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**How the Illicit Activities of Armed
Non-State Actors Undermine State
Governance:
A Comparative Study of Hezbollah and
the Sinaloa Cartel.**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the negative impact of the illicit activities of criminal organisations on state security governance. The main idea is how drug trafficking by two criminal groups affects and weakens state security governance. For this purpose, a comparative case study approach was chosen, with Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Sinaloa Cartel in Mexico as selected case studies. The analysis of the study focuses on the interactions between the drug trafficking activities of these criminal organisations and their impact on security governance in these countries. It was possible to identify and compare the negative impact of drug trafficking in Lebanon and Mexico through the number of drug seizures and the number of homicides. The analysis shows how Hezbollah and the Sinaloa Cartel influence the violence and lack of security in certain regions of both countries due to their power over local populations and their financial capacity derived from illicit activity. Therefore, to understand how both governments must deal with the activities of these groups in terms of security, scholars must consider the various factors that make these criminal organisations prominent and undermine the security of Lebanon and Mexico in order to attack the problem at its root.

Key Words: Armed Non-State Actors, Drug Trafficking, Transnational Organised Crime, Drug Seizures, Homicides, Civil Warfare, Criminal Governance.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANSAs.....	Armed Non-State Actors
ATF.....	Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
CESP.....	Sinaloa State Public Security Council
CJNG.....	Jalisco New Generation Cartel
CNS.....	National Security Commission (Mexico)
COAR.....	Center For Operational Analysis and Research
DEA.....	Drug Enforcement Administration (US).
FARC.....	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
FDI.....	Foreign Direct Investment
FGR.....	Attorney General of Mexico
IRGC.....	Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (Iran)
LCB.....	Lebanese Canadian Bank
PGR.....	Attorney General's Office
PLO.....	Palestinian Liberation Organisation
SEDENA.....	Ministry of National Defense (Mexico)
SEMAR.....	Mexican Navy
TBA.....	Tri-Border Area
TGIATOC.....	The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime
TOC.....	Transnational Organised Crime
UIF.....	Financial Intelligence Unit
UN.....	United Nations



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UNODC..... United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

USA..... United States of America

USD..... United States Dollar



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CHAPTER 1 | INTRODUCTION

Since the conclusion of the Cold War, there has been a notable increase in the relevance of armed non-state actors in global security. Many of these actors have succeeded in eroding the governance of entire nation-states, causing them to become fragile at all levels, including their security institutions. This has been facilitated by the convergence of illicit networks, which includes certain armed non-state actors such as terrorists and criminal groups. Through these transnational alliances, these actors have been empowered to threaten and, at times, undermine the security of states. As a result, the governance of states has been weakened, not only in their security but also in various socioeconomic and political aspects, leading to a snowball effect.

Consequently, armed non-state actors are no longer solely involved in violent activities such as armed conflicts and insurgencies against the state or other armed groups for political, territorial, ethnic, or religious reasons. The evolution of these actors, through convergence with other illicit actors, has led them to engage in more criminal activities to maximise their interests. Thus, they no longer adhere to the traditional patterns of armed non-state actors but instead act in accordance with their interests.

The main aim addressed in this research refers to an analysis of the presence of criminal activities of armed non-state actors that affect the exercise of power by democratic governments in terms of security. In this respect, this



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dissertation aims to contribute an understanding of the criminal activities of two organisations linked to organised crime and their negative impact on state security in order to policymakers can make decisions to mitigate them. For this purpose, my main research question is: **"How do the illicit activities of Hezbollah and the Sinaloa Cartel in Lebanon and Mexico weaken these countries' governance in terms of security?"**

The academic relevance of this research refers to how this study contributes to a better understanding of both the criminal activities of armed non-state actors and the governance challenges in the countries where these actors operate. Specifically, this research delves into a comparative case study of the interactions between illicit drug trafficking activities and their impact on security governance: Hezbollah in Lebanon, on the one hand, and the Sinaloa Cartel in Mexico, on the other. In terms of practical contributions, the research will enable policymakers to identify patterns and dynamics relevant to combating these armed non-state actors, establishing policies that facilitate undermining the illicit operations of these criminal groups.

Addressing my central research question on the illicit activities of Hezbollah and the Sinaloa Cartel in Lebanon and Mexico and their impact on weakening security governance is relevant for several reasons: the first one is national security due to their direct impact on undermining the rule of law and destabilising institutions and threatening the security of citizens by raising levels of violence, such as a higher homicide rate. The second one is governance and



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the rule of law, where the effects of Hezbollah and Sinaloa Cartel activities reflect the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of Lebanese and Mexican governmental structures. This aspect would help to identify law enforcement gaps. The third one is transnational threats, where Hezbollah and the Sinaloa Cartel's activities and networks extend beyond their countries of origin; thus, understanding the governance and security implications of their actions would assist in cooperation between international agencies in combating transnational organised crime. The fourth is related to regional stability, where the presence of Hezbollah and the Sinaloa Cartel in Lebanon and Mexico has regional and international implications in their countries of origin, as their cross-border criminal networks have contributed to spreading violence and extremism, the latter by Hezbollah. Therefore, the impact of their activities in the countries where they mainly operate will be essential for formulating regional and international strategies by policymakers to address their threats. The fifth one is about policy formulation, where research about illicit activities and weakening governance in terms of security would provide valuable insights for policymakers to develop strategies and actions from results based on evidence. The last aspect would apply because, due to this thesis being a comparative case study, it is feasible to explain the phenomenon of context, and it has been proven through results for the success of policy initiatives (Goodrick, 2014: 1). In this case, it could help in the long term to identify strategies to dismantle part of the criminal networks and strengthen the police and judicial systems, especially in the area where they operate.



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Overall, this thesis is relevant to understanding the complex dynamics of illicit activities, governance and security in Lebanon and Mexico. The results will provide a basis for informed decision-making to counter the adverse effects of these organisations' activities. Progress could benefit governments by promoting stability, the rule of law and citizen security.

This thesis comprises five chapters, with the first chapter being an introduction. The second chapter comprises the literature review, which plays a crucial role in situating the research within the academic literature and identifying its contribution to this thesis (George and Bennett, 2005: 59). The main theories that will aid in understanding the research are presented. Within this context, the theoretical approaches of civil warfare, including the logic of violence and the fragile state, the notions of an armed non-state actor and the relation between civil warfare and organised crime, are discussed. Furthermore, the theoretical approaches to organised crime, including its notion, relationship with governance, the relevance of illicit markets, and how they affect the state, drug trafficking, and the relationship between crime and terrorism, are addressed.

The third chapter is dedicated to discussing the research and design methodology, which consists of the rationale for a comparative case study, the rationale for selecting the two case studies, the selection of the units of analysis, the explanation for the data collection, and the explanation of the limitations and strengths of the research. The fourth chapter analyses the case studies, focusing



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on Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Sinaloa Cartel in Mexico. This analysis includes a historical overview of both organisations, their illicit activities, and an examination of drug seizures and the number of homicides for each case. Additionally, common patterns and differences identified in the analysis and the impacts of both organisations on governance and security in Lebanon and Mexico are discussed.

Finally, the fifth and last chapter introduces the research, summarising the main findings, limitations, suggestions for future research directions, recommendations for policymakers, and final thoughts.



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CHAPTER 2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an academic literature review focusing on two primary theoretical approaches. The first approach is focused on civil warfare, its relationship with armed non-state actors (ANSAs), and its implications for the state. The second approach focuses on organised crime, its components, activities, and connections with terrorism. To begin with, the first part of this chapter will introduce the definitions of civil warfare and ANSAs. It will also discuss the concept of a fragile state.

Moreover, the nexus between civil warfare and organised crime and the involvement in crime by insurgents and other ANSAs. In the second part of this chapter, we will explore theoretical approaches to organised crime. I will address the convergence between organised crime and terrorism to understand Hezbollah as a criminal organisation. Additionally, the implications of drug trafficking with the State, the conflicts arising from this activity, and the actors involved will be analysed as an introduction to the analysis of the Sinaloa Cartel and its drug trafficking activities. Finally, this section will conclude with the main findings derived from the theoretical debates by scholars.

The literature review will focus on the discourse among scholars concerning civil warfare and organised crime. Specifically, it will explore

publications that examine the connections between ANSAs and the government, their evolution within the conflict, and the extent of aggression they exert on the political system. The theoretical approaches to organised crime aim to understand and analyse the actors involved, their structures, activities, relationships with the government, and how they contribute to institutional weakness.

2.2. CIVIL WARFARE: THEORETICAL APPROACHES

2.2.1. Defining Civil Warfare and Armed Non-State Actors (ANSAs)

The literature dealing with **civil warfare**, also known as civil conflict or civil war, is extensive. It refers to a violent conflict between different groups within a State. Florea (2018) describes civil wars as intrastate conflicts that cause a breakdown in socio-political orders in which state and non-state actors compete for power and legitimacy. Also, these conflicts occur in different areas of a country. Generally, sovereignty is ambiguous, where governments are challenged, resulting in the contestation of authorities by rebels, criminal syndicates, or other violent groups (Florea, 2018). Other prominent scholars have provided various definitions of civil wars based on their research and perspectives. Definitions from some scholars will be discussed next.

Charles Tilly (1992) defines civil war as an enduring social conflict between government actors and those who challenge it within the independent state, where he emphasises the contestation of state power as the main element

of civil warfare. Tilly further explores civil warfare in the relationship between state-building, state power, and collective violence. On the other hand, Sathis Kalyvas (2006) describes civil warfare as armed combats or conflicts fought between two organisations or organised actors within the recognised state subject to the same authority at the outset of the hostilities. Kalyvas focuses on the protracted nature of the conflict and the involvement of armed non-state actors in the territory of the conflict within the state. Another scholar, Barbara Walter (2002), terms civil warfare as a violent conflict within a state involving organised groups that aspire to take power and change government policies by using violence to pursue their political objectives. Walter highlights the political motivations and aspirations of the groups involved in the conflict and how the role of violence as a strategic tool, and how it influences the dynamics of negotiations.

Christopher Blattman and Edward Miguel (2010) claim that about civil war, the distinction between different forms of political instability, such as interstate wars, coups d'états and other types of repression and violence, has been assumed rather than demonstrated by other scholars on the subject (Barnes, 2017). David Keen (1998) formulates that nowadays, civil wars that begin as political aims mutate and become economic conflicts to obtain short-term benefits. Civil wars change their dynamics and evolve their motivations to ideological, religious, and criminal interests, with some changing their tactics to the extent of becoming terrorists (Makarenko, 2004).



In civil warfare, violence is a primary component of the conflict. Kalyvas (2006) points out that the literature about civil warfare deals with the distinction between selective and indiscriminate violence, in which the coercive strategies of the state and the rebels are more effective when the target is discriminatory. In this regard, Kalyvas (2015) illustrates this with the case of the Mexican drug war with the cartels, in which the violence of Mexican cartels ranges from the murder of public officials, journalists and people working for rival cartels to the extent of indiscriminate massacres. For this, state security forces often must fight invisible enemies, escalating criminal violence (Kalyvas, 2015; Grillo, 2012). Furthermore, Kalyvas (2015) argues that in civil warfare, these not only politicise violence but also privatise it, in which it is possible for organised criminal violence to manage dynamics at the local level, i.e., through disputes between individuals, neighbourhoods or zones that adopt a division as if it were at the macro level.

Moreover, Tilly (1985) suggests that eliminating internal rivals is key to state-building. In this matter, he argues that some state actors use coercion and force as means of violence for state formation and governance. War is an essential mechanism for this, in which he distinguishes legitimate violence by the State and illegitimate violence by non-state actors.

Armed non-state actors (ANSAs) employ violence and armed force to pursue their political and power-seeking objectives. These groups are not formally integrated into the state structure but possess military capabilities.

Asal, Rethemeyer, and Schoon (2019) characterise them as violent actors engaged in political violence in all its manifestations, acting in groups. Multiple interpretations of ANSAs exist. Schneckener (2009) posits that ANSAs employ coercion and violence to promote their interests, irrespective of their objectives or motivations. These groups operate autonomously from formal state institutions, such as armies, guards, or the police, but may receive official or unofficial support from state actors (Schneckener, 2009). Conversely, Khalyvas argues that both state and non-state armed groups, in their understanding of political violence, rarely match the motive for using violence in practice (Barnes, 2017).

Lessing (2022) argues that criminal groups do not intend to have absolute territorial control, and, generally, the police always try to prevent these actors from maintaining their operations. In contrast, the rebels and insurgents often establish areas with exclusive territorial control, called 'liberated zones', where they can rule over civilians.

Depending on their ideologies, motivations, and contexts, ANSAs can have diverse political goals. For instance, Asal et al. (2019) argue that a key distinction in political goals, at least with respect to insurgents, is that insurgents are dedicated to fostering change in a governmental system, either by overthrowing a government or secession. This differs from a terrorist group, as they can 'pursue different, more specific agendas ranging from changes in a government's policies to fighting against the system of governments' (Asal et

al., 2019). Their objectives are varied, from establishing a new political order based on their ideology to addressing other objectives the ruling government still needs to address. Another motivation is that different ANSAs aim to effect political reform or change existing policies. For instance, Keen (2008) explores how ANSAs may aspire to bring about political change through armed struggle, social justice, and economic improvements in certain populations. Kalyvas (2006) examines these motivations in how some groups may engage in armed struggle to pressure the state for specific policy changes. Weinstein (2007) highlights how some ANSAs can challenge and transform a state's political institutions and tactics. Some ANSAs strive for specific policy reforms or changes to pressure the state to address these issues. Another political motive of ANSAs is autonomy or secession. Kalyvas (2006) examines that some groups may aim for territorial control and secession, seeking to establish their own autonomous or independent political entities.

It is important to note that ANSAs may have different political objectives, which may differ between groups and even change over time depending on the dynamics and circumstances of the national, regional, or international environment. An example of this is Hezbollah, which was born as an armed resistance group against Israeli forces. Still, over time its objectives have been redirected, and it has diversified its activities, such as its involvement in illicit markets for its targets, which will be discussed in the research analysis.

