas believes that control is the key to obtain civilian support and deter noncollaboration. It is very difficult to find empirical evidences on this proposition. It often remains unclear which actor is in control of which municipality. The following example describes how a DTO tried to take control of a small municipality in Michoacán, called Parakata.⁶² After showing how this DTO proceeded, it will be analyzed whether or not this infiltration has had an effect on the willingness to cooperate with the DTO. The story was told by a close friend, Lourdes Cartagena, whose father is mayor of that municipality. The infiltration started after her father, Fernando Cartagena, had won the elections. His campaign aide, Rodrigo Sanchez (a competent and likable man from Mexico City), and Pedro Hernandez (whose role was less clear, but seemed to be a close associate of Rodrigo) told him about their alleged connections to some important people in the Mexican government and that they could help him to receive some extra benefits for the municipality. A few months later, Fernando Cartagena got suspicious of their activities as they did

⁶² For security reasons, all names of places and people have been changed. Only pseudonyms have been used throughout this thesis to protect their identity.

not fulfill their promises nor showed any results. He suspected them to be in league with los Zetas and fired them. *"This was the moment when they started to plan something like a coup d'état (...)",* Lourdes told me. *"There were still some employees in the presidency that supported both men. They tried to convince my dad to resign from office and leave the village. They told him that he was in danger and that he should leave, and we [his family] as well. I believe this happened because they realized that they couldn't manipulate my dad the way they wanted."* Despite these threats, Fernando Cartagena (and his family) decided to stay, and thanks to lucky coincidences nothing happened to them afterwards.⁶³

In the following months, it seemed, however, to get increasingly difficult to remain neutral, at least for some people. Lourdes told me about a farmer who is regularly transporting fruits and vegetables towards the United States. One day he was menaced by various armed men that they would kill his son if he does not agree to hide a load of drugs in his truck.⁶⁴

At the beginning of 2009 a tragic incidence occurred. The vice president of the municipality, Arturo Cervantes, had been taken by an armed group. A few days later his cadaver was found along with the dead body of another man. Both showed signs of torture and were shot in the neck. The reasons for the killing remain unclear, though many rumors circulated. The mayor, Fernando Cartagena, said that Arturo Cervantes had acted strangely the last two months before his death. He was very nervous and lost in thought all the time. Lourdes told me that two days before he was kidnapped, Arturo wanted to talk with her father Fernando. He asked him for pardon for having made a deal with "them". He said that he is going to get killed and that there is nothing he can do about it. But he wanted to let him know that he never said anything bad about him or put him or his family in danger. He has nothing to worry about.

Nobody knows what the deal was about. The mayor and his family believe that he was a good and honest man, but that los Zetas had forced him to cooperate. Lourdes assumes that they

⁶³ I asked Lourdes how she can explain it to herself that nothing happened to her family afterwards. *"Why nothing happened afterwards? I don't know. Rodrigo Sanchez actually wasn't that bad, at least not as bad as the other guy. I think he liked me. We dated several times at the beginning. But we both were too busy and nothing happened. Luckily! It is so terrible to realize that this might only have been an attempt to increase the influence on my dad. But I also believe that he protected me and my family afterwards and prevented the other guy from using other, more violent means."* This seems to be a typical modus operandi how DTOs infiltrate municipalities. Finnegean (2010, p. 9) reports a similar case. He was told by Lázaro Cárdenas Batel, who served as governor of Michoacán from 2002 to 2008 and therewith in the time La Familia extended its dominance, that *"there were these incredible scenes in small towns all over Michoacán. I would get a call afterward from the mayor. Ten pickup trucks full of armed men had arrived at the municipality. The local police could do nothing. They were outgunned."* This case also reveals the importance of elections as entry point of DTOs to infiltrate into a municipality (see confirms Snyder & Duran-Martinez', 2009). It is reported that DTOs even put their favorite candidates in races (Wilkinson, 2009c). They are also known for buying politicians and local police chiefs. La Familia pays generously for their "hospitality" (Finnegean, 2010). In an election campaign it supported favored mayoral candidates with about 2 million pesos (\$153,000). If these candidates succeed and are elected, they obtain a monthly salary of 200,000 pesos (\$15,000) (Grayson, 2009c). Those, however, who reject La Familia's open arms are shown no mercy. Finnegean (2010, p. 9) accurately describes the situation as *"plata o plomo - silver or lead. You take the money or we shoot you and your family"*.

⁶⁴ It remains unknown if he agreed to collaborate with them, but in the light of lacking alternatives and the fact that he never went to the police, I assume that he truckled to their menace.

might have promised him to get president if he helps them to convince Fernando Cartagena to resign from office. *"I believe he was a little bit ambitious and didn't think things through well...I believe when he had thought the matter over, it was already too late because he was already enmeshed with them...and they know no pardon...they don't care..."*.⁶⁵

Everything remains, however, highly speculative. It is also unclear whether both men were killed by los Zetas themselves for having broken an agreement or if La Familia had entered the municipality and got wind of the deal. The way they were killed supports both assumptions as "el tiro de gracia" (coup de grâce) is a sign for treachery (Campbell, 2009, p. 28). The fact that Rodrigo Sanchez and Pedro Hernandez, the men who had been fired by Fernando Cartagena and who seemed to be associated with los Zetas, left town after this incidence supports the second assumption.

Lourdes told me that afterwards many people have appeared from the nowhere and occupied important positions of the presidency. *"Nobody can prohibit it, not even her father...they control everything. I don't know if they are los Z[etas], La Familia or now los Caballeros Templarios [the Knight Templars, a splinter group of La Familia that first appeared at the beginning of 2011]...all of them are in an interminable war...the only thing one can do is not to enmesh with them, they don't respect nothing nor anyone..."*.

This case reveals that it got increasingly difficult to remain neutral after the DTO(s) took control of the municipality. Various civilians found themselves forced to collaborate with the DTO, if not actively, at least passively by not denouncing them. Fernando Cartagena, for instance, who is not sympathetic towards any DTO, found himself powerless against this kind of infiltration. He increasingly realized that there is nothing he can do about it.⁶⁶ This confirms Kalyvas' proposition that the level of control exercised by the actors affect the degree of collaboration.

⁶⁵ I assume that the deal also might have been linked with the transportation of drugs because the other man whose corpse was found next to the one of the vice president was identified as a worker responsible for the package of vegetables and fruits. It is important to know that the municipality is an important grower of diverse vegetables and fruits and that the example I mentioned before with the farmer who was threatened by the life of his son happened only a few months before this incidence.

⁶⁶ It seems that the situation hasn't changed in Parakata since then. *"The less we know, the better for us"*, was his comment when Lourdes recently asked him if he knows something about the DTO's activities in the municipality. He only told her that they received a lot of death threats via phone calls lately because elections are coming soon and whichever DTO is operating in the municipality, they want him to hold off from running for reelection. Once, he and his wife felt so threatened that they spent the night at the home of some friends.