2.2.2. The Impact of Civil Warfare on Governance

This research highlights the significant impact of civil warfare on state governance, as this form of conflict has frequently incited challenges and disruptions for the state, including the weakening of state institutions. In this regard, Keen's (2008) examination of the effects of civil wars on governance and state institutions reveals that conflict can interrupt public services, undermine government administration systems, and compromise the legitimacy and effectiveness of state institutions. Consequently, civil wars can result in the judiciary and law enforcement breakdown and the loss of government control and legitimacy. Collier (2007) similarly emphasises that civil wars erode institutions and their ability to provide basic services, contributing to the weakening of governance.

Moreover, according to Collier's (2007) argument, countries that experience a consistent pattern of bad governance in economic and political spheres, particularly small nations, invariably contribute to persistent and enduring poverty. This, in turn, exacerbates corruption. The case of Lebanon exemplifies this phenomenon, where weak institutions facilitate corruption, political instability, and ethnic divisions. These, in turn, create a conducive environment for the emergence of civil unrest and the eventual takeover of territories by non-state armed groups. Another crucial factor impacting state governance during civil wars is the erosion of legitimacy. Keen (2008) highlights this point by analysing how the collapse of security, human rights



violations, and population displacement during conflicts undermine the government's legitimacy with the population. Kalyvas (2006) examines the role of violence perpetrated by state and non-state actors during civil wars, which leads to a loss of trust and legitimacy in government. This loss of legitimacy can be perceived as a failure of the government to provide security and protection for its citizens, leading to further delegitimisation of the incumbent government.

Additionally, civil wars can disrupt the delivery of public services. Reno (1998) explicates how armed conflicts can undermine public services to the population and damage infrastructure, impeding the government from delivering public services. Public services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure development are indispensable for addressing socio-economic problems. However, civil wars can hinder the delivery of these essentials and exacerbate governance challenges. Examples of such civil wars include Liberia from 1996 to 2003 and Somalia from 1991.

A relevant aspect of the impact of civil warfare on governance is undoubtedly the economic impact. Fearon et al. (2003) argue that a higher per capita income is associated with a lower risk of civil war because it is a proxy indicator of the state's financial, administrative, police and military capacity. Collier (2007) also explores the economic consequences of civil warfare and how conflicts disrupt economic activities, damage infrastructure, and hinder investment and development. This can result in increased poverty and inequality in the population, challenging the governance capacities of the state.

One of the most relevant aspects is the security challenges of state governance in civil warfare. For example, Collier (2007) stresses that civil wars create significant security challenges in governance, as such conflicts often lead to the proliferation of armed non-state groups and rising crime rates, undermining the government's ability to provide security. Keen (2008) argues that the onset of ANSAs can intensify violence and population displacement. Reno (1998) points out that the proliferation of ANSAs leads to an increase in the availability of weapons, posing threats to the security of governance.

ANSAs, like insurgents and criminal groups, exploit power vacuums, making territory conducive to engaging in illicit activities and perpetuating violence. This undermines the state's ability to maintain law and order and protect its citizens.

Another relevant aspect is fragmentation and division, as it is usually such conflicts that trigger civil warfare and lead to a weakening of state governance. Civil warfare generally exacerbates societal divisions, ethnic, religious, or political. For instance, Fearon et al. (2003) examine how ethnic divisions can contribute to escalating civil wars. Fearon and Laitin (2003) argue that when certain political and economic factors are combined, the likelihood of civil warfare increases and thus incentivises ethnic groups to resort to violence. When civil wars are motivated by ethnic cleavages, they tend to be more prolonged and intense. Thus, Fearon and Latin point out that when civil warfare is based on ethnic divisions, they lead to the fragmentation of government



structures and long-term state instability. An example can be seen in Lebanon's sectarian problems, which have perpetuated weak governance and the presence of criminal groups.

2.2.3. The Fragile State

A state that is considered fragile encounters obstacles such as deficient governance and institutional fragility, thereby rendering it incapable of furnishing indispensable commodities and amenities to its population. The lack of security in this type of state can lead to conflict or other internal or foreign actors leading to violence and instability. For this study, Briscoe et al. (2012) define the fragile State as a country with national authority incapable of providing security, goods and basic services and simultaneously suffering from civil war or conflicts with other states. Likewise, Briscoe et al. (2012) indicate that when institutional fragmentation levels are high, the stable relationships between organised crime and the central and local levels of the state are more significant so that they can carry out illicit activities without oversight.

Numerous scholars contend that the fragility of a State is characterised by two elements, namely, the lack of capacity and legitimacy (Anten et al., 2012; Briscoe et al., 2012; Varese, 2000; Felbab-Brown, 2010). The absence of legitimacy results in the population losing trust in the State, leading to insufficient protection and security (Varese, 2000). When the State's legitimacy is undermined, control of the territory becomes a matter of dispute with ANSAs.

Clarke (2015), Felbab-Brown (2010), Asal et al. (2019), Flanigan (2008), Kenney (2007), Schoon (2017), Shelley (2014), Grynkewich (2008) all concur that this is when criminal organisations thrive. Insurgencies tend to be involved in all forms of criminal activities, taking advantage of the absence of legal frameworks. Additionally, Eccarius-Kelly (2012), Peters (2010), Asal et al. (2019), McDougall (2009: p. 325), Davis (2010), Goodhand (2008), and Flanigan (2012) suggest that territorial control opens the door for ANSAs to participate in criminal activities, owing to the lack of surveillance and law enforcement intervention. Nonetheless, the legitimacy of ANSAs in a fragile state is contingent upon a change in the government regime. Paul et al. (2010) posit that this legitimacy is only possible if it is endorsed by the civilian population, i.e., the voters of the conflict zone.

2.2.4. *Civil Warfare – Organised Crime Nexus*

The nexus between civil warfare and organised crime entails a multifaceted relationship that encompasses various connections between armed conflict and illicit activities conducted by organised crime groups. Numerous authors have delved into the intricacies of ANSAs' engagement in organised crime throughout and following a civil war, investigating the underlying dynamics and motivations behind these activities.

Asal, Deloughery, and Phillips (2012) have elucidated the intricate relationship between crime and intrastate conflict, particularly emphasising the

significant influence of economic factors (Asal et al., 2019). According to Collier and Hoeffler (1998), civil wars are frequently fuelled by rebels' pursuit of illicit activities for financial gain. Moreover, Makarenko (2012) posits that economic motivations in civil wars reflect the intertwined nature of political violence and economic interests. Cornell and Jonsson (2014) assert that funding sources are pivotal in politically motivated ANSAs' involvement in organised crime. Asal et al. (2019) and Dishman (2005) suggest that necessity and opportunity drive insurgent groups to engage in organised crime while recognising that not all ANSAs participate in criminal activities. Thus, this argument underscores the relevance of resources as a primary driver, compelling many ANSAs, including insurgents, to engage in activities that may not align with their core objectives.

Several scholars have examined the correlation between territorial control and ANSAs involvement in criminal activities in the context of material conditions that drive them. Asal et al. (2015, 2019), Felbab-Brown (2010), and Kenney (2007) posit that ANSAs' quest for territorial control serves as a significant motivation for their engagement in criminal activities. Cornell and Jonsson (2014) corroborate this link, emphasising that territorial control heightens ANSAs' chances of partaking in drug production, cultivation, and extortion. Moreover, Paoli and Reuter (2008) highlight that ANSAs with larger membership sizes necessitate more resources to execute criminal operations and

maintain power over illicit markets, aligning with the rationale of territorial control.

Asal et al. (2019) posit that criminal activities serve as a valuable and compensatory avenue for insurgent groups economically, enabling them to generate essential income for countering their adversaries, particularly the state. However, organised criminal involvement can also result in adverse outcomes for insurgent groups, potentially altering their reputation and leading to a decline in social support from their followers (Hough, 2011) and other sponsors. According to Felbab-Brown (2010), violent groups may evolve, resulting in economic and social advantages. Consequently, ANSAs' participation in criminal activities is often motivated by necessity and opportunity rather than social factors (Asal et al., 2019). This indicates that ANSAs' earnings from criminal activities are typically steady, while the related social costs remain minimal. By examining the economic dynamics, social repercussions, and evolution of violent groups, these perspectives shed light on the fundamental reasons for ANSAs' engagement in criminal activities, emphasising the importance of necessity and opportunity as driving forces (Asal et al., 2019).

Lessing (2022) argues that insurgent groups are most likely to adopt criminal strategies when establishing exclusive territorial control as "liberated zones," enabling them to govern over civilians. This aligns with their "competitive state-building" objective, which involves seeking secession from or overthrowing the state (Lessing, 2022). Additionally, this scholar suggests

that insurgent groups are more inclined to adopt criminal strategies when engaged in battles over valuable territory and resources. Conversely, insurgent groups are less likely to use criminal strategies to influence state behaviour and policy outcomes.

Lessing and Willis (2019) posit that resource limitations may prompt insurgent organisations to adopt delinquent tactics. Moreover, they argue that insurgent groups may govern illicit markets, partially attributable to state proscriptions. Lessing (2015) observes that engaging in criminal pursuits enables insurgent groups to generate income to finance their operations and establish a paying clientele. Nevertheless, it is essential to consider that criminal activities may impede insurgent groups by creating a potential victim constituency that seeks to allocate resources for prevention measures (Lessing, 2015). In addition, Lessing (2015) notes that competition with the state over natural resource rents and the prerogative to displace populations can pose challenges for insurgent groups. Furthermore, Lessing and Willis (2019) contribute insights into how insurgent groups may adopt rational-bureaucratic legitimacy within criminal governance, thereby gaining community support and legitimacy. By examining these dynamics, Lessing's research provides a comprehensive understanding of when and why insurgent groups are likelier to adopt criminal strategies and the potential consequences of such activities.

According to Barnes (2017), insurgent factions' resort to criminal tactics when they encounter resource constraints and necessitate additional resources



to sustain their organisations. These tactics could encompass resource extraction, looting, manufacturing, and selling illicit commodities. In times of financial hardship or the incapacity to obtain resources through legal channels, insurgent groups resort to criminal activities for support (Barnes, 2017). Conversely, when insurgent groups possess alternative means of support, such as external financing or popular support, they are less prone to adopt criminal strategies (Barnes, 2017). Barnes (2017) underscores that committing criminal acts may furnish insurgent groups with crucial resources, such as finances, armaments, and provisions for their operations.

Nonetheless, such activities also expose them to elevated dangers. Implementing law enforcement and security forces may single them out, impeding their operations and resulting in the apprehension or demise of their members (Barnes, 2017). Furthermore, Barnes (2017) accentuates that indulging in criminal activities can besmirch the reputation of insurgent groups and curtail support among the local population. Insurgent groups must contemplate the trade-off between the advantages and perils of committing criminal acts to realise their strategic objectives (Barnes, 2017).

2.3. ORGANISED CRIME – THEORETICAL APPROACHES

2.3.1. Defining Organised Crime

Organised crime entails the systematic operation of criminal groups to engage in illicit activities with the aim of attaining economic gains and power.

The definition of organised crime remains a subject of debate, with contradictions among scholars in the academic literature. The United Nations High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change describes organised crime as a fluid network rather than a formal, hierarchical organisation (United Nations, General Assembly, 2004: 53). On the other hand, Block and Chambliss (1981) and Hobbs (1988) define it as a business model involving illicit goods and services, supply chains, transportation, and protection. Asal et al. (2019) argue that the leadership structure directly influences organisational involvement in criminal acts. Some authors perceive organised crime groups as businesses, with Briscoe et al. (2012) identifying key characteristics such as clearly defined illegal goods and services, organised hierarchical structures, perpetuation through violence, and corrupt relationships with public officials. Additionally, Briscoe et al. (2012) view these groups as international criminal enterprises that profit from illicit activities and are often in high consumer demand.

According to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, an organised crime group is a collective of three or more individuals collaborating over time to engage in criminal activities for financial gain (UNODC, 2010). Despite this broad definition, Carnevale et al. (2017) critique the United Nations Convention, stating that it has limitations in effectively identifying and combatting organised crime. Carnevale argues that the Convention must provide clear guidance on effectively punishing and

criminalising organised crime, which poses significant challenges for national security authorities in addressing this issue.

Tilly (1985) posits that the formation of organised crime groups cannot be attributed solely to economic motives but is also a response to social conditions. Tilly further suggests that these groups establish networks to fulfil specific objectives, with criminal activities being just one facet of their dynamic. Boer and Bosetti (2015) similarly contend that the crux of a criminal group lies in its activities rather than the organisational structure itself. Typically, these groups engage in illicit activities such as distributing illegal goods and services, often displaying a transnational dimension. Criminal groups that operate internationally are commonly referred to as transnational organised crime (TOC) networks.

Galeotti (2008) suggests that TOCs operate as continuing enterprises, functioning outside social and legal structures and driven by the pursuit of illegal profits. Kalyvas (2015) defines TOCs as hierarchical organisations characterised by stability and continuity, distinguishing them from sporadic and isolated criminal activities that quickly fade or are neutralised. On the other hand, Varese (2017) views TOCs as part of a broader category resembling a form of governance regulating and controlling the production and distribution of illicit products and services. This phenomenon is dynamic, constantly evolving and influenced by technological variables that impact their capabilities in specific markets (Varese, 2017). In contrast, Kleimenov (2017) criticises



international conventions for failing to update their frameworks, as the adaptable "new criminals" exploit loopholes in public and state criminal mechanisms, undermining the effectiveness of existing regulations. Kleimenov (2017) likens this emerging type of organised crime to cancer, as it infiltrates and grows within the state. In summary, Galeotti highlights the illicit profit-driven nature of TOCs, Kalyvas emphasises their hierarchical stability, Varese examines their regulatory role, and Kleimenov criticises outdated conventions in the face of evolving criminal strategies.

Banfield (2014) challenges the traditional interpretation of organised crime as a business-driven phenomenon. Banfield posits that the application of this term necessitates examination within the framework of armed conflict and instability, particularly in relation to efforts towards building peace. Within this context, the author contends that the operational procedures of TOCs demonstrate intrinsically political behaviour. Additionally, the author emphasises that certain motives and narratives that propel their actions are focused on perpetuating social marginalisation. Moreover, Banfield (2014) investigates the influence of poverty, social inequality, and injustice as underlying factors motivating organised criminal groups and the brutality, they employ to achieve their objectives. These criminal associations actively seek the participation of diverse factions, including political, commercial, and even indigenous elites, to play proactive roles in their undertakings.

2.3.2. *Crime – State Relations*

When examining the concept of state fragility within theoretical frameworks of civil warfare, one of the key actors highlighted is the government itself, particularly officials who collaborate with organised crime groups. Briscoe et al. (2012) identify several emerging patterns in these instances of state-organised crime relationships. These patterns include local organisations engaging in local criminal activities, expanding their operations across national borders, establishing transnational logistical networks, and states serving as transit points for transnational organised crime.

Banfield (2014) highlights that political actors can be complicit in organised crime as part of the government's strategy, with certain criminal gains being directed towards these individuals. Barnes (2017) further argues that collaboration between state agents and criminals is not limited to formal agreements but often occurs opportunistically. Organised crime establishes collaboration agreements directly or through the tacit recruitment of senior members from public security forces, politicians, judges, or other officials, allowing them to evade law enforcement and avoid legal repercussions. The nature of these agreements between criminal organisations and the state can be ephemeral, changing with shifts in government administration, or enduring for decades (Barnes, 2017). Particularly, during periods of dictatorship, criminal organisations tend to thrive and expand their market for illicit goods and services with the consent of the ruling leaders, enabling them to operate with

relative freedom. Also, Barnes (2017) categorises the dynamics between the state and organised crime into four main scenarios: confrontation, where organised crime directly targets the state; enforcement-evasion, when the state employs law enforcement to combat organised crime but encounters avoidance tactics from criminals; alliance, where there is cooperation between organised crime and the state, whether tacit or formal, for their respective benefits; and integration when the state and organised crime become intertwined. It is important to note that although the state is expected to always act against organised crime, cooperation between the two sometimes occurs, particularly when the state is fragile, and corruption is prevalent. Felbab-Brown (2017) suggests that attempts to mitigate illicit economies can backfire when criminal organisations are powerful, and security measures are inadequate or absent.

According to Barnes, when the state and criminal groups derive mutual benefits from their relationship, it can strengthen their ties. Felbab-Brown (2017) further explains that states may strategically engage with organised crime to bolster their military power for various purposes, such as obtaining international public goods or seeking protection. In such cases, the state often tacitly permits these organisations' involvement when it cannot adequately protect its citizens due to weak governance and security measures.

Similarly, Boer and Bosetti (2015) highlight the correlation between weak political and economic institutions and the absence of an effective security response. This creates an environment conducive for criminal groups to thrive



and conflicts to persist. Felbab-Brown (2012) also argues that incumbent governments may shield specific organised crime groups to suppress internal opposition groups in certain cases. This delegation of authority to criminal groups allows politicians to save resources and compensate for the incapacity of the police forces. Examples of such phenomena are perceptible in the destitute urban regions of Brazil, Jamaica, and Bangladesh. It has been observed that in instances where the State clandestinely imposes specific responsibilities upon organised criminal entities, Banfield (2014) posits that these groups assimilate and coerce community leaders into becoming members of their organisation.

According to Barnes (2017), criminal organisations are increasingly involved in shaping the policies of fragile states, which differs from the perspectives of other scholars. Although these organisations do not aim to replace the state, they utilise various forms of violence to exert control, leading to an escalation of violence and granting political authority, albeit tacitly (Barnes, 2017). As a result of weak institutions and ineffective security responses, criminal groups are provided opportunities to flourish. Additionally, governments may protect certain criminal organisations for their purposes, and the involvement of organised crime in state policies contributes to the escalation of violence, ultimately impacting the dynamics between organised crime and the state.



2.3.3. *Criminal Governance*

Criminal governance pertains to the endeavours of organised crime factions to establish dominion over territories and illegal markets via illicit means (Breuer and Varese, 2022). These groups typically function hierarchically and utilise violence to maintain power and influence (Breuer and Varese, 2022). Furthermore, Breuer and Varese underscore that the internal structure of governance-oriented organised crime groups differs from trade-oriented groups and between groups driven by financial and political motives. Similarly, Varese (2011) characterises criminal governance as the phenomenon wherein criminal organisations exert authority over a specific territory or market, such as mafia factions. These organisations offer protection to individuals and businesses in exchange for loyalty and financial compensation (Varese, 2011).

Criminal governance is observed in various states worldwide, where criminal groups exert control over territories and influence governance dynamics. Mexico is a prime example, grappling with the challenges of powerful drug cartels. Not only are these cartels deeply involved in drug trafficking, but they also corrupt law enforcement agencies, politicians, and the judiciary. Their reach extends beyond illicit activities as they establish dominance over specific regions, wielding authority and influence. Similarly, Afghanistan has experienced criminal governance due to armed non-state actors, notably groups like the Taliban. These groups exert control over regions

and influence various sectors within the country. In Nigeria, the extremist group Boko Haram exemplifies criminal governance in action. They assert control over territories by employing violence and intimidation tactics and imposing rules and governing systems. These examples highlight the complex dynamics of criminal governance, where the groups undermine the institutions and establish parallel systems of authority, exploiting weak governance structures.

According to Briscoe et al. (2012), the presence of institutional weaknesses within a state creates opportunities for corruption, thereby facilitating the activities of TOC groups. Consequently, local authorities often offer support and cooperation to criminal groups, leading to the erosion of state governance through corruption (Van Dijk, 2007). This erosion undermines two essential elements of the state: its capacity to provide public goods and services and its political legitimacy (Varese, 2000; West, 2006). The competition between criminal organisations and the government for loyalty and legitimacy can result in the emergence of "dual sovereignties" (Boer and Bosetti, 2015). When the state is weak and unable to fulfil basic service provisions, TOC groups exploit this opportunity, establishing their market and creating informal networks (Briscoe et al., 2012).

Moreover, Johnson (2013) highlights that many criminal groups are adept at managing their activities, often outperforming the states where they operate and even assuming governmental functions. This aligns with Kalyvas' (2015) perspective, as he emphasises that as criminal groups adopt state-like



functions, they evolve and become more significant in their impact. To summarise, the collaboration between local authorities and criminal groups undermines state governance through corruption. This, in turn, weakens the state's capacity to provide essential services and erodes its political legitimacy.

The resulting competition between criminal organisations and the government for loyalty and legitimacy can lead to the emergence of dual sovereignties. Exploiting the weaknesses of the state, criminal groups establish their market and informal networks, often assuming functions akin to those of the government.

Conversely, Skaperdas (2001), Manrique (2006), and Adams (2011) argue that TOCs can have a positive impact on communities, particularly those facing economic precarity, as they may provide a means of survival and be seen as legitimate alternatives. TOCs often establish legitimacy in rural or remote areas (Briscoe et al., 2012). However, Lessing (2013), Molzahn, Ríos, and Shirk (2012) and Kalyvas (2015) propose an ambiguous relationship between TOCs and the territory. Rather than seeking territorial conquest, TOCs engage in violence to coerce state actors and influence policy outcomes, exacerbating violence. State repression, in turn, aims to eliminate these criminal groups.

Territories controlled by TOCs thrive, particularly in rural areas where state control is limited and in border regions that facilitate the transportation of illicit goods (Briscoe et al., 2012). This does not imply the disappearance of the

state but rather indicates its favouring of the emergence and presence of TOCs. As Van Dijk (2007) suggests, the infiltration of formal institutions and the economy by TOCs signifies the imminent presence of corruption among state agents. Once corruption takes hold, TOCs can operate freely within their controlled territories. Moreover, Banfield (2014) notes that TOCs can easily cross borders, facilitated by the corruption of border agents responsible for migration and security. A tacit social contract is formed when TOCs establish stable relationships with local authorities (Briscoe et al., 2012). While criminal governance enables efficient operations for criminal groups, Lessing et al. (2019) argue that its impact extends beyond the members of these organisations and corrupt officials, reaching the civilian communities within the markets where these criminal activities occur.

TOCs exploit fragile states and those with a high level of corruption to establish their logistical operations. These states serve as transit points in the supply chain, ensuring the smooth passage of goods to other countries (Briscoe et al., 2012). For example, in Mexico, Kleiman (2011) highlights the central role of the United States in the drug problem, making Mexico an incidental country in the drug trade. This situation perpetuates violence in some territories of Mexico through local protection and state co-optation (Olson, 2012). Additionally, Bagley (2005) asserts that in contexts of fragility or weak governance, clandestine trade becomes highly profitable, making such states

more susceptible to transnational and indigenous organised crime. This pattern is evident in various countries across Latin America and the Caribbean.

2.3.4. Political Theories of Organised Crime

Varese (2010:4) postulates that the political dimension of organised crime involves regulating, controlling, producing, and disseminating illegal commodities and services within illicit groups. Koivu (2016) similarly suggests that this approach is motivated by the structural exigency of illegal markets, which compels criminal organisations to act like states. In this regard, Koivu (2016) emphasises the political approach to organised crime, proposing that criminal groups embody state-like entities endeavouring to oversee and govern the production and dissemination of illegal commodities or amenities. This methodology assumes that illicit markets arise if governments are disinclined or incompetent to regulate them.

Gambetta (1993), Hill (2003), Varese (2001), and Volkov (2002) also view the political approach as involving surveillance and contract enforcement by criminal groups using violence and coercion. Koivu (2016) contends that criminal groups, like the state, enforce contracts. Furthermore, Koivu (2016) asserts that the state's failure to provide mechanisms for illegal transactions could create the conditions for organised crime. Koivu could also argue that the political approach overlooks criminal organisations that do not provide illicit

transactions or protection but have other arrangements that enable cooperation, in agreement with Gambetta, Varese, Hill, and Volkov.

While political theories related to organised crime offer valuable insights, it is crucial to recognise that such theories also have certain limitations and gaps that require identification. As mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, certain theories are often based on oversimplified generalisations that cannot be universally applied. Additionally, the lack of empirical data due to the clandestine nature of criminal organisations makes it difficult to obtain accurate information, hindering the validation of the theories.

Furthermore, the political dimension of organised crime can be context-specific, resulting in exclusivity to certain local criminal groups. While generalisations may apply to other groups, a particular group's socioeconomic and political status can affect political theory's applicability to the organisation.

2.3.5. Economic Theories of Organised Crime

The study of organised crime from an economic perspective focuses on criminal groups' market dynamics and strategies, as Koivu (2016) noted. Scholars including Fiorentini and Peltzman (1995), Naylor (1997), and Reuter (1983), suggest that the demand for prohibited goods and services is a driving force behind the emergence of organized crime. Koivu (2016) argues that economic theories view the prohibition of specific goods and services as a form of over-regulation that criminal groups exploit in black markets, resulting in

further over-regulation. Criminals are thus viewed as entrepreneurs who seek new business opportunities and develop strategies to maximise profits.

In a related vein, Garriga and Phillips (2022) examine the relationship between organised crime and foreign direct investment (FDI), with the latter being impacted by transnational organised crime (TOC) activities within a state's domestic companies involved in import and export investments. Garriga et al. (2022) suggest that organised crime groups target national companies and engage in predatory practices that discourage foreign investors, thereby competing. As such, Garriga and Phillips (2022) hypothesise that higher levels of organised crime competition correspond to lower levels of FDI.

Contrasting the limitations of the approach, the political approach fails to consider many criminal organisations that do not engage in the purchase or sale of protection. Instead, these groups establish alternative arrangements to facilitate cooperation. According to Koivu's (2016) analysis, the political approach contends that the absence of regulation, stemming from the state's incapacity or reluctance, fosters the emergence of coercive criminal groups. This is due to the third-party enforcer typically supplied by the state as a requisite component of economic exchange. On the other hand, the economic approach posits that overregulation, such as prohibition, is the root cause of organised crime; market forces, not state efficacy, determine the formation of criminal syndicates (Koivu, 2016).



2.3.6. Drugs for War and Illicit Market: Drug Trafficking

When examining the economic theories surrounding organised crime, it is imperative to explore drug trafficking as a lucrative illicit activity for criminal organisations. According to UNODC (2011), drug trafficking represents one of the most profitable unlawful enterprises today, accounting for 85 per cent of the global value of transnational organised crime (UNODC, 2010). In this section, fragile states are critical to drug production, providing a haven for transnational organised crime groups (Briscoe et al., 2012).

To gain insight into drug trafficking, it is necessary to delve into cartels. According to Lessing (2015), the disparity between insurgents and cartels lies in the latter's pursuit of territorial and resource domination and their resistance against states to curtail their actions. When the conflict between the cartel and the state arises, Lessing (2015) posits two coercive logics: 1) violent lobbying and 2) violent corruption. Cartels rely on violence in violent lobbying to persuade leaders to alter their policies and decrease repression (Lessing, 2015). In violent corruption, a certain level of police corruption is obligatory to intimidate security forces with violence if they refuse bribes. In both cases, negotiations take place between the two parties. However, a viable issue must be present for the state to negotiate, while officials and cartels negotiate the bribe in the latter.

While sharing similarities, drug cartel and mafia organisations diverge in their structure and operations; according to Jenkins (1992), mafia groups play a significant role in the narcotics trade, particularly when drug trafficking organisations need to gain control over local communities. Nevertheless, their activities are distinct. The drug war that Mexican President Felipe Calderón's administration undertook in 2016 resulted in the death of approximately 70,000 individuals (Lessing, 2015; Shrik and Wallman, 2015). Although cartels do not seek to overthrow the Mexican government, they play a fundamental role in drug-related violence (Lessing, 2015). A crucial term in the drug trafficking conflict is 'calentar the plaza', which refers to the turf war between cartels through violent means directed at the state (Poppa, 2010: 42; Lessing, 2015). West (2006: 11) argues that while cartels are a symptom of weak state governance, state officials have contributed to the causes of their failure, as exemplified by the drug war during Felipe Calderón's administration in Mexico.

In analysing the relationship between cartels and state governance, Kalyvas (2015) posits that while cartels do not seek to overthrow a government, they seek to infiltrate it and exploit it for their gain. This indicates that cartels resort to corruption among officials to carry out illicit activities in certain regions when a state lacks institutional strength. Felbab Brown (2017) opines that the situation of cartels is ambiguous; while the economic consequences of drug trafficking are intricate, drug cultivation can provide employment opportunities for rural communities, albeit at the expense of state governance.

In summary, drug trafficking constitutes a significant aspect of transnational organised crime, and fragile states provide a sanctuary for ANSAs, particularly cartels involved in drug production and trafficking. Mexico's drug cartels do not seek to overthrow the government. Still, they are deeply entrenched in drug-related violence, engaging in turf wars and conflicts using violent means directed against the state. The escalating violence and challenges the cartels pose can be attributed to weak state governance and government actions. The relationship between cartels and state governance is complex. Cartels aim to infiltrate and exploit weak institutional systems, using corruption among officials to facilitate their illicit activities. Understanding these dynamics is critical in addressing the complex issues surrounding drug cartels and their impact on state governance.