5.2.3 The role of violence

Proposition 3: *Violence is a “key instrument for establishing and maintaining control – and thus for generating collaboration and deterring defection”, but only if this violence is effective (Ibid, p. 111)*

Many scholars emphasize that violence is an omnipresent course of action in organized crime (Geis, 1966; von Lampe, 2006a; Finkenauer, 2005; Abandsky, 2010; Paoli, 2006). Von Lampe (2006a, p. 419f.) explains this with the fact that illicit markets operate outside the law. Hence, conflicts and disputes - whether within the organization itself, with rivals or the state - cannot be resolved by legal means. In the absence of alternative control systems available to them, the use and threat of violence turns out to be OCGs dominant mechanism of conflict resolution. It is even vital for them to make the credible impression to have the “power to kill”, that is to say the ability to use violence if necessary (Geis, 1966, p. 95). Finkenauer (2005, p. 81f.) therefore describes “*the ability to use, and the reputation for the use of violence or the threat of violence to facilitate criminal activities*” as one of the most important defining features of organized crime.

5.2.3.1 *Narco-propaganda*

The Mexican DTOs seem to be aware of this fact and give much effort to cultivate their image of having the “power to kill”. One way to cultivate this image is by making extensive use of propaganda. Sullivan (2011) distinguishes between two types of “narco-propaganda”: informational and violent “narco-propaganda”.

First, the informational “narco-propaganda” can take the form of *narcomantas* (or banners bearing a message from the DTO), *narcobloqueos* (street blockades to hinder the military from reaching some of the shootouts), *manifestaciones* (demonstrations allegedly organized by DTOs), or *narcocorridos* (drug ballads praising narco-culture) (Sullivan, 2011, p. 12). Narcomantas are particularly interesting. They are usually attached to public monuments, such as bridges, statues, or church walls so that everyone can see them. In these messages they often announce the formation of a new DTO (usually after a split-up), the termination of an alliance, and/or the declaration of “war” against a rival DTO. In others they publish their group’s manifesto, blame rival DTOs for committing atrocities, or publish lists of state officials whom they menace with death (Campbell, 2009, p. 27-28). Los Zetas even used narcomantas for their recruitment campaign.⁶⁷ Besides narcomantas, some DTOs spread their propaganda by distributing hundreds

⁶⁷ Los Zetas published various banners that were directed at police and military men to join them by promising better payment and other benefits, as well as a telephone number to call. It reads “Operations Group 'Los Zetas' wants you. Military or ex-military. We offer a good

of flyers or purchasing ad spaces in daily newspapers to present themselves (e.g. La Familia). They are also increasingly using “new media” technologies, in particular social networking sites, such as YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, or blogs (e.g. “El Blog del Narco” (The Narco’s Blog) or “Borderland Beat”) or even own homepages (e.g. los Zetas with www.loszetas.mx) that give uncensored insights into their world and are frequently used to communicate, legitimize and glorify their crimes, and spread fear (Campbell, 2009; Sullivan, 2011; Gibbons/ Spratt, 2011). It is said that La Familia even has an own “public relations” department to fulfill this task (Logan/ Sullivan, 2009; Ranitzsch, 2010).

Second, the violent “narco-propaganda” takes the form of public displays of smashed and detached human heads dumped on highways, public plazas, night clubs, or in front of police stations so that everyone can see; mutilated corpses hanging from bridges or meat hooks; the line-up of dead bodies in rows (Campbell, 2009; Sullivan, 2011). Hand-written messages are often attached next to the bodies or are even carved on them. In these notes DTOs often claim responsibility for the crime and legitimize why these individuals have been killed (Campbell, 2009).

Narco-propaganda is usually broadcasted on local and national television and published in newspapers, online articles, or blogs.⁶⁸ Violent narco-propaganda is particularly powerful because it becomes directly available to a broader audience and takes on a psychological dimension by “transcending the victims and speaking to a mass audience” (Campbell, 2009, p. 27). The media therewith unintentionally supports the “psychological warfare” of the DTOs through their coverage and through distributing these evidences of symbolic and instrumental violence. First, the media influences public opinion through their choice of reportage by shaping the perception of a particular DTO to be stronger (or weaker) which might influence people’s course of action (e.g. the willingness of civilians to denounce, or of local state officials to collaborate with a DTO, etc.). Second, this might also encourage DTOs to commit more brutal killings to keep up with the violence of the rival DTO(s) and to avoid being perceived as weak (q.v. Campbell, 2009, p. 28-29).

DTOs also make a lot of efforts to control the media directly by influencing or censoring media coverage (Sullivan, 2011, p.2). Some DTOs (e.g. the Gulf Cartel) have special employees who are

salary, food, and we care for your family. Do not suffer bad treatment. Do not suffer hunger. We will not feed you Maruchan (noodle) soups. Do not hesitate to call 8671687423.” (Schilling, 2011).

⁶⁸ Unfortunately, there has been no attempt to collect this data systematically by transferring them into databases. The Mexican government might possess such a database, though it is not publicly available. They only published one in which they distinguish between executions on the one hand and aggressions and confrontations on the other hand. Further information entails the sex and age of the victim, the place where the corpse was found and whether a banner was attached or not (see Section 1.5.2).

responsible for informing journalists what they are allowed to cover and what not and some journalists even play a double role (Brophy, 2008; Isackson, 2011; Stone, 2011). Hence, the local press has been largely silenced. According to a member of the Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ), there is no true journalistic coverage in several Mexican states, such as Tamaulipas, Michoacán, Chihuahua, and Guerrero (Gibbons & Spratt, 2011).⁶⁹ A local newspaper editor confirmed this by saying that *“our newsrooms have been infiltrated by these reporters. They monitor what we write. They know where we live. With this system, the narcos have direct control over us”* (Schilling, 2010, March 15). This allowed DTOs to increase their influence on public discourse and shape their operating environment(s) and therewith exert what Sullivan (2011, p. 2) calls “raw power”.⁷⁰

After most media and journalists have largely been silenced, social media seemed to be the last space where citizens were allowed to publish and denounce information on DTOs’ criminal activities, and other information helpful for the Mexican government. This changed on September 15, 2011, when social media users received a horrific message. Two mutilated cadavers were found hanging from a bridge in the border city of Nuevo Laredo. The narco-message left behind claimed: *“This is going to happen to all of those posting funny things on the Internet. You better (expletive) pay attention. I’m about to get you”* (Justicia hoy, 2011, September 15). According to banner, both victims were allegedly social media users and had published delicate information about los Zetas. If this is true and not only propaganda, this would be *“the first time users of such social networks have been targeted”* (Romo, 2011, September 15). Two weeks later, another cadaver was found with a similar threat: *“OK Nuevo Laredo en Vivo and social media sites. I am Nena de Laredo and I’m here because of my (online) reports and yours.....For those who don’t believe this happened to me because of my actions, for trusting in the Army and Marines... Thank you for your attention, La Nena de Laredo, ZZZZ”* (Borderland Beat, 2011c).⁷¹ Whether it is true what los Zetas have claimed or merely propaganda remains unknown. But their message is clear. They want to prevent anyone from denouncing them and publishing anything that is not in line with their own propaganda.

⁶⁹ In February 2010, for instance, the local press of Reynosa provided almost no coverage of the fighting that took place between the Gulf Cartel and the Zetas. The only reports available were delivered by the U.S. (Gibbons/ Spratt, 2011 p.16f.).

⁷⁰ There have been some efforts lately to prevent DTOs from using the media for their propagandistic purposes. At the beginning of the year, Mexican media outlets agreed to set guidelines for reporting on organized crime to prevent DTOs using them for their propagandistic purposes. It is even reported that the Mexican Senate is thinking to make this agreement into law (Stone, 2011).