2.3.7. Crime – Terror Nexus

When engaging in violence, TOCs often form alliances with other entities to achieve funding and reciprocal advantages. These alliances may include terrorist groups. Asal et al. (2019) posit that the interconnection between organised crime and terrorism is primarily motivated by the resource requirement to finance their activities. The idea that an altruistic ideology drives terrorists has been brought into question by Tamara Makarenko (Wang, 2010).

Makarenko (2004) elucidates how organised crime and terrorist groups coexist and may cooperate until converging at a central point, which she calls a "black hole." This convergence leads to the formation of a hybrid organisation. Makarenko suggests that these hybrid groups, which begin as organised crime groups, alter their tactics and adopt terrorist methods to accomplish political objectives.

On the other hand, terrorist groups may acquire criminal capabilities to utilise their political ideology to engage in organised crime (Boer and Bosetti, 2015). Therefore, both groups can engage in each other's activities and converge. For instance, Johnson (2019) argues that criminal groups recruit military and paramilitary specialists for violence, as was the case with Los Zetas in Mexico. This resulted in a paradigm shift for the Mexican government as an organised crime group adopted terrorist tactics.

Contrary to Makarenko's analysis, Johnson (2019) cautions that adopting terrorist tactics by organised crime groups is concerning. The limitation has been observed to concentrate solely on the convergence of criminal groups and terrorist groups, such as Hezbollah in Lebanon or the FARC in Colombia. Although organised crime connections to terrorism are strategic, they do not occur by chance (Johnson, 2019). Johnson queries whether more research on the terrorist tactics employed by organised crime groups is necessary since, on numerous occasions, they could be denoted as terrorists without considering that their groups' motivations remain economic. Philips



(2018) shares these ideas and contends that while drug-related violence in Mexico is not terrorism, the actions are deemed terrorist tactics. In this regard, Philips suggests that violence against the state usually aims to get them to leave the cartels alone to carry out their activities and not to have political control of the state.

Apart from Makarenko, Johnson, and Philips, James Piazza, and Scott Piazza (2020) propose that the engagement of terrorist groups in criminal activities increases their longevity. This means there is a causal relationship between criminal activities and group longevity and that terrorist groups involved in drug trafficking and extortion will likely have a more complex organisational structure to carry out these activities. Perliger et al. (2022) add that criminal and terrorist organisations may establish transnational or logistical relationships to exchange resources. Vianna de Azevedo et al. (2020) explains that the nexus between organised crime and terrorism manifests itself in two principal ways: The first, the transactional nexus, implies when there is a union between both groups to perform specific operational tasks, in which there is either a simple alliance of the tasks to be performed or an appropriation of each other's tactics. The second, the organisational nexus, occurs when both terrorist and criminal activities take place in the same space and time, i.e., they overlap, which is clarified by Makarenko's black hole definition.

In contrast, Louise Shelley (2014) indicates that corruption is a critical element of the relationship in this convergence since officials are involved in



these activities on many occasions for them to occur. The case of Hezbollah is a clear example since corrupt governments have enabled the potential of its activities (Vianna de Azevedo et al., 2020).

2.4. CONCLUSION

This chapter has demonstrated the existence of diverse academic discussions and theoretical approaches within the literature review regarding civil war, organised crime, and terrorism. Despite the extensive literature available, this review primarily focuses on the role of ANSAs, specifically organised crime groups, and their involvement in illicit activities, particularly drug trafficking. Moreover, this study examines how the incursion of these groups can negatively impact a country's governance and security, potentially leading to the control of state territories by these groups. Additionally, this literature review addresses the convergence of organised crime and terrorism, where different ANSAs can coordinate and ally with each other for economic gain and to achieve their objectives. On the other hand, Lessing's approach provides an excellent framework for this thesis, as it elucidates the link between ANSAs, such as insurgents and cartels, and weak governance resulting from conflict, violence, and corruption, leading to their engagement in illicit activities.

Despite the extensive literature, scholars still need to address certain points. Within these limitations, there is a lack of exploratory studies on the



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evolution of the modus operandi and illicit activities that ANSAs engage in, specifically criminal groups involved in drug trafficking, and their negative impacts on state governance and civil society, such as homicides resulting from violence and these activities. In this dynamic, scholars such as Felbab-Brown, Briscoe et al., and Van Dijk mentioned how these groups influence corruption leading to their ability to maintain their operations, especially in fragile states. However, more research is needed on the relationship between the criminal organisation, civil society in the territory that ANSAs control, and the ineffectiveness of the state in providing security and stability to the population. In this aspect, the state sometimes neglects the same illicit activities in which the civilian population is involved due to the territorial control of criminal groups. Therefore, this strengthens the criminal organisation and thus maintains the violence. Therefore, further academic studies in the field are necessary to understand the current situation better. This thesis addresses the relationship between Hezbollah's drug trafficking and the Sinaloa Cartel's impact on the Mexican and Lebanese governments, reflected in drug seizures as an institutional weakness, as well as on the civilian population in the number of homicides resulting from the violence of these groups' activities.



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CHAPTER 3 | RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION OF THE METHODOLOGY

A comparative case study design is used to answer my central research question in this dissertation. In addition, the research uses a structured-focused comparison method to compare certain aspects of the cases to be examined in the historic period selected to refine the theoretical and practical elements (George & Bennett, 2005: 58; Kachuyevski: 2014). This research is essential to explore, identify and understand determined patterns through a critical, quantitative, and qualitative view in the selected countries and time. (Bartlett and Vavrus, 2017; Goodrick, 2014: 1). Besides, only two countries were chosen for comparison because it is more effective to compare a small number of cases in this methodology (Lijphart, 1975: 163; Levy, 2008: 10).

The case studies selected were Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Sinaloa Cartel in Mexico. Both organisations are linked to a variety of illicit activities; the research focuses exclusively on drug trafficking by both organisations in a period between 2016 and 2021. In the case of Mexico, it will be analysed during the administrations of Enrique Peña Nieto from 2016 to 2018 and Andrés Manuel López Obrador from 2018 to 2021. On the other hand, in the case of Lebanon, the administrations of Prime Minister Saad Hariri (2016 - 2020) and Hassan Diab (2020 - 2021) will be analysed.

The rationale for the timeframe (2016 - 2021) is justified for the following reasons: regarding Lebanon, for the last few years, the country has been facing a significant economic crisis caused by various factors, including unemployment, food insecurity, corruption and long gaps in governance and security services, in addition to clashes over fuel, primary resources, as well as violent protests and riots (COAR, 2021). This could have allowed Hezbollah to strengthen its criminal activities and encourage violence in the country. On the other hand, according to the U.S. Congress (Beittel, 2022), in Mexico during Enrique Peña Nieto's administration, homicides rebounded from 2016 until the end of his administration in 2018, as an indicator of the increase in violence. Likewise, this report notes that according to the State Department's annual report on human rights in 2021, organised crime groups linked to drug trafficking were involved in various events related to homicides and corruption, with the Sinaloa Cartel being one of the most representative.

Bartlett and Vavrus (2017: 907) argue that in the comparative case study, time as a contemporary historical process is relevant to understanding the perspective of the phenomena under study. This timeframe can be justified by its recent relevance, as it allows focusing on recent developments and events related to the illicit activities of Hezbollah and the Sinaloa Cartel. By considering the period from 2016 to 2021, this research can collect the most updated information and impacts on governance in terms of security in Lebanon and Mexico. Also, the availability of data during a relatively recent period would

ensure the finding of relevant data sources, increasing the reliability of the research results. The dynamics during this period will provide a complete and accurate analysis of this research. Likewise, the case study observes that this research should be conducted with a contemporary phenomenon in depth (Yin, 2009). This will ensure that these selected years provide a broader social, political, and economic context of the dynamics and implications of the illicit activities of Hezbollah and the Sinaloa Cartel on the governance structures and security frameworks in Lebanon and Mexico.

In summary, the rationale for the selected time frame between 2016 and 2021 is based on greater data availability, dynamics, and the contemporary context. This timeframe allows the research to provide relevant information on how the illicit activities of Hezbollah and the Sinaloa Cartel, to be precise, in drug trafficking, undermine the governance and security of the mentioned governments.

3.2. THE RATIONALE FOR A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY

The main objective of this research is to have a clear understanding and explanation of how the illicit activities, specifically drug trafficking, carried out by Hezbollah and the Sinaloa Cartel, impact the weakening of governance in terms of security, mainly concerning the increase of violence and insecurity in the areas where these organisations operate.

I selected a comparative case study, as it helps explain the exploration of illicit activities, organised crime, and their outcomes through the comparison method. (Goodrick, 2014: 1; Bryman, 2012: 72). In the field of security, political science and international relations, this method is relevant to understand the conditions in which this phenomenon develops, in this case, illicit activities, as it allows to extract the common and different patterns, and the results that explain it, i.e., the increase in the levels of violence in Lebanon and Mexico (Burnham, et al., 2008: 66).

3.3. THE RATIONALE FOR CASE STUDIES SELECTION

For this research, Lebanon and Mexico will serve as case studies. Both countries were selected because their governments have faced a prevalence of illicit activities by armed non-state actors, such as organised crime, and as an outcome, weakening of governance in terms of security. On the one hand, the government of Mexico has faced drug trafficking as an illicit activity by Sinaloa Cartel, the country's most prominent organised crime organisation. On the other hand, Lebanon has faced problems related to Hezbollah's illicit activities, specifically drug trafficking.

Mexico is an important transit route for drug trafficking due to its proximity to the United States and as a connection to Central America. Similarly, Hezbollah in Lebanon has regional implications due to its connections with various criminal actors in the Middle East. Examining this



case could shed light on the regional dynamics in the transnational nature of threats.

Regarding the governance aspect, Mexico and Lebanon represent different contexts, so there is an area of opportunity in a comparative analysis. Mexico is a federal republic with another institutional framework than Lebanon, which has a complex confessional system due to a power-sharing arrangement. Studying the impact of illicit activities on governance and security in different contexts can provide valuable insights. The detection of common patterns in the different contexts of Mexico and Lebanon is relevant, for example, their political system and geographic location (Amarasingam, et al., 2022: 3). Both countries face fundamental security challenges, albeit of a different nature. Mexico has faced high levels of violence, homicides, and the presence of various organised crime organisations. On the other hand, Lebanon has experienced problems linked to terrorism, political instability, and other external influences, yet both share corruption as a determining factor plaguing the form of government. By examining the impact of illicit activities on security in these various contexts, the case study can explain commonalities and differences in how governance is weakened, and safety compromised.

By conducting a comparative analysis of their methodologies and results, policymakers may acquire valuable knowledge regarding optimal techniques and acquired knowledge in combating the compromised security governance that is a consequence of the actions carried out by Hezbollah and

the Sinaloa Cartel. In summary, the choice of Mexico and Lebanon as countries for a comparative case is justified by the prevalence of their illicit activities, regional importance, diverse governance contexts and various security challenges. The research could provide insight and understanding of the impact of the activities of these armed non-state actors while offering ideas for addressing similar challenges in different contexts. While the comparative analysis will provide a greater understanding of the context, caution must be maintained about the levels of generalisation that can be made in this research case (Burnham et al., 2008: 68). It should be clarified that the conclusions cannot be generalised beyond these cases under inquiry.

3.4. THE RATIONALE FOR A STRUCTURED-FOCUSED COMPARISON METHOD

Within this methodology, the structured-focused comparison is the method that will be used to analyse the research. According to George and Bennett (2005: 58), this method is simple and direct since, in addition to the main research question, other general questions reflecting the objective of the research are drafted to standardise the data collection and make possible a systematic comparison and accumulation of the conclusions of the cases. For this, there must be a selection and analysis within a class or subclass of the phenomenon, in this case, illicit activities, to employ the variables of theoretical interest to explain this phenomenon, which will influence the results (George and Bennett, 2005: 58). In the comparative case and using this method, the

relevant variables affect the results of the research (Kachuyevski, 2014). In this respect, the forthcoming research analysis will employ one independent variable in conjunction with the dependent variable, with two indicators. As an independent variable, the ‘illicit activity of armed-non state actors’ (of Hezbollah and the Sinaloa Cartel); in this case, the illegal activity chosen is ‘drug trafficking’. It is worth mentioning that corruption will be seen as a factor affecting the variation of this variable. My dependent variable is ‘the weakening of governance in terms of security’ for Lebanon and Mexico; in this regard, I provide two empirical indicators: 1) drug seizures and 2) the number of homicides. For the case of Mexico, the indicator for the number of homicides will be concentrated with the measurement of those deaths in the states of Sinaloa, Chihuahua, Baja California, Baja California Sur, Durango, and Sonora since these are the areas where the Sinaloa Cartel has its primary operations. In the case of Lebanon, Hezbollah operates throughout the entire country. Therefore, the number of homicides throughout the country will be analysed. In the case of drug seizures, the Mexican side will count those coming from the Sinaloa Cartel, and the Lebanese side will count drug seizures throughout the country.

3.5. SELECTION OF THE UNITS OF ANALYSIS

In addition to choosing Lebanon and Mexico as countries for the comparison study, it was essential to determine which representative criminal organisations to select and conduct adequate research to explore the relationship

between the independent and dependent variables. For the case of Mexico, I chose the Sinaloa Cartel, as it is considered one of the longest-operating organisations in Mexico, as well as being comprised of a network of smaller organisations (Beittel, 2022: 24). In fact, the U.S. Congress (Beittel, 2022: 25) considers it to be the most powerful drug trafficking syndicate in the western hemisphere, with a network not only at the state or regional level but worldwide. Likewise, the DEA has catalogued this organisation as the leading drug-supplying organisation in that country (Beittel, 2022), in addition to being a reference as the Mexican criminal organisation with the most significant international presence. Regarding Hezbollah, which describes itself as a Shiite resistance organisation in Lebanon, is considered a social, political, military, and cultural network within this resistance discourse (Nilsson, 2020). Compared to the Sinaloa Cartel, Hezbollah is politically recognised by its country, as it is registered as a political party in Lebanon, is officially involved in providing social assistance to the population and has a paramilitary wing. Unlike the Sinaloa Cartel, the original motivations for this organisation were not economic but ideological. However, in addition to being politically recognised, Hezbollah is also considered a terrorist organisation by several governments and organisations, such as the United States and the European Union (Realuyo, 2014). Therefore, this organisation is the perfect example of the terror-crime convergence phenomenon. For this research, Hezbollah will be used only as a criminal organisation since, like the Sinaloa Cartel, within its illegal operations, drug trafficking is among its primary operations in this field.

In summary, the selection of a comparative case study is because both actors are linked to illicit activities and pose essential challenges to the governance and security not only of both countries but also at the regional and international levels. These cases also provide contrasting contexts and allow us to examine the impact of illicit activities on governance and security in different regions. Other criteria for selecting these cases were the following: In both cases, the context of the presence of corruption is because of the influence of these criminal organisations in local politics, allowing them to operate freely. Additionally, the selected cases (Lebanon and Mexico) must reckon with different historical, political, cultural, and social experiences, however, with common patterns in the case of Hezbollah and Sinaloa Cartel operations regarding drug trafficking activities.

Investigating different cases, such as Lebanon and Mexico, will help broaden the understanding of the impact of illicit activities on governance and security in both countries. The research that will analyse common patterns, such as drug seizures and the number of homicide deaths in both, will allow identifying key factors and causal mechanisms by contrasting contextual differences and strengthening conclusions.



In the structured-focused comparison method, in addition to the main research question, George and Bennett (2005: 59) argue that it is crucial to have a series of standardised questions to reflect the objective of the research and the theoretical approach and thus, data can be obtained that are important for the results of the study. These questions are aimed to reinforce the research through the variables' validity and the study's importance. (Kachuyevski, 2014). In this case, some questions to be answered in the research are as follows:

- How do the drug trafficking activities of Hezbollah and the Sinaloa Cartel differ in Lebanon and Mexico?
- How do the illicit activities of Hezbollah and the Sinaloa Cartel exert influence and power over state security institutions to undermine state governance in Lebanon and Mexico?
- What role do external factors, such as foreign actors and global drug demand, play in facilitating the illicit activities of these groups in Lebanon and Mexico?
- What are these activities' potential long-term security implications for state governance in Lebanon and Mexico?
- How do increasing or decreasing homicide deaths in Mexico and Lebanon correlate with Hezbollah and Sinaloa Cartel drug trafficking activities?



- Are there specific moments or events where an increase or decrease in drug trafficking-related violence is observed in these countries from 2016 to 2021?

3.6. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

In terms of data collection, to conduct this research, I will employ data to compare the indicators from the dependent variable, in this case, the number of homicide deaths and drug seizures from 2016 to 2021. These statistics will come from secondary sources, such as data from the Mexican and Lebanese governments, academic sources, for example, intergovernmental organisations, i.e., the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and sources from the government of Mexico. In this paper, I selected document analysis and existing data as the principal methodologies for data collection. The secondary sources consist of the evidence linked to the event (Burnham et al., 2008: 187). Considering this, the secondary references will be used due to the time of their publication produced shortly after the events of the measurement of the variables. Therefore, the analysis of documents and existing data are essential to analyse and reinterpret these data that will answer the research question. This section represents a critical point in the research.

For data analysis, Yin (2003) emphasises that the most effective way to interpret data is through triangulation which refers to the documentation of research through different data sources while maintaining the chain of evidence



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to provide validity of the research question. This research method will strengthen the validity of the multiple data derived from the convergence of the different sources. A triangulation of sources will be used for this research, derived from quantitative and qualitative data to analyse the research question comprehensively.

The evaluation of the data collected from each case will compare the trends and patterns in Mexico and Lebanon regarding the weakening of governance in terms of security in these countries. The research will assess the similarities, differences, and significant changes between these indicators in relation to the independent variable. The interpretation of the results will evaluate the findings of the comparative analysis to determine how the weakening of security governance caused by illicit activities, specifically drug trafficking by Hezbollah and the Sinaloa Cartel, is related to the number of homicide deaths and drug seizures in security governance in Mexico and Lebanon. Moreover, I will analyse the possible connections, causalities, and associations between these variables and how they contribute to the weakening of governance.



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3.7. LIMITATIONS AND STRENGTHS OF THE COMPARATIVE CASE

STUDY METHODOLOGY

3.7.1. Limitations of the Research

This research is focused on the outcomes of drug trafficking activities carried out by Sinaloa Cartel and Hezbollah as players within the countries they have their hubs, Mexico and Lebanon. Regarding the data collection, one of the main limitations is relying exclusively on secondary resources due to the limited control over data collection, the possibility of biases from the works of other authors, and the lack and credibility of data information. In this context, it is likely some data information is outdated or incomplete, especially with that related to Lebanon, because it is possible they may not include the most recent data from drug seizures or the number of homicides in the country.

One of the reasons for using only secondary sources is that direct access to individuals involved in these criminal organisations would be dangerous, or conducting interviews with people who have at some point been involved in these activities. Likewise, it was considered to interview personnel from security agencies involved in the fight against these criminal organisations.

However, conducting an interview would also have been risky due to the possible collection of sensitive information. For this reason, the research will be presented with academic and officially available information from government security institutions and other intergovernmental agencies, i.e., secondary

information. Therefore, these data must be reliable and of quality by the sources and be brief in the comparison activity. Otherwise, the results could become less reliable (Goodrick, 2014).

This research is focused on how illicit activities, specifically drug trafficking, carried out by Hezbollah and the Sinaloa Cartel weaken the Mexican and Lebanese governments in terms of security. In this comparative case study, one should select a theoretical problem that is best understood through this type of research. Another limitation of comparative studies is to identify cases that are identical or different in all but one of the aspects (Levy, 2008). When dealing with countries with contexts, these should contain comparable data between them, in addition to considering that there may be a limited number of cases in the indicators of the variables, so caution should be exercised in generalisation since they cannot be fully representative of all contexts (Burnham, et al., 2008: 68). The availability and reliability of data could also pose problems, especially in the number of drug seizures and the number of homicides, as the official data provided by the Lebanese government may be difficult to access or the numbers provided may be incomplete or biased.

The 'most different' method in the selection case, for Mexico and Lebanon, as case studies, was considered a limitation as they are two culturally, politically, and socially different countries. Nevertheless, both coincide in the independent variable "drug trafficking" as illicit activity, i.e., a causal variable. Here the variable is the same in both cases, so they could seem ideal cases for



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comparison since the development of this research is due to the degree of affectation derived from the same type of illicit activities carried out by Hezbollah and the Sinaloa Cartel (Burnham, et al.: 2008: 79).

3.7.2. Strengths of the Research

This research, which focuses on the criminality concerning armed non-state actors and their influence on the State, is novel because my approach compares two criminal organisations in different contexts but with everyday illicit activity, drug trafficking. Although several studies have been conducted on Hezbollah and the Sinaloa Cartel and their incursion into illegal activities, comparing both organisations in the logic of violence as armed non-state actors in Lebanon and Mexico is attractive.

Furthermore, the research question addresses a contemporary issue of importance, as the illicit activities carried out by Hezbollah and the Sinaloa Cartel have significant implications for governance and security in Lebanon and Mexico. These points, therefore, highlight this research for a contribution to academia and, in practical terms, for policymakers to address governance and security challenges.



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CHAPTER 4 | ANALYSIS

4.1. CASE STUDY: HEZBOLLAH IN LEBANON

4.1.1. *Hezbollah - Overview (Historical background)*

Hezbollah surfaced in 1982 amidst the second Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon, which aimed to drive out Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) fighters (Humud, 2023). This group, consisting of Shia Muslims (Kane, 2018), emerged in response to the resistance against Israeli forces. Its name, meaning 'Party of God', was established with the assistance and supervision of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) (Worth, 2011) and drew upon economic, political, social, and ideological foundations (Van Engeland, 2008). Iran initiated the effort to unify various militant Shi'a groups in Lebanon into one organisation (Levitt, 2021). In 1985, the group presented a Manifesto outlining its radical objectives of establishing an Islamic state in Lebanon, emulating Iran, fighting Zionism, and promoting social justice for the Shia population (Van Engeland, 2008). Following the conclusion of the Lebanese Civil War, the Ta'if Accords were established in 1989. Subsequently, in 1992, Hezbollah commenced its involvement as a political party. It adopted an unconventional political engagement model while maintaining its military presence (Guarin, 2020). Since 2005, Hezbollah has held political office, with eight members occupying positions in parliament (Javed, 2022). In 2006, the group clashed with Israel again, renewing its military tactics and becoming more

radical with the support of external sponsors beyond Iran (Szekely, 2012). Since then, Hezbollah has participated in multiple conflicts outside Lebanon, diverging significantly from its original mission (Kane, 2018). Notably, the group has supported President Bashar al-Assad in Syria since 2013 against rebel mobilisations opposing his government.

Hezbollah's operations encompass a variety of scenarios, resulting in its changing position in Lebanon (Byman, 2022). Gaub (2013) highlights its complexity as a group, given its designation as a political party in contrast to its classification as a terrorist organisation in countries like the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Israel, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, as well as intergovernmental organisations such as the Arab League and the European Union. Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognise that its identities are interrelated yet distinct, evolving as Hezbollah adjusts to circumstances (Gaub, 2013). Its political clout grants it access to the resources of the Lebanese state (Byman, 2022), leading some scholars such as Javed (2022), to describe it as a state within a state. Consequently, it possesses a military wing and a political party and controls certain Lebanese territories, particularly those in the south, such as the Beqaa Valley. In other words, it performs multiple roles, including that of a Foreign Security Organization (Kokinos et al., 2022). Hezbollah also provides social goods and services in various sectors of the country, as well as health, education, and religious institutions, which it maintains for its

constituency and is funded by patrons such as the Lebanese diaspora and Iran (Byman, 2022; Levitt, 2021).

Furthermore, Hezbollah continues to employ resistance group rhetoric to safeguard the Shia community and prevent its disarmament from the military wing (Ottaway and Hamzawy, 2008:22; Gross, 2010). In this respect, Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah, who has been its representative since 1992, delivers speeches that mobilise its adherents in various spheres (Nilsson, 2020). As an organisation, it initially claims to act on behalf of the Shia community in the country but ultimately serves its interests (Levitt, 2014). To this end, it engages in militant, terrorist, and criminal activities outside Lebanon that are indispensable to its survival. For instance, Hezbollah supports other Iranian proxy groups by training and deploying military units (Levitt, 2021), including in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, the latter supporting Huthi rebels. Hezbollah's continued involvement in the Syrian conflict has jeopardised the stability of Lebanese society, resulting in factionalism and sectarian conflicts (Kane, 2018). However, the Lebanese government's weakness, the armed forces' vulnerability, and the malfunctioning of the state apparatus have given Hezbollah the latitude to pursue its Islamic project in the areas it controls (Saab, 2008).

4.1.2. Hezbollah's Illicit Activities

Hezbollah has been implicated in various illicit undertakings, not just within the confines of Lebanon but on a global scale. In this regard, the



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organisation adheres to a commercial rationale akin to many terrorist groups in the Middle East (Leuprecht et al., 2015: 903). Over time, Hezbollah has expanded its interests to include drug trafficking, arms trafficking, migrant smuggling, cigarette smuggling, diamond trading, money laundering, financial fraud, counterfeit medicines, auto parts theft, and exploitative marriage, among other things (Leuprecht et al., 2015). These pursuits serve to underwrite the military infrastructure as well as the social, religious, and educational initiatives of the organisation. Regarding fundraising, Hezbollah relies on small clusters of trustworthy actors, which foster greater coherence within these frameworks, typically composed of kin, who furnish ethnic solidarity and stability to its criminal networks overseas (Leuprecht et al., 2015).

Hezbollah, while classified as having a hierarchical structure, exhibits a tendency to maintain a flexible and adaptable framework (Leuprecht et al., 2015) concerning its criminal activities to elude detection during its operations, thus maintaining a network of diverse operators before the gains reach the organisation. In this sense, Hezbollah sustains operators who offer logistical services and precursor chemicals for cocaine refinement (Ottolenghi, 2017). Criminal operatives sometimes carry out direct instructions from Hezbollah officials (Levitt, 2016), but they do not always adhere to their guidance to preserve the organisation's covert status. Regarding operatives, Hezbollah frequently relies on its global network of supporters and sympathisers, who provide financial, logistical, and operational support and may be established as



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individual supporters or companies acting as criminal organisations (Levitt, 2017). In this context, the former provides financial support on a small scale, whereas the latter provides logistical support, such as using front companies to divert resources directly to Hezbollah (Levitt, 2017).

The organisation primarily employs individuals of Lebanese descent residing in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe, as Realuyo (2014) noted. A prime example of this phenomenon is the Tri-Border Area (TBA) between Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay. In this border region, sympathisers from the Lebanese diaspora established businesses in Ciudad del Este, Paraguay. Without regulatory measures and security, Hezbollah engaged in illegitimate activities, including soliciting donations from the local Muslim community, as Levitt (2013) and Realuyo (2014) reported.

Due to inadequate governance and institutional vulnerabilities in security and economy, criminal organisations have gained de facto control over these regions. This phenomenon extends beyond domestic groups, as foreign entities like Hezbollah have seized opportunities to operate and collaborate with local communities and national criminal organisations. This connection between transnational organised crime and the affected areas has solidified Hezbollah's presence in Lebanon, contributing to destabilisation amid an already fragile governance system. This instability is evident in the economic crisis, political control exerted by Hezbollah, and social sectarian conflicts. The detention of a Lebanese national holding Paraguayan citizenship at Ciudad del



Este International Airport in 2016 for attempting to smuggle 39 kilograms of cocaine (Ottolenghi, 2017) exemplifies the transnational organised crime activities carried out by sympathisers of Hezbollah. This example illustrates how Hezbollah sympathisers operate with ease in vulnerable economies facilitated by the corruption of officials. Additionally, other corruption involving the Paraguayan Ministry of Immigration has been reported, including document forgery and extortion in 2009, which enabled approximately 1,000 applications for Paraguayan residency for Lebanese, according to local media (Ottolenghi, 2017). Hezbollah is recognised to be involved in extortion activities, such as collecting protection at the local level and corruption, utilising its influence in communities with sympathisers for financial gain.