⁷¹ Los Zetas even attacked a member of the internationally known online hacker group called “Anonymous” on October 6, 2011. The group, however, didn’t let it cave in and declared a “cyber-war” against Los Zetas by menacing to publicize the identities of Zeta Cartel’s members and those supporting them if their member would be not released (Schiller, 2011; Justice in Mexico Project, 2011a; Borderland Beat, 2011e). Los Zetas allegedly backed down and released the victim from captivity (Justice in Mexico Project, 2011b). If this is true this would support the assumption that delivering delicate information about DTOs is their biggest sore point.

The calculated use of instrumental and symbolic violence shows that violence is not only about the physical elimination of a person, *“drug killings are meant to intimidate rivals, law enforcement, government officials, and the public through richly choreographed rituals of brutality with specific symbolic meanings”* (Campbell, 2009, p. 27). They are also meant to spread fear, foster the perception of strength and make people believe that they are the “winning party”.⁷² This in turn helps them to prevent denunciations and demonstrates the government’s inability to provide security (Logan & Sullivan, 2009; see Kalyvas, 2006, p. 127f.).

5.2.3.2 Violence & collaboration

The “power to kill” of Mexican DTOs is well-known and helps them to obtain collaboration of the civilian population. This collaboration does not necessarily take the form of active collaboration. I assume that most civilians collaborate passively by not denouncing DTO members to the Mexican government (see 5.2.2; Kalyvas, 2006, p. 104). Many civilians know, for instance, who the drug traffickers are, but they do not denounce them. *“I know who’s from La Familia in my town,”* says Juan Carlos Campos, who heads the public-security committee of the Michoacán legislature. *“I see them in their cars. But I don’t report them, because they’d kill me”* (The Economist, 2009, July 23). Fabiola Alanis, head of the Democratic Revolution Party in Michoacán, supports this view: *“If we know or hear that a candidate is mixed up with narcos, we are not going to denounce it. (...) It is not my job. It would put my candidates in danger. There is nothing to guarantee that they would wake up alive”* (Wilkinson, 2009b).

There are presumably also many cases in which state officials have been corrupted and were primarily driven by greed. I assume, however, that most Mexicans are not sympathetic towards the DTO(s). But in the light of a general mistrust in Mexico’s justice sector, they prefer to turn a blind eye to the DTO’s activities as they are primarily interested in their own survival. Even when they are affected by crime themselves, they prefer not to go to the police. My friend Lourdes told me that her father was once kidnapped by armed men. He never went to the police afterwards, nor told his family about what had happened. The only thing he said was that he had never thought that he would come back alive. This seems to be typical behavior for kidnapped victims. According to a recent study by a risk-consulting firm, about ninety six per cent of kidnappings remain unreported. *“It is a matter, people believe, best handled privately, as the kidnappers prefer. The police might be involved on the other side”* (Finnegan, 2010, p. 9f.).

⁷² According to Finnegan (2010), the Mexican public believes that the Mexican government is losing the war against the DTOs. About 59 % assume that the DTOs were winning; whereas only 21 % believed in the government.

In sum, Kalyvas' proposition that violence serves as *"key instrument for establishing and maintaining control – and thus for generating collaboration and deterring defection"* (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 141) is also valid for the Mexican case. I assume that most Mexicans are not sympathetic towards the DTO(s), but as they are mainly interested in their own survival and as they believe that the Mexican government cannot protect them from retaliation, they are forced to collaborate with the DTOs; if not actively, at least passively by not denouncing them to the Mexican government.

5.3 Selective versus indiscriminate violence

Kalyvas (2006, 2008) distinguishes between two types of civil war violence: selective violence and indiscriminate violence. Selective violence entails "personalized targeting" and is based on specific information about individuals' behavior, whereas indiscriminate violence means that individuals are targeted on the base of their group affiliation (e.g. family, village, etc.) regardless of their actions or preferences. Kalyvas argues that the use of indiscriminate violence is counterproductive which leads political actors to shift towards selective violence within the process of war. Kalyvas therefore derives the following proposition and hypothesis:

Proposition 5: *"Indiscriminate violence is counterproductive in civil war"*

Hypothesis 1: *"Political actors are likely to gradually move from indiscriminate to selective violence" (see 3.5.1)*

In the following it will be tested whether this is true for the Mexican DTOs or not.

5.3.1 Selective violence

Research on organized crime and illicit markets supports the assumption that *"violence in illicit markets is typically selective and instrumental rather than random and gratuitous"* (Andreas & Wallman, 2009, p. 227; q.v. Friman, 2009; Snyder & Duran-Martinez, 2009). This also seems to be true for the Mexican case. First, as the aforementioned analysis has shown, drug-related violence is temporally, as well as geographically concentrated in strategically important key trafficking corridors (such as border towns, sea ports, etc.) (cf. Ríos, 2011). Second, by looking at the targeted victims most of the killings seem to have selective character (see Section 4.2.2).⁷³ Third, the "stylized killings" make clear that they do not only aim at eliminating an "enemy". Drug-related violence also aims at sending a message to a broader audience (see Section 5.2.3). It

⁷³ First, about 90 % of drug-related violence can be attributed to disputes among drug traffickers themselves. Hence, the persons killed have made themselves guilty by the mere fact of being part of the rival DTO. Second, military and police forces, state officials, and journalists, amongst others are another common target group when they endanger the DTO's criminal activities. Third, many killings are accompanied by a narco-message that legitimize why the person has been killed.

seems that the Mexican DTOs have even created their own semiotics in respect to the way the narco-killings are carried out. Campbell (2009, p. 28) has collected some of them: *“Traitors are shot in the neck, philanderers are castrated, spies are shot in the ear, and people who talk too much are shot in the mouth. A body found with one or more fingers cut off then placed in the victim’s mouth, or with the tongue cut off, is considered to be a message that the victim was a police informer (a dedo, or finger)”* (q.v. Reuter, 2009, p. 279)

5.3.2 Indiscriminate violence

The escalation of drug-related violence in recent years, the brutal tactics of beheadings and dismemberments or the discovery of mass graves, however, have led some commentators to believe that violence is becoming increasingly indiscriminate. As the circumstances of most killings remain unclear and as DTOs often put much effort to give the impression of targeting selective, it is often difficult to distinguish between both types. Some cases of indiscriminate violence, however, cannot be denied.

The first prominent incidence of large-scale indiscriminate violence occurred on September 15, 2008, when grenades were thrown into a crowd in Morelia celebrating Independence Day. Eight people were killed and more than 100 injured (Stratfor, 2008). According to Kalyvas’ hypothesis this incidence should have turned out to be counterproductive. And indeed it was. A large public condemnation followed the attacks. In particular La Familia, the DTO that primarily operated in Michoacán at that time, was suspected to be responsible. In the following, La Familia, but also other DTOs immediately distanced themselves from the attack. They publicly announced their “innocence” via large public banners, and blamed the rival DTO for being responsible for having killed “innocent civilians”. La Familia’s banner claimed: *“The suffering of the Michoacán people grips us. No more crimes against innocent people. The Zetas will pay for their acts of terrorism. Sincerely, F.M.”* (Grayson, 2010b, p. 44). Los Zetas replied *“we are no brothers of charity but we are neither jackals nor crazy assassins without reason”*. Another one said, *“we know how to use weapons, for this we have been trained and for the same reason we don’t use it against peaceful civilians”* (Castillo, 2008, September 24). The Sinaloa DTO also took the change and made both los Zetas and La Familia responsible for the crime. On their banners and e-mail communiqués they claimed: *“we have never killed innocent people, much less in public events (...) Sinaloans have always defended the people, we have respected the families of capos and small drug couriers, we have respected the government, [and] we have respected women and children”* (Grayson, 2010b, p.45). The different DTOs even claimed to undertake own investigations and

offered rewards for the arrest of the responsible people (Beittel, 2009, May 27; Williams, 2009a; Carpenter, 2010).