Hezbollah maintains connections with criminal organisations, which may not necessarily share identical ideological or political objectives but have mutual interests in engaging in illegal activities, including drug trafficking and money laundering (Realuyo, 2014). This convergence helps both parties to finance their respective purposes. While the exact budget of Hezbollah remains undisclosed to the public, it is estimated that the group receives around \$1 billion annually from Iran (Levitt, 2021). In February 2016, the DEA (U.S. Government Publishing Office, 2017) identified the group's link to a multi-million-dollar drug trafficking and money laundering network, indicating that many of Hezbollah's financial resources rely on these illicit operations. A notable example was the 2008 Operation Titan, where US and Colombian

agents dismantled an international cocaine smuggling and money laundering network that allocated a portion of the profits to Hezbollah, involving Lebanese citizen Chekry Harb (Realuyo, 2014). Concerning money laundering, the US Treasury Department reports that Hezbollah has invested in multiple front companies to finance its military activities, particularly in Iraq (Levitt, 2017).

In relation to front companies, an additional illustration pertained to the Lebanese Canadian Bank (LCB). This financial institution acted as a medium for money laundering via a plan that involved selling used vehicles throughout the Americas, Africa, and the Middle East. The resulting profits were returned to Lebanon with the organisation's assistance (Realuyo, 2014). Levitt (2013) identified further instances of 'front' companies employed by Hezbollah, specifically charities established for fundraising purposes. Due to the complexity and strategies of national security and financial entities to freeze accounts connected to the organisation, Hezbollah has adapted its logistics system to discover new paths on every continent. Levitt (2016) observed that loosely connected nodes characterise Hezbollah's structure and do not depend on hierarchical organisational links. Consequently, it is advantageous for the group to be financed by sympathisers, predominantly those in the diaspora since it is more challenging for security agencies to monitor cash flow.



4.1.3. *Governance and security situation of Lebanon*

Since it emerged as an autonomous state in 1943, Lebanon has been confronted with numerous crises and conflicts, particularly the sectarian divisions between Maronite Christians, Shia Muslims and Sunnis that have pervaded its political, economic, and social milieu. According to the World Bank (COAR, 2021), Lebanon experienced its most severe crisis in modern history, which persisted until 2021. This political and governance crisis has engendered a wave of mass protests since October 2019, which have demanded economic improvements, political changes, and the containment of corruption. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic and the explosion in the port of Beirut on 4 August 2020 have further exacerbated the situation, impeding the ability of the state to provide basic amenities like electricity and food. The prolonged crisis has been exploited by Hezbollah, which has sustained its money laundering scheme, ultimately leading to the collapse of the Lebanese banking system (Guarin, 2020). A 2021 UN study revealed that poverty levels in Lebanon doubled from 42 per cent in 2019 to 82 per cent in 2021 (Humund, 2023).

Several catalysts are attributed to the conflict situation in Lebanon, including the presence of thousands of Syrian refugees and Hezbollah's interference in the Syrian civil war; institutional malpractices and corruption, as well as banking collapse, among other causes, due to the looting of public funds by politicians; the widespread economic crisis and lack of public services, such

as food, medicine, among others (COAR, 2021). Hezbollah has also acted as a destabilising agent in many respects, for example, in the political sphere. For example, Hezbollah has recently been implicated in several political assassinations, including the death of civil society activist and Hezbollah critic Lokman Slim (Humund, 2023). Regarding security services, the Lebanese navy was deprived of food services and salary cuts due to the devaluation of the currency (COAR, 2021), which led to the desertion and retirement of elements in 2020. This caused crime rates to rise sharply, causing murder cases in December 2020 to increase by 65 per cent (COAR, 2021). Therefore, trust in the security services by the population declined, leading to the emergence of local militias as self-defence groups in many parts of the country (COAR, 2021).

The multifaceted predicaments that Lebanon is presently grappling with cannot be solely attributed to Hezbollah. However, the organisation has played a pivotal role in engineering many of them, which has led to heightened levels of uncertainty in both the government and society.

4.1.4. Analysis of drug seizures in Lebanon (in relation to Hezbollah)

As discussed in the previous subchapters, drug trafficking is one of the most significant sources of profit within Hezbollah's illicit activities. Part of these profits has allowed the group to keep its armed cells active, acquire weapons, and finance political causes (Guarin, 2020). Also, part of the drug proceeds has filtered into the government, specifically into a system of



corruption by the security forces (TGIATOC, 2017). While there is no single model to distinguish those individuals linked to drug trafficking with Hezbollah, Matthew Levitt (2016) indicated that it is likely that, in general, some are linked to the families of members of the organisation. Others are sympathisers from the Lebanese diaspora who do so for the cause. Among the sympathisers linked to drug trafficking are generally Lebanese Shi'a and not formally affiliated with Hezbollah (Levitt, 2016).

The subsequent table displays the number of kilograms confiscated by the government of Lebanon from 01 January 2016 to 31 December 2021, grouped and subcategorised by drug types. The seizures were executed under Prime Minister Saad Hariri (2016-2020) and Hassan Diab (2020-2021) administrations. The compilation of data was procured from the UNODC in the year 2022.

Number of Drug Seizures in Lebanon 2016 - 2021								
Drug Group	Drugs	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total (kilograms)
Ecstasy	Ecstasy	2	5	5	6	0.34	1.03	19.37
Amphetamine (excluding ecstasy)	Amphetamine (Captagon; Pasta; Speed)	2,175	1,337	880	662	215.16	5,597.95	10,867
Any other drugs/substances	Benzhexol; Cough syrups; Pharmaceuticals; carisoprodol; pregabalin	2,681	108	0	0	0	0	2,789
Cannabis-type drugs	Marijuana; Cannabis oil; Cannabis plants; Hashish; Cannabis seed; Other types of cannabis	7,694	6,421	8,750	5,451	24,769.59	16,125.39	69,211
Cocaine-type	Cocaine; other	185	145	174	64	66.07	29.2	663
NPS	Ketamine; phencyclidine-type substances; Plant-based NPS; synthetic cannabinoids (Spice)	14	13	24	0	0.43	18.72	70
Opioids	Opiates; Pharmaceutical opioids	57	22	15	13	13.48	34.12	155
Precursors	Non-specified precursors; precursors	0	0	245	19	0	0.00	264
Sedatives and tranquilizers	Benzodiazepines; GBL/GHB	0	0	0	0	0.01	0.91	1
Solvents and Inhalants	Solvents and Inhalants	0	10	0	0	0	0.00	10
TOTAL		12808	8061	10093	6215	25065.08	21807.32	84,049

Table 1. Seizures in Lebanon from 2016 to 2021 (in kilograms) (UNODC, 2022).

The independent variable in this study is drug trafficking. The dependent variable is the 'weakening of security governance' in Lebanon, measured by drug seizures. From 2016 to 2021, 84,049 kilograms of drugs were seized, with cannabis accounting for the highest number of seizures at 69,211 kilograms. There was a notable increase in seizures in 2020, likely influenced by factors such as the COVID-19 outbreak, the Beirut port explosion, economic crisis protests, and changes in administration, including the resignation of Prime Minister Saad Hariri in 2020. Amphetamines represented the second-largest quantity of seizures, with 10,867 kilograms seized, including cocaine paste, speed, and Captagon.

Amphetamines and cannabis were the most seized drugs in Lebanon, with amphetamines, including Captagon, showing a significant increase. The Captagon trade in Lebanon has gained prominence, leading to worsening economic illicit flows (TGIATOC, 2017). According to the UNODC, Captagon has increasingly advanced in illicit markets in the Middle East, both in terms of production, trafficking, and consumption, with Lebanon as a critical hub, especially in Beirut and the Beqaa Valley (TGIATOC, 2017 and 2021). The Beqaa Valley is a critical region for Captagon cultivation and production, with Hezbollah believed to be behind the spike in amphetamines due to its control over the area. The Beqaa Valley has several outstanding government arrest warrants for drug cultivation and production. It is the sole source of income for the locals (TGIATOC, 2017), and the inhabitants have protection from the

group. In fact, in 2014, Lebanese authorities arrested a Bulgarian known for his Captagon manufacturing skills, and a report by the Ministry of Public Health stated that large quantities of heroin are cultivated in the region (TGIATOC, 2017). This amphetamine production, especially Captagon, has also been supplied to local markets in the Gulf and the Middle East (TGIATOC, 2021). Drug lords involved in manufacturing and distributing Captagon possess superior capabilities to law enforcement, hindering Lebanon's ability to enforce drug laws. While not directly affiliated with Hezbollah, most drug lords are closely associated with the organisation. Lebanon's police force and security agencies lack resources and manpower, limiting their capacity to combat drug trafficking.

Lebanon receives limited international assistance in combating drug trafficking, particularly from Syria, a major producer of Captagon. The fear of Hezbollah's influence in the region may deter cooperation with the group. Captagon seizures underscore Hezbollah's potent drug manufacturing and trafficking activities, undermining government authority, funding the organisation, and perpetuating violence in affected areas.

The escalation in drug seizures may be attributed to the escalation of insecurity and violence in the country since 2019, consequent to the onset of protests over the economic crisis. However, it is noteworthy that some of the violence has also been linked to Hezbollah's involvement in drug trafficking. The porous border with Syria has contributed to increased drug smuggling,



making it an indispensable territory for Hezbollah. Additionally, the geographical location of the region, characterised by rugged terrain along the border, further underscores the significance of the area to Hezbollah (TGIATOC, 2017). Scholars have pointed to Hezbollah as a patron of Syrian domestic production of cannabis and hashish (Ezzi, 2020), as demonstrated by the statistics of the number of seizures of these drugs by the Lebanese government in the table above. Moreover, as a sponsor, Hezbollah represents a critical player in the supply of drugs to the Syrian market, with most of the drugs sourced from the Beqaa Valley, which is controlled by Hezbollah, and where Syrian refugees are employed in hashish farms (Ezzi, 2020).

Drug seizures in Lebanon indicate weakened security and governance for several reasons: law enforcement failures, operational deficiencies, and lack of resources for effective drug seizure efforts. Hezbollah's virtual control of the drug market results from a weak government authority, as the group relies on drug trafficking to finance its political, military, and terrorist operations. The Lebanese government's focus on protecting the country from potential war has diverted attention from the drug fight, leaving sites like the Beqaa Valley under Hezbollah's command. (TGIATOC, 2017). Consequently, drug lords operate with impunity, leading to a lack of territorial control and citizen security. The state's failure to guarantee security is evident in the relatively low number of drug seizures.



Drug seizures in Lebanon signal weakened security and governance for multiple reasons. Law enforcement failures, including operational deficiencies and inadequate resources, have hindered effective drug seizure efforts by the government. Additionally, Hezbollah's virtual control over the drug market highlights the limited authority of the Lebanese government. The group relies on drug trafficking to fund its political, military, and terrorist operations. With the focus on protecting Lebanon from potential warfare due to the Syrian civil war, combatting drug trafficking has taken a backseat for the government.

Consequently, sites such as the Beqaa Valley, under Hezbollah's jurisdiction, are not under government control (TGIATOC, 2017). This absence of regulatory power enables drug lords to control territories, leading to Hezbollah's impunity in operating within the country. The low number of drug seizures reflects the state's failure to ensure citizen security.

On the other hand, the increase in drug seizures from 2020 to 2021 may indicate a rise in violence and threats to public security, highlighting the Lebanese state's security weaknesses. The Beqaa Valley's economic dependence on Hezbollah-controlled drug cultivation exacerbates socio-economic challenges caused by the illicit drug trade. This indicates a deficiency in the state's ability to safeguard citizens' security, potentially leading to further destabilisation and exacerbating sectarian tensions in the face of the country's economic predicament.



Estimating the quantities of drugs supplied by Hezbollah domestically and internationally is challenging. A UN report confirms a drug trafficking relationship between the organisation and the Lebanese diaspora in South America (TGIATOC, 2017). Effective counternarcotics measures and sanctions against Hezbollah by the Lebanese government are necessary to weaken their criminal operations and financing, but achieving this goal remains a formidable challenge.

4.1.5 Analysis of the number of homicides in Lebanon (in relation to Hezbollah)

Intentional homicides in a nation can result from civil wars, inter-population conflicts, non-state actors with arms, or socio-economic and political dilemmas. Such homicides reflect a decline in the state's governance and citizens' safety. The two tables below depict the number of registered homicides between 2016 and 2021.

Number of Homicides in Lebanon 2016 - 2021	
Year	Number of homicides
2016	235
2017	246
2018	172
2019	182
2020	128
2021	No data
TOTAL	963

Table 2: Number of homicides in Lebanon (2016-2021) Source: UNODC

This table presents data from UNODC (2022) based on information from the Lebanese government and internal sources. Despite no figures for 2021, the table shows an increase in homicides, possibly due to inadequate data collection capacity, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic and inaccurate counting by the government. The recorded 963 deaths from 2016 to 2020 (excluding 2021) indicate significant fatalities but may not fully represent the number due to the country's instability and violence.

The increasing trend of homicides in Lebanon is evident due to the state's inability to provide protection and maintain law and order. This rise in violence can lead to a loss of trust in state security institutions and discontent among the civilian population. While the exact number of fatalities associated with Hezbollah's drug trafficking remains uncertain, the country's instability and ongoing socio-economic crisis have escalated violence and insecurity, resulting in a surge in homicides. Research indicates that Hezbollah effectively controls the drug trade in Lebanon, and most drug-related killings can be attributed to this organisation. The upsurge in drug-related homicides fosters a sense of lawlessness and insecurity in the country, undermining the rule of law and the integrity of the Lebanese judiciary. The statistical data for 2021 may be non-existent due to the change of government and the pandemic, and the number of homicides may have increased significantly due to the socioeconomic crisis and tensions caused by individuals involved in drug trafficking. Although the reasons for the homicides listed in the table may not all be related to drug

trafficking, the demand for illicit substances in Lebanon suggests that internal demand may have influenced drug trafficking and violence, further fuelling the rise in homicides, particularly during times of socio-economic crisis.

The 2019 protest movement in Lebanon led to the departure of Prime Minister Hariri's government, resulting in a financial crisis exacerbated by the port explosion in Beirut (Humud, 2023). These events triggered violence and protests, leading to the resignation of Prime Minister Hassan Diab. Police records indicate a significant surge in criminal activity within Lebanon, with homicides doubling during the first four months of 2020 compared to the same period in 2019 (AXA, 2020). While the precise number of homicides related to Hezbollah's criminal activities is challenging to ascertain due to the clandestine nature of the group and data procurement limitations, research and the data table suggest that Hezbollah is primarily involved in organised criminal activities in Lebanon, particularly drug trafficking and money laundering, with the Beqaa Valley being a prominent region where violence and homicides are often linked to drug trafficking.

Furthermore, Hezbollah's extensive influence in these areas and nationwide severely hampers security forces' efforts to combat the group, leading to weakened and destabilised governance. The civilian population is directly subjected to Hezbollah's authority as it perpetuates its criminal enterprises. The group's political clout within the Lebanese government further complicates

determining the exact number of killings directly linked to Hezbollah, hindering security forces' criminal investigations and information gathering.

4.2. CASE STUDY: THE SINALOA CARTEL IN MEXICO

4.2.1. The Sinaloa Cartel – Overview (Historical background)

The Sinaloa Cartel, alternatively known as the Pacific Cartel, is an illicit organisation that originates from Mexico and is deemed one of the most infamous entities that operate in the realm of drug trafficking globally. The organisation is also acknowledged as Mexico's most longstanding criminal organisation, encompassing an extensive network of minor criminal groups (Beittel, 2022). The group's nomenclature alludes to its roots in the Mexican state of Sinaloa, located northwest of the country, where a crucial drug trafficking production is situated. The group's inception dates to the conclusion of the 1980s, with the disbandment of the Guadalajara cartel, which primarily engaged in trafficking marijuana, cocaine, and heroin (Islas, 2020). Notably, Sinaloa's drug culture traces its origins back to the late 19th century when Chinese migrants arrived. Many entrepreneurs and producers lived in the state and distributed goods to border cities such as Nogales, Mexicali, and Tijuana (Astorga, 1999). The merchandise primarily consisted of marijuana and opium (Lessing, 2017). The inhabitants of families and small towns in the Badiraguato mountains, where poppy fields were cultivated, began to acquire knowledge about the drug business, which spread to cities such as Culiacán (Astorga, 1999).



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By the 1970s, Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo, became the leading cocaine trafficker. From him, other individuals emerged who would become notable traffickers in the forthcoming years, such as the Caro brothers, Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, the "Güero" Palma, the Arellano Felix brothers, and Amado Carrillo (Astorga, 1999).

By the late 1980s, under the leadership of Félix Gallardo, they managed to form a strategic alliance with the aim of efficiently controlling drug trafficking routes and securing their interests. In 1989, when Félix Gallardo was arrested and gradually lost control of the industry, the routes began to be divided among the trafficker's associates, and they founded their cartels, such as the Tijuana, Juárez and Sinaloa cartels, the latter of which developed an alliance with the Beltrán-Leyva brothers (Rosas, 2020). In the 1990s, the Sinaloa cartel enjoyed relative stability; although there was a struggle with other cartels to secure territories, especially along the border, drug trafficking remained in continuous operation (Islas, 2020). In this regard, in the 1990s, the Sinaloa Cartel experienced growth and consolidation as an organisation by expanding its drug trafficking production. During this period, the Sinaloa Cartel established strategic alliances with other criminal groups, such as the Juarez Cartel, the Tijuana Cartel, and the Gulf Cartel. While there were alliances between the latter two, there were rivalries and conflicts, but the alliances were temporary in this respect. The conflicts between cartels led to violence and increased drug-related homicides in the country. On the other hand, with the expansion of the Sinaloa



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cartel's activities after the conflicts with its enemies, it managed to control drug trafficking, especially cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin, and marijuana, which consolidated it as the leading criminal organisation in both Mexico and the U.S.A. (Islas, 2020).

The 2000s was a significant period for the cartel. Although "Chapo" Guzmán was arrested in 1993, he continued to control operations from prison, even when he escaped prison in 2001 (Rosas, 2020). After this escape, Guzmán consolidated himself as the organisation's leader and strengthened the group as he developed complex logistics in drug trafficking. In this regard, the organisation used submarines, carbon fibre planes, trains, transnational underground tunnels, and secret compartments, among others, all for drug trafficking (Islas, 2020). The rise of the Sinaloa Cartel prompted the US Treasury Department to designate each of its leaders a kingpin in the early 2000s (Benittel, 2022). One of the leaders, with Guzmán at the top, was Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada García, who has characteristically kept a low profile and avoided the attention of the authorities and other criminal groups (Castillo, 2001).

In 2003, Mexican President Vicente Fox launched an offensive by deploying federal troops to quell a turf war between the Sinaloa and Gulf cartels (Lessing, 2017). This provoked a call for the Cartel's presence on national territory with drug trafficking. Already in 2006, President Felipe Calderón when launched the war on drug trafficking in Mexico, which meant a state crackdown

on cartels and a war of corruption by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) until 2000, which produced cartel-state conflicts (Lessing, 2017). This had repercussions for the Sinaloa Cartel, so there were dynamics of its functioning in drug production and distribution. Jorge Chabat argues that in 2006, Calderón inherited a complicated security scenario, especially a war between cartels and high levels of violence, in addition to a significant flow of drugs to the United States (Sánchez Espinoza et al., 2019; Chabat, 2010). While the Sinaloa Cartel consolidated its presence in numerous Mexican states through territorial expansion, this was aided by co-opting local authorities, who helped it gain effective control of drug trafficking routes (Beittel, 2022). These actions also helped the cartel secure its dominance in the illicit drug market, especially by corrupting local and national public officials in Mexico (Beittel, 2022). The cartel also diversified its operations, becoming more involved in arms trafficking, money laundering, and corruption, which allowed it to consolidate its influence in different sectors of Mexican society. During this decade, the Sinaloa Cartel took advantage of any opportunity for expansion, as it also took advantage of the weaknesses or loss of leadership of other cartels to take over their territory and trafficking routes (Islas, 2020). This led to a weakening of the Mexican state's governance, which was even reflected in the assassination of police officers (Islas, 2020). In sum, the 2000s marked an expansion of the Sinaloa Cartel and clashes with the authorities and its criminal rivals. Although the authorities managed to capture members of the organisation, it continued to position itself.

By the 2010s, the organisation faced various challenges that impacted its structure and operational leadership. In 2014, Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán was recaptured, and his arrest dealt a significant blow to the group. However, he escaped again in 2015; in 2016, he was finally arrested for the last time. In January 2017, Guzmán was extradited to the United States and was tried in 2019 in Brooklyn, New York (Beittel, 2022). Since El Chapo's incarceration, the Cartel has split into four key factions, one led by "El Mayo" Zambada; another by "El Chapo's" brother, Aurelio "El Guano" Guzmán Loera; the third by a co-founder of the defunct Guadalajara Cartel; and the fourth by "El Chapo's" four sons, known as "Los Chapitos" (Beittel, 2022). Although there are changes in the structure and reconfiguration of the organisation, the Sinaloa Cartel remains a significant organisation.

4.2.2. Sinaloa's Cartel Illicit Activities

The Sinaloa Cartel's drug trafficking, arms trafficking, money laundering, and corruption activities have profoundly affected governance and security in Mexico, leading to widespread violence in the country. As a central cartel, it dominates the production, distribution, and sale of large drug quantities in Mexico and internationally. According to Beittel (2022), the group controlled between 40 per cent and 60 per cent of the drug trade in Mexico, with annual profits of up to USD 3 billion. In addition, the cartel is the main drug trafficker in the United States, controlling virtually all states except Texas and New Mexico, where it only has a presence in a few cities (Guerrero, 2021). However,

its monopoly has cost it many conflicts with other cartels, to the extent that it disputes over the plazas of Tijuana, Ciudad Juárez, Tamaulipas and Michoacán (Valdés Castellanos, 2013). The disputes have caused some localities in Mexico to become embroiled in violence, such as the cities and states mentioned above, especially those on the border with the United States. In this regard, this has generated two major crises of violence, from 2008 to 2012 during the administration of President Felipe Calderón, as part of the war on drugs, and since 2014 with the administrations of Enrique Peña Nieto and Andrés Manuel López Obrador (Lantia Intelligence, 2020). Essentially, the violent disputes have been due to internal disputes, such as the case of the splintering of the Sinaloa Cartel, following the split of the Beltrán Leyva brothers (Latina Intelligence, 2020). Since 2017, fentanyl use in the United States has reflected a public health crisis (Torres González, 2021).

In this regard, Mexico has been a critical player in the international fentanyl market, where criminal organisations have taken advantage of this synthetic opioid for its production (Torres González, 2021). Criminal organisations such as the Jalisco Cartel - New Generation (Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generación) have benefited the most from importing chemicals from China (González Torres, 2021). In this sense, the Sinaloa Cartel has also become involved in this synthetic drug as an opportunity to maximise its profits derived from its cost and popularity among consumers in the United States. In this sense, Josué Torres (2021) refers that these two groups are involved at the domestic



level in their commercialisation, and consequently, Mexico appears as a production and distribution zone. Although the Sinaloa Cartel has been able to generate profits through the trafficking of products and services it offers, it has managed to stay within its criminal boundaries (Rosas, 2020). While it uses violence to protect and defend its territory from other cartels and criminal organisations, it strategically uses violence not to generate conflict with the Mexican government (Rosas, 2020). Despite leadership disputes and bifurcations of the cartel, it has continued generating profits by trafficking new drugs, such as fentanyl, which has maintained violence in the territories where it is present and contributed to the illicit economy. In this aspect, the Sinaloa cartel, although it has tried not to confront the government, has tried to undermine the government economically, offering protection in its controlled territories and, at the same time, maintaining violence when threatened by its rivals.

Regarding protecting controlled territories, the Sinaloa cartel has assisted COVID-19-affected populations in local communities (Calderón et al., 2021). In this regard, Alejandrina Guzmán, daughter of "El Chapo", coordinated the distribution called "Provisiones Chapo" in Guadalajara, Jalisco, with basic goods such as hygiene products (Calderón et al., 2021). While the Sinaloa Cartel was not the only one offering public services, this strategy kept the group active during the pandemic, in addition to trafficking fentanyl, heroin, cocaine and other methamphetamines to the United States, especially when the borders were

closed (Realuyo, 2020). This is why many times, the services of the cartels ensure the silence of the community, such as "El Chapo" Guzmán, who was considered a Robin Hood and the communities that the Cartel protects or was protecting were not motivated to turn him in (Flanigan, 2014). In this regard, Celina Realuyo (2020) noted that despite the pandemic, transnational criminal organisations, such as the Sinaloa Cartel, could adapt quickly. In the same pandemic environment, the so-called "Los Chapitos" enforced curfews during the quarantine (Calderón et al., 2021). While violence can be counterproductive for criminal organisations in the long run, the Sinaloa Cartel can operate more freely by keeping a low profile without resorting to violent attacks (McDermott et al., 2021). In addition, the Sinaloa Cartel has been known to enjoy the support of some local populations when the organisation offers economic and security support when the state is sometimes unable to do so or when local officials are corrupt. For instance, cartel leaders have provided funds for various purposes such as festivities, churches, educational institutions, and even the construction of football arenas. Concurrently, they have diligently strived to accumulate political influence by establishing connections with clergy members, government officials, military personnel, and the general population. This is evident in Baja California Sur towns, as Felbab-Brown contended (2022).

The Sinaloa Cartel is involved in various illicit activities, including the trafficking of arms. This criminal organisation has taken advantage of the opportunity presented by arms trafficking to traffic this illegal commodity and



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safeguard its operations. To accomplish this, the group illegally imports firearms from various countries, with the United States being the primary source. One notable example is the "Fast and Furious Operation," an undercover operation carried out by the United States ATF, between 2006 and 2011. This operation permitted Mexican cartels to utilise intermediaries to smuggle over 2,500 weapons into Mexico from the United States in order to track the arsenal and neutralise arms smuggling networks (González Rodríguez, 2014). However, US agents lost control of the operation, and the weapons ultimately ended up in the hands of the cartels, particularly the Sinaloa Cartel (González Rodríguez, 2014). This resulted in a proliferation of weapons among criminals, increasing violence in Mexico. According to the database, "Firearms recovered and traced-purchased between 12/1/6 and 11/30/10 with a Mexico recovery" (González Rodríguez, 2014), the Sinaloa Cartel seized 8.07 per cent of the total arms that were intended for the operation, while the "Los Zetas" group came in first place with 44.79 per cent of the total arms seized. While the Cartel utilises arms trafficking to finance its activities, it has also, directly and indirectly, contributed to the country's violence and strengthened the Cartel's ability to confront other cartels and security forces.

Money laundering is another of the strategies used by the Sinaloa Cartel to launder the profits generated by drug trafficking activities. This activity includes all the illegitimate businesses involved in the organisation, to go unnoticed in the Mexican and international financial systems. In this regard, the



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cartel has resorted to various methods to launder money. Although they continue to resort to the classic method of cross-border cash smuggling, they have also increasingly carried out money transactions to launder millions of dollars (Realuyo, 2020). For instance, the Sinaloa Cartel has resorted to using shell companies, where criminals use individuals not directly linked to the organisation to set up front companies, such as real estate companies, brokerages, or consultancies, to conduct transactions (Realuyo, 2020). Such schemes are common with TOC organisations, as these companies generally do not file tax returns or do not match the actual amounts they launder. For instance, in 2014, the Financial Intelligence Unit (UIF) in Mexico detected four companies that sent and received resources linked to the cartel; these companies transferred 3,523.2 million pesos in less than two years (Realuyo, 2020). Although the activities of the Sinaloa Cartel have become a relevant economic activity, they come from drug trafficking activities; for example, a study pointed out that 8 per cent of the wealth generated in the state of Sinaloa in 2012 came from drug trafficking activities (Rosas, 2020). The Sinaloa Cartel generates significant economic amounts through money laundering in this relationship. Still, behind it, it generates illegal activities and undermines the integrity of financial institutions and the Mexican government's efforts to track and seize illicit asset laundering. Besides, Realuyo (2020) indicates that the Mexican cartel has used Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies to launder money, making it virtually impossible for authorities to prosecute those responsible. In this regard,

US authorities believe that Mexican cartels launder \$25 billion a year in Mexico alone (Realuyo, 2020).