There have been several other incidents of indiscriminate violence, such as the birthday party massacre in Ciudad Juárez in January 2009 or another one in the city of Torreón in July 2010. In both massacres several of the victims were identified as teenagers (Tuckman, 2010, October 24; Malkin, 2010, July 18; Torres, 2010, October 23). Drug rehabilitation centers have become another popular target of the DTOs. It is assumed that these clinics often serve as recruitment centers for the DTOs and that the massacres were retaliatory acts by rival drug cartels.⁷⁴ Furthermore, there are numerous cases of mass kidnappings or discoveries of mass graves, so-called “narcofosas”, such as the discovery of 72 executed migrants in the state of Tamaulipas or the 89 bodies found in a vacant auto repair lot in Durango (Hernandez, 2010, October 28; Banderas, 2011). The latest large-scale incidence of indiscriminate violence occurred in August 2011 when several gunmen attacked a casino in Monterrey and set a fire that trapped gamblers inside. According to the Mexican authorities, 53 people were killed and several more injured (El Universal, 2011b; The Guardian, 2011; Booth & Miroff, 2011).⁷⁵

It can be assumed that los Zetas have been responsible for most of these attacks which partly explains why they are considered to be one of the most brutal and ruthless DTOs (CNN, 2009, August 06; The Washington Times, 2011, April 19). Their profile and modus operandi support this assumption. They are well-known for employing terror tactics and spreading fear among the civilian populace. According to Grayson (in: Seper, 2011), los Zetas “*enjoy killing - they want to terrorize communities*”, and are eager to obtain the reputation of being “*the most sadistic, cruel and beastly organization that ever existed*”.⁷⁶ Los Zetas even use their terror techniques abroad. In 2009, the president of Guatemala has received death threats from them (Logan, 2009; Stratfor, 2009) and in May 2011, los Zetas slaughtered about 27 farm laborers in the Peten region (Guatemala) (Pachico, 2011).

⁷⁴ The massacre of a rehab center in Tijuana in October 2009 could also be linked to a drug bust of 135 tons of marijuana a few days before. Shortly after the attack, a voice announced via a police radio that 135 people would be killed in Tijuana which prosecutors assumed to be linked with the drug seizure (Fox News Latino (2010, October 28).

⁷⁵ It is assumed that Los Zetas have been responsible for this massacre. The reasons remain unclear. The discovery of a video and series of photographs depicting how the brother of Monterrey’s mayor receives bundles of cash at a casino several days before the massacre have led the Washington Post to assume that the massacre might be a retaliatory act linked to old, familiar networks of corruption (Booth & Miroff, 2011).

⁷⁶ According to a former Zeta-member, Los Zetas allegedly started a new gladiator-like sport in order to recruit new members and to amuse themselves. After kidnapping bus passengers on a highway, they allegedly force them to fight against each other. Those who survive have the chance to become new members of the group. However, it remains unsure whether this is true or just a rumor that either supports their reputation of being one of the most brutal and ruthless DTOs or that legitimizes the course of action of the Mexican government to fight against Los Zetas.

Los Zetas can also be considered as the first DTO that shifted to other criminal activities, such as kidnapping, extortion and human trafficking, all activities in which violence is inherent and automatically indiscriminate (Williams, 2009, p. 324). Many other DTOs followed suit (e.g. La Familia). Interestingly, los Zetas never denied to be involved in these kinds of activities, whereas other DTOs give much effort to claim not to be involved in them. La Familia, for instance, frequently claims that their presumably goal is to safeguard order, stop robberies, kidnappings, extortion and protect the state from rival organizations (Grayson, 2010a, p. 212)

According to Kalyvas, indiscriminate violence also includes the killing of a person because of his/her association (in particular family ties). This type of killing also seems to be widespread. Examples include the killing of the husband of the Tiquicheo mayor in Michoacán (see 4.2.2) or the assassination of various family members of the fallen marine, Melquisedet Angulo, who was involved in the attack on Arturo Beltrán Leyva in 2009 and was declared a national hero afterwards (The Guardian, 2009, 23 December). Drug traffickers' families are particularly in danger. La Familia Michoacana, for instance, keeps an account on the names and location of their group members' families to retaliate any case of defection or betrayal (Grayson, 2010a). Leaders of a DTO are not excluded from this practice. The killing of the brother of Vicente Carrillo Fuentes, the head of the Juárez DTO, in 2004 is such an example. It is said that Gúzman Loera, the leader of the Sinaloa DTO, had ordered the assassination. In the following, Vicente assassinated Gúzman's brother. Both killings sparked off a turf war in Ciudad Juárez since then. A further example is the killing of Guzmán's son by the Beltrán Leyva brothers which can be considered as a retaliatory act for the capture of their brother Alfredo (they suspected Gúzman for having delivered information to the Mexican government (Grayson, 2010a).⁷⁷

Kalyvas' claim that the use of indiscriminate violence turns out to be counterproductive can only partly be confirmed by looking at the Mexican case. It can be observed that most DTOs (except for los Zetas) try to avoid the killing of "innocent" people that are not directly or indirectly involved in drug trafficking. They also give much effort in legitimizing the killings of those they have killed by attaching narco-banners in which they publish the victim's "crime". It seems that most DTOs have realized the counterproductive effect of indiscriminate violence because it only *"attracts unnecessary attention from law enforcement agencies"*, and/or provokes retaliatory acts from rival DTOs (Longmire, 2009, September 7). The use of indiscriminate violence might also encourage civilians to give increased evidence to the police as they are threatened with

⁷⁷ These cases also reveal that the killing of family members of DTO leaders bears an emotional quality which produces hostilities and a desire for retaliation that can take years and no matter what the price is (Williams, 2009, p. 327).

death no matter what they do.⁷⁸ Most DTOs therefore deny any involvement in acts of indiscriminate violence by blaming the rival DTO for having committed them.

But is the use of indiscriminate violence really that counterproductive? Los Zetas have suffered many setbacks. Most of their original members have been captured and also many of the new ones. But it seems that Los Zetas do not really care about their members. They are replaceable. And if they do not find willing members, they force some to join them (e.g. migrants or poor Mexicans (Msnbc.com, 2010, August 26; Olmos, 2011)). The organization itself, however, seems to profit from their violent reputation. Los Zetas are considered to be one of the most powerful DTOs and their operating model has enabled them to spread geographically within a very short time period (Gutiérrez, 2011), or as Logan (2009) accurately puts it: *“These guys are everywhere”*.

But why have los Zetas been that successful, even though they often rely on indiscriminate violence? I argue that this does not contradict Kalyvas’ hypothesis. I assume that corruption in all branches of the central government have undermined its capability to protect the civilian population from retaliatory acts. As Kalyvas argues, a group can only be indifferent about what type of violence is used when the other one is incapable of protecting the civilians.

In sum, Mexican DTOs use both types of violence, though selective violence seems to be the predominant type of violence used by the different DTOs in Mexico. It can even be assumed that this type of violence is much more common than in civil wars where selective violence accounts for only half of the homicides in Kalyvas’s dataset (Kalyvas, 2008). Most DTOs (with the exception of los Zetas) seem to be aware of the counterproductive effects of indiscriminate violence and try hard to deny any involvement in it. Kalyvas’ hypothesis, however, that the counterproductive effect leads DTOs to shift to more selective violence within the process of the conflict does not conform to the empirical reality. It rather seems that indiscriminate violence has become more common than in previous years.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ It is, however, difficult to find evidences that confirm this assumption. Furthermore civilians are only likely to denounce if they believe that the Mexican government is able to protect them from retaliatory acts. As already mentioned in 2.3.2, many Mexicans lack confidence in the Government’s institutions and its capability to fight against the DTOs due to high levels of corruption.

⁷⁹ It has to be emphasized that this thesis concentrates on violence related to drug trafficking. Many DTOs have increasingly shifted to other criminal activities, such as kidnapping for ransom, extortion, human trafficking, and therewith all activities that are automatically indiscriminate (Williams, 2009, p. 324).

5.5 Measuring control

Kalyvas' theory predicts variation in the level of violence by the degree of territorial control that the political actors have over an area. The different level of territorial control is likely to determine the extent of collaboration and can be considered as the main explanatory variable in Kalyvas' theory (Kalyvas, 2008a, p. 450). A way to define and measure control empirically is to use Kalyvas five-zone indicator ranging from 1 (full incumbent control) to 5 (full insurgent control).

The measurement of control demands a thorough engagement with cases, as well as a careful and detailed collection of fine-grained data and can be considered as *"the most significant empirical challenge"* (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 210). The measurement of territorial control on the case of Michoacán turned out to be difficult indeed; in some cases impossible. The reason is that data is usually lacking or incomplete (for example for certain areas or periods there is no news coverage; it is not known which group operates in a municipality; the background of the killing remains unclear (e.g. the identity of the victim, the perpetrator, or the content of the "narcomensaje"), etc.). Despite these limitations, I will try to measure territorial control by focusing on the case of Michoacán in 2009. Like in the previous chapter, I will first present the main hypotheses concerning the particular control zone and test if they are valid on the case of Michoacán.

5.4.1 Total incumbent control & total insurgent control (zone 1 & 5)

According to Kalyvas, zones of full control are characterized by the fact that the civilian population has only access to one actor. As the level of collaboration and defection is highly endogenous to the level of control, these zones are characterized by relatively low levels of violence. If violence is used by the group who has the local monopoly on violence, it is to punish rival group members and/or noncompliance, whereas violence used by the rival group is likely to be indiscriminate (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 219-223).

Kalyvas' main hypotheses concerning areas of full control are therefore:

Hypothesis 2: *"The higher the level of an actor's control, the less likely it is that this actor will resort to violence, selective or indiscriminate. Therefore, no incumbent violence is likely in zone 1 and no insurgent violence is likely in zone 5" (see Section 3.6).*

Hypothesis 3: *"The lower the level of an actor's control, the less likely that this actor will resort to selective violence and the more likely that its violence, if any, will be indiscriminate. Therefore, insurgent violence in zones 1 and 2, if any, is likely be*

indiscriminate and incumbent violence in zones 4 and 5, if any, is likely be indiscriminate”

(Ibid).

On the base of my sources it is unfortunately not possible to reconstruct which municipalities in Michoacán might have been areas of full incumbent control (zone 1) in 2009. Or, to put it differently, in which municipalities there has been no DTO presence at all and/or where the government has been able to prevent DTOs from *“entering or operating with any effectiveness”* - a key criteria for zones of full control (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 211). Considering the fact that La Familia did successfully infiltrate almost all levels of the government as well as the economic sphere within Michoacán, and is believed to control and operate in at least 77 of the 133 municipalities (Grayson, 2010a), I assume that there are only very few municipalities – if any at all - in which the Mexican state exerts full control.⁸⁰

The same can be said about zones of full insurgent control (zone 5). According to Kalyvas (2006, p. 224ff.), an indicator for full control is the ability of insurgents to engage in statelike activities, e.g. the ability to collect taxes, organize policing, administer justice, and conscript combatants. There is evidence suggesting that La Familia engages in these kinds of activities. The DTO is known for collecting taxes and offering “protection” to civilians and businesses (e.g. merchants, street vendors, loggers, hotel owners, local gangs, and small-scale drug sellers) via racketeering.⁸¹ It is also documented that La Familia has successfully organized policing and administered justice (see Section 5.1).⁸² La Familia’s ability to “keep order” is also well-known and appreciated. *“I have a number I can call”,* said a woman from Morelia proudly. *“It’s not El Chayo, but it’s his people (...). If I have a problem, somebody threatening me, somebody trying to steal my car, I just call, and they send a police officer, a woman. The police work for them”* (Finnegan, 2010, p. 4). Once, a man wanted to betray her over a piece of land. She called La Familia who cleared up the matter. He paid and didn’t make further troubles.

This case also reveals that the relationship between DTOs and state officials cannot be compared with the one that exists between incumbents and insurgents in a classical sense. This is one of

⁸⁰ Wilkinson (2009a) believes that *“[a]t least 83 of Michoacán’s 113 municipalities are mixed up on some level with the narcos.”* The federal Attorney General’s Office, or PGR, even claimed that La Familia has “relations,” or links, with civil servants in almost all of the state’s 113 municipalities. About 40 % of all economic activity (Shirk, 2011, p. 7) and 85 % of legitimate businesses are involved in some manner with La Familia (Grayson, 2010b; Finnegan, 2010). Furthermore, these figures do not cover municipalities controlled by another DTO. Hence, I assume that actually many more municipalities are (partly) controlled by a DTO.

⁸¹ José Infante, a hotel owner and president of the local hotel association in Apatzingán, tells that hotel owners have to pay a monthly “protection” fee to La Familia (Grayson, 2010b). Some business owners are even taxed weekly (Longmire, 2011a). El Universal (2009) even knows some prices. Street vendors have to pay 100 pesos a month, a concessionaire of automobiles or a firm providing materials for construction pay 30.000 pesos. Anyone who refuses to pay gets beaten. “Recidivists” even risk their life.

⁸² In late January 2010, various newspaper articles reported, for instance, that La Familia had caught six presumed criminals in Zamora. After torturing them, they forced them to walk through the streets of Zamora, wearing signs reading: *“Keep an eye out you rats, we are coming for you, sincerely La Familia,” “I am a rat and La Familia is punishing me,”* or *“This is for all delinquents, La Familia is here citizens, don’t judge us, we are cleaning your city”* (Grayson, 2010b, p. 74).

the peculiarities of the Mexican case. Even though DTOs engage in many statelike activities, this does not necessarily mean that the Mexican government has lost control over parts of its territory as various U.S. analysts have claimed (Friedman, 2008). As long as the Mexican state does not intervene in DTOs' business, both are not necessarily enemies. The DTOs rather prefer to work under the state's radar or to cooperate with them. A specific feature of DTOs might explain this particularity. In contrast to insurgents, DTOs are primarily driven by economic, not political or ideological motives. It is about money and power. This does not exclude political involvement, but the motivation behind is to obtain protection or immunity for their criminal business (Abandsky, 2010, p. 3). Furthermore, the line between state officials and DTOs is often blurred as many state officials play a double game (see Section 4.2.2).⁸³ It was therefore not possible to reconstruct which municipalities in Michoacán might have been areas of full incumbent or insurgent control (zone 1 and 5) in 2009.

It might be therefore more adequate to use Kalyvas' five-zone indicator to measure the level of control among the different DTOs themselves. Looking at Figure 10 (in Section 4.2.1.5) that depicts the geographic distribution of the total number of homicides at the municipality level in 2009 as well as the documented DTO presence, it can be observed that in many "peaceful" municipalities only one DTO is documented. It has to be admitted, however, that there are also several municipalities that are (almost) not affected by violence, but in which more than one DTO is present or municipalities that are affected by violence and in which only DTO is present. But as already explained in Section 4.2.1.5, it was not possible to reconstruct the complete DTO presence with the data I was drawing on and blank fields do not necessarily mean that there is no DTO presence. Furthermore, I could only depict the total number of homicides, not the one of drug-related violence. With other databases the results might have been different. Hence, the results might be distorted. Nonetheless, I believe that there is some astonishing agreement with Kalyvas' hypothesis. I counted about 16 municipalities that were affected by relatively low levels of violence in 2009 (with 0-14 homicides) and in which the presence of only one DTO was documented. In only four cases a single DTO was present in a more violent municipality (with 15-34 homicides), but never in the most violent one (with 35-121 homicides).

⁸³ The arrest of 27 high-ranking officials by Mexican authorities on May 27, 2009, for their alleged links with La Familia confirmed this assumption. Among them were 10 mayors and a judge. Michoacán's Governor, Leonel Godoy Rangel, was not even informed of the operation before it was carried out (Esmas.com, McDonald, 2009). Michoacán's Governor himself is said to have a close family member who is tied with La Familia. His half-brother, Julio César Godoy Toscano, a deputy-elect to Congress, has been accused for having protected La Familia in Lázaro Cárdenas, Arteaga, and Nueva Italia (Rocío, 2009; Grayson, 2009c; McDonald, 2009). Grayson (2009c) therefore argues that La Familia successfully established what the late historian Crane Brinton (1965) referred to as "dual sovereignty", namely a narco-administration that stands parallel to the elected government and collect taxes, keeps order, offers employment and provides social services.

5.4.2 Dominant incumbent control & dominant insurgent control (zone 2 & 4)

In zones of fragmented or incomplete control (zone 2 + 4) the population has access to both rival groups. In zone 2 the incumbents have dominant, but incomplete control, whereas in zone 4 it is the other way around (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 212). Kalyvas assumes that selective violence is most likely to be used in these “contested” areas because the incentives of both civilians and political actors converge. Most people would like to stay out of the conflict. Neutrality, however, gets increasingly difficult and is punished as “*passive collaboration with the enemy*” (Ibid, p. 233).

The hypotheses concerning areas of fragmented control are:

Hypothesis 4: “Under fragmented control, violence will be exercised primarily by the political actor enjoying an advantage in terms of control: incumbents in zone 2 and insurgents in zone 4” (see Section 3.6).

Hypothesis 3: “The lower the level of an actor’s control, the less likely that this actor will resort to selective violence and the more likely that its violence, if any, will be indiscriminate. Therefore, insurgent violence in zones 1 and 2, if any, is likely be indiscriminate and incumbent violence in zones 4 and 5, if any, is likely be indiscriminate” (Ibid).

Like with zone 1, it is very difficult to find empirical evidences due to the lack of data that allows the measurement of control. According to Kalyvas, incumbents usually control cities, accessible terrain in general and areas close to a military base. In Michoacán these would be cities like Morelia, Lázaro Cárdenas, Uruapan or Apatzingán where the military is stationed. And indeed these areas are also the ones where the Mexican government could score the most important blows against organized crime and arrest or kill DTO members (Grayson, 2010b, p. 105-110).

Interestingly, the capture of “La Minsa”, one of La Familia’s top bosses, on July 11th 2009, which can be interpreted as an act of selective targeting, was answered by selective violence of the other side. His arrest sparked off a series of retaliatory attacks against the Federal Police and the military which highlighted in the execution of 12 members of the Federal Police. How is it possible that the government’s success was responded with selective violence by La Familia itself? Does this contradict Kalyvas’ hypothesis? I argue that not. Whereas the Mexican government is dependent on information to target selectively (because the difference between DTO members and civilians is usually blurred), DTOs do not necessarily need information because it is relatively easy for DTOs to detect state officials and members of the military or police forces. Furthermore, it can be contested if the killing of members of the Federal Police was selective

violence at all. These men have been killed because of their association with the Federal Police, not because they have been involved in the capture of “La Minsa” themselves. Hence, I argue that the DTOs have a strategic advantage that allows them to target selectively even without obtaining information.

In zone 4 it is the other way around, namely that DTOs have dominant, but incomplete control. Hence, selective violence is likely to be used by the DTO, whereas the rival group is likely to use indiscriminate violence due to the lack of information. Neutrality, or as Kalyvas (2006, p. 232) puts it “fence-sitting and hedging”, get increasingly difficult. Looking at the case of Michoacán (and the precedent analysis) there are strong indicators confirming the hypotheses. First, DTOs seem to be present in almost all municipalities and have taken control by establishing a narco-administration that stands parallel to the elected government (Grayson, 2009c; see Section 5.1 and 5.4.1); and second, the use of selective violence is very common. Even though the circumstances of the killings often remain unclear, the attachment of narco-mensajes next to the dead bodies or the fact that Michoacán is one of the states where the killing of high state officials is most concentrated reveal that drug-related violence is often selective (see Section 4.2.2 and 5.3.1).⁸⁴ The municipality of Parakata has been the most illuminating example that illustrated how difficult it got for many people to remain neutral. Examples for the use of indiscriminate violence could not be found.

Concerning the balance of power between the different DTOs themselves, there is only little information available. Esmas.com (2009) reports two violent confrontations: one in Morelia between La Familia and Los Zetas on June 10th 2009, and another one in Uruapan between two criminal groups on December 14th 2009.⁸⁵ Many more aggressions and confrontations have been reported, but the background information is usually missing. Esmas.com also reports various executions in which narco-mensajes have been left, but in only two cases they could reveal the victims’ and the perpetrators’ identity. On April 1st 2009, the body of the former mayor of Lázaro Cárdenas was left on a highway. Next to him was a message directed at los Zetas indicating that he had supported them. On June 30th, four corpses were found in a car in Apatzingán with a message from la Familia directed at los Zetas.

⁸⁴ In 2009 alone, about 14 high state officials (mayors, ex-mayors and deputy mayors) have been killed. Members of the police and military forces were another popular target group (see Figure 12). Many state officials therefore resigned after receiving death threats from La Familia (e.g. the mayor and several other state officials of Tancítaro in December 2009 or the 200 local policemen in Uruapan in March 2009).

⁸⁵ The newspaper articles, for instance, often do not mention who was involved. Furthermore, there have been many more confrontations than actually covered by Esmas.com. I assume this because the database of the Government of Mexico (2010) lists many more aggressions and confrontations than reported by Esmas.com (see Section 4.2.1.5).

A look at the map of Figure 10 (in Section 4.2.1.5) has been more illuminating. It can be observed that the eight most violent municipalities (Morelia, Apatzingán, Lázaro Cárdenas, Uruapan, La Huacana, Tacámbaro, Zitácuaro and Zamora (with 35-121 homicides in 2009)) are the ones in which at least two DTOs (in most cases La Familia and Los Zetas) are present. In seven cases, however, two DTOs are present in less violent municipalities (0-7 homicides). Nonetheless, the case of Parakata has shown that a shift in control from one DTO to the other can go very quickly and does not necessarily produce a lot of violence. Purakata, for instance, appears as a white spot and might create the outward impression that this municipality has neither been infiltrated by DTO(s) nor been affected by violence.

In sum, I believe that Kalyvas' five-zone indicator is more adequate to measure control between the different DTOs themselves. There is evidence that zone 2 and 4 are most prevalent and Kalyvas' hypothesis seems to be confirmed that these areas are particularly affected by selective violence. I further assume that the high levels of violence in Morelia and other municipalities might be explained with frequent control shifts (from zone 2 to 4 and the other way around) that have been caused by the military intervention. This link, however, has to be further tested.

5.4.3 Contested control (zone 3)

In zone 3 incumbents and insurgents equally share sovereignty. As a result, the civilian population is insecure which side to support as the balance of power is likely to shift. They prefer not to denounce at all because the risk of retaliation is high. Kalyvas therefore believes that these zones are characterized by low levels of violence in which neither selective nor indiscriminate violence is likely to be used by either side (see Section 3.6). Kalyvas therefore formulated the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: *“Parity of control between the actors (zone 3) is likely to produce no selective violence by any of the actors” (Ibid).*

Kalyvas (2006, p. 236) admits that it is extremely difficult to find empirical evidences that distinguish between areas of dominant (zones 2 and 4) and even control (zone 3) because the descriptive literature usually fails to differentiate between both types, and indeed it was.

I couldn't find any evidence in my data for the year 2009 that allowed such a measurement.

Hence, it was not possible to confirm or disprove the correctness of this hypothesis. And even if I had found some, it would have been difficult to distinguish whether this “ceasefire” is a result of Kalyvas' predictions or of the mere fact that the state officials are corrupted and hand in glove with the DTOs.

According to Figure 10, there are about 8 municipalities in which more than 2 DTOs are present and that are relatively violence-free. Might this indicate the correctness of Kalyvas' hypothesis? Without further hypothesis testing and data collection, this question can hardly be answered. Nonetheless, I assume that Kalyvas' hypothesis that zones of parity turn out to be "oases of peace" does not confirm with the empirical reality. It rather seems that DTOs are particularly reliant on the use of violence if it is unclear which of the DTOs is winning.

An interview conducted by the Mexican professor Rossana Reguillo (2011) with a 16-year old child soldier, called Beto, in 2007, has led me to this conclusion. Beto, who works for La Familia in the municipality of Turicato, told that *"the town just isn't a livable place anymore (...) It's a big mess (...) It got really hot over there. People killed from one day to the next. The other side killed one of our guys to send a message, and we had to return the favor. Lots of action, but it wasn't clear who won. The bosses were all nervous and ready to kill anyone over anything."* And they did. Beto told Reguillo about his first killing and how they dismembered the bodies to send a "gift" to the rival DTO leaders [los Zetas and the Sinaloa DTO]. For the DTOs operating in Turicato it seemed to be about all or nothing. La Familia, for instance, didn't rethink their strategy, even though they knew that they were not as well equipped as the rival DTOs (Reguillo, 2011). Hence, I assume that if a DTO still relies on violence even though it knows that it is inferior to the other DTO in terms of military equipment, it is even more likely that it would rely on violence if it were equally equipped.

Even though there are no further empirical evidences, I could imagine that this is a typical *modus operandi* to rely on violence no matter what the price is. First, DTO leaders often consider their members as "replaceable"; and second, many men are willing to risk their life as their livelihood depends on this conflict. I therefore doubt that Kalyvas' hypothesis about zones 3 to be "oases of peace" are valid in the context of organized crime.

6. Conclusion

The escalating levels of drug-related violence and the challenges Mexico is facing are indeed very serious. Yet, apocalyptic statements such as that Mexico is becoming a failed state or is turning into a civil war have not helped much to evaluate the situation adequately. On the contrary, they have supported the belief that organized crime and violence are inherently linked with one-another, meaning if when there is organized crime there needs to be violence. The fact, that organized crime in Mexico is long-standing and has never been as violent as since 2006 reveals that this link has to be rethought. Actually, such an interpretation comes short a number of important facts: not all Mexican states are equally affected by violence. In 2010 for instance, 84 % of all drug-related killings were concentrated in only four of the 32 Mexican states, namely in Chihuahua, Sinaloa, Guerrero and Baja California, whereas Baja California Sur, Yucatán or Campeche remained largely unaffected. It also oversees important differences in drug-related violence within the Mexican states themselves. It can be observed that there are many municipalities struck by violence, while their neighboring ones are violence-free. The question is how to explain the unequal distribution of violence? Moreover, for which reasons did drug-related violence escalate since 2006 with every year outstripping the previous one in terms of intensity, scope and atrocity?

The aim of this thesis was to explain the differences in drug-related violence across time and space. From my point of view, Kalyvas' theory of selective violence is the most promising approach to explain these variances. Kalyvas' theory predicts differences in the level of violence by the degree of territorial control that the political actors have over an area. The different level of territorial control is likely to determine the extent of collaboration and defection which, in turn, decides whether an actor can resort to selective or to indiscriminate violence. The simple reason is that "political" actors can only target selectively when they have information whom to target. This information is primarily delivered by civilians. Kalyvas considers selective violence as a "joint process" produced by both political actors and civilians and is unlikely to happen where only one actor wants it most. Combining both logics yields that selective violence is most likely to be employed in zone 2 and 4 by the dominant political actor while areas of full control and those of complete contestation are surprisingly peaceful. Indiscriminate violence, on the contrary, is likely to be used by the political actor that lacks control and therewith has no access to

information. Kalyvas claims that indiscriminate violence often turns out to be counterproductive which leads political actors to gradually move from indiscriminate to selective violence.

6.1 Constraints

Before presenting the results of my analysis, it is important to mention that I identified several factors that complicate the use of Kalyvas theoretical model and therefore might have distorted the results. First, Kalyvas call for disaggregated data was sometimes difficult to meet. Data is often lacking or is incomplete, in some cases even contradictory. Even though I tried to compensate the lack of data by using triangulation and by critically analyzing the data, I cannot exclude distorted results. Second, as Kalyvas has pointed out it is important to look at the warfare used. The Mexican “conflict” seems to be a mixture of irregular and conventional warfare. The DTOs often rely – as guerillas do - on ambush and raids and hide among the civilian population. Uncertainty and fear rule in these areas because of the constant presence of the enemy behind one’s back. Furthermore, there are no clear frontlines. The armed confrontations between the DTOs and the Mexican military on the one hand, and between the DTOs themselves on the other also resemble to some degree what Kalyvas calls conventional warfare. DTOs are equal, if not superior to the Mexican military in terms of their military strength which enables them to use heavy weaponry and face their rival - the Mexican military or other DTOs - directly in the field. Still though, I argue that irregular warfare is the most dominant type. In particular by looking at the violence used – a key feature that distinguishes irregular wars from conventional ones - it gets clear that violence is mainly used to terrorize the population and shape its behavior (Kalyvas, 2005, p. 97). Third, there is not only one conflict between two warring factions (the Mexican government and a DTO), but various other conflicts among the different DTOs themselves. The constantly shifting and temporal alliances of DTOs and the evolvement of new groups resulted in an extremely confusing and fuzzy picture. Even by focusing on a particular region, I assume that at least 3 main groups remain: two DTOs and the Mexican state. Fourth, the relationship between DTOs and state officials cannot be compared with the one that exists between incumbents and insurgents in a classical sense. Organized crime groups have another internal logic. They are driven by economic, not political or ideological motives. Hence, as long as the Mexican state does not endanger their activities, both are not necessarily enemies. The DTOs rather prefer to work under the government’s radar or to cooperate with them. Furthermore, many state officials play a double game by merging with the DTOs. As a consequence, it turned out to be very difficult to measure control between DTOs and the Mexican government. The

application of Kalyvas' five-zone indicator to measure the level of control among the different DTOs themselves turned out to produce more reliable results.

6.2 Contribution of the research

Although only a plausibility probe, the case of Mexico between 2006 and 2011 and of Michoacán in 2009 in particular, provides strong evidence that Kalyvas' theoretical model can even be applied on this case and therewith on a case that is completely distinct from the logic of a civil war.

After testing the main propositions and hypotheses on the case of Mexico and Michoacán in particular, I came to the following conclusions: First, civilian support matters indeed, and the Mexican DTOs as well as the Mexican government seem to be aware of this fact. In particular la Familia has been eager to obtain the support of the civilian populace by engaging, for instance, in statelike activities (e.g. providing security, social services and community development). This has helped La Familia to establish and maintain social control and to prevent rival DTOs from entering the municipality. Second, Kalyvas proposition that violence plays a key role in obtaining control and collaboration is also valid for the Mexican case. I assume that most Mexicans are not sympathetic towards the DTO(s). Their main priority, however, is their own survival. Furthermore, they mistrust the Mexican government either because they believe that they are incapable to protect them from retaliation or because they suspect them to be in league with the DTOs. As a consequence, those civilians that are living in an area that is primarily dominated by a DTO are often forced to collaborate with them. This collaboration is not necessarily active. I assume that it is passive in most case by letting things happen and not denouncing DTO members or their activities to the Mexican government. Third, Mexican DTOs use both types of violence, though selective violence seems to be the predominant type of violence used by the different DTOs in Mexico. It can even be assumed that this type of violence is much more common than in civil wars where selective violence accounts for only half of the homicides in Kalyvas's dataset (Kalyvas, 2008). The analysis has further shown that most DTOs seem to be aware of the counterproductive effect of indiscriminate violence. Most DTOs therefore deny any involvement in it and blame the rival DTO for having committed it. Los Zetas are an exception. However, I believe that they could only be indifferent about what type of violence they used because the Mexican population did not believe that the Mexican government is capable of protecting them. Kalyvas hypothesis, however, that the counterproductive effect of indiscriminate violence leads DTOs to shift to more selective violence within the process of the conflict does not seem to

conform to the empirical reality. It rather seems that indiscriminate violence has become more common in previous years.

The measurement of territorial control on the case of Michoacán turned out to be difficult; in some cases impossible. Furthermore, there was only little empirical evidence. It was therefore not possible to make rigorous hypotheses testing. Despite these limitations I argue that there is evidence supporting most of Kalyvas hypotheses. First, Kalyvas' hypothesis that violence is rarely used in zone 1 and zone 5, and therewith in areas of complete control, seem to match with those empirical evidences I could find. This, however, only applies for the balance of power among the DTOs themselves. As mentioned before, the relationship between state officials and DTOs is too particular to allow such a categorization. Second, according to Kalyvas, selective violence is most likely in so-called "contested areas" (zone 2 and 4) in which one group has dominant, but incomplete control. And indeed, there is strong evidence suggesting that those municipalities belonging to areas of fragmented control were affected by high levels of violence. Third, Kalyvas' last hypothesis for zones of parity as "oases of peace" could neither be confirmed nor denied because of the lack of empirical evidence. However, I assume that the internal logic of DTOs must contradict this hypothesis because DTO leaders do not care much about their members and the livelihood of many men depends on this conflict. Instead I argue that they are equally affected by violence like zone 2 and 4.

6.3 Recommendations

First, if the Mexican government wants to defeat the DTOs in the long run they have to put more efforts to obtain civilian support. First, they have to realize that a military-dominated strategy can only succeed if they are able to guarantee the security of civil society. A major impediment in doing so has been corruption. Hence, the Mexican government has to put more emphasis on anti-corruption measures. Furthermore they also have to put emphasis on measures that allow regaining the trust of the civilian population. For the latter it is crucial to win the "war of perceptions". It is therefore important to impede the DTOs from using the media and other mediums to spread their propaganda of terror and fear and make the civilians believe that they are "winning party".

Second, the Mexican government should be aware of the fact that the active or passive collaboration with a DTO does not necessarily mean that the civilians are sympathetic towards this group. It is rather the result of lacking control by the Mexican government and the civilians' will to survive. The Mexican government should therefore be aware that corrupt state officials

are not necessarily corrupt because of their “greed” or other malicious motives. It can also be result of lacking alternatives.

Third, I further argue that the Mexican government has to be more aware of the negative consequences of their military-dominated counter-drug operations. The mere reliance on the Mexican armed forces has not only done little to reduce the power and reach of the DTOs or the violence associated with them. In fact, the situation has even been exacerbated. Calderón’s „war on drugs“ and in particular his “kingpin strategy” can be made responsible for two things: first of all, the escalating levels in violence because it has created an intercartel power vacuum, which the different DTOs are trying to fill. And secondly, it has produced the phenomenon of “fractionalizations”. This is not a condemnation of the enforcement-and-suppression strategy per se. Yet, a strategy that is primarily dominated by law enforcement and militarization risks to draw attention away from fundamental reforms of the police and justice systems and is unlikely to solve Mexico’s security crisis in the long term.

I argue that the integration of Kalyvas’ theory of selective violence into the policy process could bear practical contributions, namely to better interpret the varying patterns of violence. First, the absence of violence from a municipality does not necessarily mean that DTOs are absent as well. Instead it could also indicate that this municipality is firmly in the hands of a DTO. Second, the use of indiscriminate violence should not be interpreted as a sign of strength as the media and policy makers often do. Instead it is a sign of weakness because the DTO using this type of violence lacks support and therewith information to target selectively. Third, high levels of selective violence might either imply that a DTO has dominant, but incomplete control or that a control shift between two DTOs has taken place. Fourth, if the levels of violence remain constantly high over a long period this might allude that the power balance between the different DTOs is constantly shifting from one DTO to the other.

In sum, the integration of Kalyvas’ theory of selective violence into the policy process could help to better interpret the varying patterns of drug-related violence. It could thereby help to produce more subtle approaches how to cope with DTOs while avoiding the escalation of drug-related violence.

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