The Sinaloa Cartel is the Mexican cartel with the most prominent international presence in Mexico. Although its operations are concentrated in Mexico, the cartel has expanded its operations in several countries, taking advantage of its experience in drug trafficking and its criminal infrastructure. In the United States, as mentioned above, it is one of the leading suppliers of drugs, especially for distribution along the border with Mexico. The cartel's operations are estimated to reach more than 50 countries, many thanks to international corruption (Beittel, 2022). For example, in Central America and Colombia, the cartel has used bribes to avoid a state crackdown (Beittel, 2022). In particular, the cartel uses Central and South America as transit points to secure its smuggling routes and thus ensure the supply of drugs globally. In Europe, Diorella Islas (2020) refers to a collaboration of the groups in a network to maximise profits. Although the Cartel might not play a relevant role in the trafficking of cocaine to Europe, it would have participation and presence, although not in a very relevant way. It is also possible that the Sinaloa Cartel's presence is not only limited to drug trafficking but also to other activities, such as money laundering and others.

4.2.3. *Analysis of drug seizures in Mexico (in relation to the Sinaloa Cartel)*

As noted in the previous sub-chapters linked to drug trafficking in Mexico, this illicit activity is probably the most profitable asset for Mexican cartels, specifically for the Sinaloa Cartel. Likewise, the profits derived from drug trafficking have allowed them to maintain their illicit activities and diversify their operations, not only in the country and the United States, but also internationally. The United States, the main country to which the drugs distributed by the Sinaloa Cartel are destined, has attempted to dismantle the cartel's operations by prosecuting members and associates of the organisation, mainly those financially associated with its operations (Beittel, 2022).

The cartel's influence in drug trafficking over several decades has allowed it to dabble in different types of drugs, such as marijuana, cocaine, heroin, methamphetamines and, more recently, fentanyl. Concerning the latter type of drug, its diversification has allowed it to adapt to changes and the emergence of new synthetic drugs popular with users. The following table shows the number of kilograms seized by the Mexican government at the national level from 01 January 2016 to 31 December 2021, classified into drug groups and types of drugs. The seizures shown were carried out during Presidents Enrique Peña Nieto (2016-2018) and Andrés Manuel López Obrador (2018 - 2021) administrations. The compilation is taken from data provided by UNODC (2022), which is derived from data provided in part by the Mexican government.



Number of Drug Seizures in Mexico 2016 - 2021								
Drug Group	Drugs	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total (kilograms)
Ecstasy	Ecstasy	2	1	0	1	0.63	0.81	5.44
Amphetamine (excluding ecstas)	Amphetamine	34,768	23,375	33,868	32,029	18,905.03	41,336.88	184,281.91
Any other drugs/substances	Benzhexol; Cough syrups; Pharmaceuticals; carisoprodol; pregabalin	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cannabis-type drugs	Marijuana; Cannabis oil; Cannabis plants; Hashish; Cannabis seed; Other types of cannabis	848,107	405,495	234,491	219,621	158,879.60	91,788.84	1,958,382
Cocaine-type	Cocaine; other	12,970	11,998	16,490	12,430	21,151.66	15,001.17	90,040.83
Hallucinogens	LSD	0	0	0	1	2.15	0.02	3.17
Opioids	Opiates; Pharmaceutical opioids	17,178	21,457	1,191	9,094	570.63	1,671.18	51,161.81
Precursors	Non-specified precursors; precursors	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
Sedatives and tranquilizers	Benzodiazepines; GBL/GHB	0		0	0	0	0.00	0
TOTAL		913025	462326	286040	273176	199509.7	149798.9	2283875.6

Table 3: Seizures in Mexico from 2016 to 2021 (in kilograms). Data taken from UNODC (2022).

Considering that the independent variable is drug trafficking by the Sinaloa Cartel, and the independent variable is drug seizures by the Mexican government. The table shows that the total amount of seizures by the Mexican government from 2016 to 2021 was 2,283,875.6 kilograms nationwide. The largest number of seizures was in the cannabis drug group, with 1,958,382 kilograms seized, which includes drugs such as marijuana. In this group, a trend of decreasing seizures of this type of drug can be observed since 2016. However, an increase in the amphetamines group can be seen, especially from 2020 to 2021. Regarding opioids, where fentanyl is found, an increase was also seen from 2020 to 2021. It is worth remembering that between these years, COVID was introduced, and this may have influenced the increase in the figures.



The seizures observed in this study, particularly those attributed to the Sinaloa Cartel, can be interpreted as evidence of the Mexican government's efficacy in combating cartels to some extent. However, these seizures also signify a decline in security governance for several reasons. Notably, the seizures imply an escalation in drug trafficking within the country, suggesting that the Sinaloa Cartel operates with greater audacity and efficiency. Consequently, the Mexican state is challenged to maintain security and control in certain regions, as evidenced by the states identified in the table. The fact that drug seizures are still occurring implies that the security measures implemented by the Mexican government are inadequate in containing drug trafficking, enabling the Sinaloa Cartel to overtake them. This underscores the relative impunity with which this cartel continues to operate, thus revealing the limitations of the Mexican government's efforts.

Furthermore, these seizures also expose the Sinaloa Cartel's corruption and infiltration of local and state institutions. Suppose seizures are obstructed by government officials' complicity or a lack of political will to address the problem. In that case, this weakens security governance and undermines public confidence in local and state institutions.

For the figures of this variable, I decided to take them at the national level because although the drugs may come from different Mexican cartels, the Sinaloa Cartel maintains operations in almost the entire country. According to researcher Eduardo Guerrero (2021), as of 2019, the Sinaloa Cartel had a

presence in 28 Mexican states and had 37 cells, including Mexico City, except for San Luis Potosí, Hidalgo, Jalisco, and Morelos. Some of the Mexican institutions involved in narcotics seizures are: the Ministry of Navy (SEMAR), which through the Mexican Navy intercepts and seizes drugs in Mexican ports and territorial waters; the Ministry of National Defence (SEDENA), which is responsible for Mexico's national defence and internal security, which participates in operations against drug trafficking, both in land and border areas; the Fiscalía General de la República (FGR); which was known as the Procuraduría General de la República (PGR) until the Enrique Peña Nieto administration, and which, through its agents such as the Policía Federal Ministerial, conducts anti-drug trafficking operations, including drug seizures; the National Security Commission (CNS), which coordinates and oversees security actions in Mexico, through the Intelligence Division and Gendarmerie Division, is dedicated to drug trafficking operations and drug seizures; in addition to the State and Municipal Police, which seize narcotics at the local level, in collaboration with the federal level institutions to combat drug trafficking. While these and other security institutions in Mexico are dedicated to surveillance and counter-narcotics operations, corruption has also led officials and agents to allow drugs to pass through from abroad and for distribution within the country and across borders, especially at the local level. It is also important to highlight the seizures made by security agents at Mexican airports, mainly those with international operations, where drug seizures have also occurred.

Researcher Diorella Islas (2020), for example, highlights the Sinaloa Cartel's modus operandi and the diversity of techniques used by the group, resulting in the constant flow of drugs to the United States. This constancy and variety in the supply of drugs are also because the large revenues obtained by the cartel allow it to maintain this network of flows, not only nationally but also internationally, especially in the United States, together with corruption, which allows it to bribe both officials and security agents (Islas, 2020).

While the Sinaloa Cartel has faced many challenges, especially between 2020 and 2021, such as clashes with rivals, the criminal organisation's connections abroad have allowed it to maximise its profits compared to other Mexican cartels. In this regard, several analysts suggest that the group's dominance remains hegemonic, both domestically and internationally, as well as infiltrating the upper echelons of the Mexican government. Although the Jalisco Cartel - New Generation (CJNG) has been expansive in Mexico, it is not necessarily as powerful as the Sinaloa Cartel (Beittel, 2022). And although there have been splits within the group internally, these have not prevented the flow of drugs through its operations to remain a prominent criminal organisation.

4.2.4. Analysis of the number of homicides in Mexico (in relation to the Sinaloa Cartel)

The related deaths in Mexico reflect the violence and criminality in the country for various reasons, resulting from a combination of several complex

factors. Although no single cause reflects all the problems that contribute to homicides in Mexico, several determinants cause them: first and foremost, among them is violence derived from drug trafficking and organised crime. Many of them are caused by drug cartels and other criminal groups that fight for territory and with the security forces, resulting in civilian deaths. An example was in previous subchapters with the drug war initiated in 2006 under Felipe Calderón. These efforts by the Mexican government have also led to increased violence and homicides. Socio-economic inequality and lack of opportunities in Mexico are drivers of violence and homicides, which lead more individuals to join and participate in criminal activities. In Mexico, a relevant factor is the number of femicides that have occurred throughout the national territory, which has increased in the last decade of the 2010s and left deaths discriminatory towards women.

Presented below is a tabular representation of the counts of intentional homicide in Baja California, Baja California Sur, Chihuahua, Durango, Sinaloa, and Sonora from the period 2016 to 2021. The rationale behind selecting these states is the prevalence of the Sinaloa Cartel's authority over these territories. The Sinaloa Cartel's illegal activities and association with violent occurrences in these states may have contributed to a significant number of homicides, albeit not all homicides may be solely attributed to the Cartel. The exact quantification of homicides linked to drug trafficking is arduous to obtain from publicly available sources. Hence, the homicide counts in these states substantially

reflect the extent of homicides and their direct correlation with the Sinaloa Cartel, owing to its dominance in these regions of Mexico. The Executive Secretariat of Mexico's National Public Security System and the Sinaloa State Public Security Council (CESP) are the sources of this information.

Number of Homicides in Mexico 2016 - 2021						
Year	State	State	State	State	State	State
	Sinaloa	Chihuahua	Baja California	Baja California Sur	Durango	Sonora
2016	1,162	1,470	1,244	269	236	630
2017	1,565	2,000	2,312	788	216	727
2018	1,122	2,199	3,132	185	182	857
2019	935	2,576	2,865	84	170	1,356
2020	820	2,689	2,940	67	180	1,585
2021	643	2,434	3,030	51	158	1,930
TOTAL	6,247	13,368	15,523	1,444	1,142	7,085

Table 4: Number of homicides in Mexico (2016-2021) Own elaboration.

Source: CESP and Secretariado Ejecutivo del Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública de México.

The table displays homicide statistics from 2016 to 2021, with Baja California registering the highest number of intentional homicide deaths (15,523), followed by Chihuahua (13,368), Sonora (7,085), Sinaloa (6,247), Baja California Sur (1,444), and Durango (1,142). Notably, Sonora, Chihuahua, and Baja California experienced an increase in homicides since 2019, while Sinaloa, Baja California Sur, and Durango saw a decrease.

Concerning these figures, Baja California and Baja California Sur have experienced clashes between cartels and criminal groups, resulting in high

violence and homicides, especially in Baja California. Tijuana, Mexicali, and Tecate border cities are relevant for criminal organisations such as the Cartel due to their significance in drug trafficking and other illicit activities, including arms trafficking. These disputes over trafficking routes and territory may have increased homicides recently.

Sinaloa is considered the home state and stronghold of the Sinaloa Cartel. For several years it has been the scene of violent clashes, both by rival groups and security forces. The cartel's presence has influenced the high murder rates in the state, especially in Culiacán, which is important for the criminal organisation. An example of this was on 17 October 2018, when a failed operation to capture Ovidio Guzmán, son of Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, triggered a wave of violence in the city of Culiacán, which exposed a lack of coordination on the part of the security forces, as well as a weak security strategy, both in terms of the possible consequences and in securing the drug trafficker (Serrano, 2021). Ovidio's capture made it clear that the Sinaloa Cartel's mobilisation was greater, threatening military installations and at different points frequented by civilians, such as streets, the airport, and roadblocks. In this regard, the federal government was forced to release the son of "El Chapo", and the head of the Mexican government said he did so to avoid further conflict, violence, and deaths in the civil society of Culiacán and other towns in the state. This is why the deaths by homicide are a clear sign of the state's inability to address citizen security, in this case in Sinaloa, both at the

state and federal levels. In this sense, the Sinaloa Cartel showed the control it had to provoke disturbances and how its activities killed civilians and security forces. Ovidio was finally recaptured on 5 January 2023.

The state of Durango has experienced the impact of the Sinaloa Cartel and other cartels. The elevated prevalence of premeditated homicides and general violence within the region can be ascribed to the competition amongst criminal factions and their conflicts over regulating transport routes. Similarly, in Chihuahua, drug trafficking and clashes between criminal groups, particularly the Sinaloa Cartel, have led to increased intentional homicide deaths. This state is strategically important to the organisation due to its border with the United States and its large size, including significant cities like Ciudad Juárez that share a border with El Paso, Texas. Sonora has also seen increased violence in recent years, evidenced by a higher number of homicides, largely linked to drug trafficking activity. Although the Sinaloa Cartel is in the state, other criminal groups have emerged, contributing to the region's high death rates, violence, and insecurity. While homicide levels vary across Mexico's different regions, it is crucial to recognise that the intermittent presence of violence and social conflicts, such as criminality and femicides, associated with the Sinaloa Cartel in these states is a significant problem that the Mexican government must address with a more incisive approach to strengthen its institutional capacity.



4.3. DISCUSSION

4.3.1. Identification of common patterns and differences

The section on the Research Design Method addressed the rationale for choosing the two cases for comparative study. In this regard, I first clarify that both the Sinaloa Cartel and Hezbollah are studied from the perspective of criminal organisations because this study focuses on the illicit activities they carry out, specifically drug trafficking.

Both actors pose important challenges to the security of Lebanon and Mexico, not only for governance and in its different spheres, such as economic, political, and social, but also in security and how these actors affect and weaken security institutions and other spheres. In this sense, in security, both actors increase the levels of corruption in their respective countries and the levels of violence and criminality that provoke crises, both at the socio-economic and political levels. The following is an assessment of what common and different patterns emerged from the research and analysis of the two cases and how they impact the security governance of Mexico and Lebanon.

4.3.2. Common patterns between Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Sinaloa Cartel in Mexico

Lebanon and Mexico are both countries that have been affected by the presence of criminal organisations that have had a negative impact on governance and security for several decades. One of the key factors that have



enabled the existence of these groups is corruption, which has given rise to armed non-state actors like Hezbollah and the Sinaloa Cartel, leading to violence, illicit activities, and a pervasive sense of fear and insecurity among the local population. Local authorities have also contributed to the problem in both countries by complicity in allowing these organisations to operate with impunity. Even though the levels of corruption differ between Lebanon and Mexico, it has influenced both governments to empower these criminal organisations, as evidenced by drug seizures and the number of homicides in both countries. In relation to this matter, individuals in positions of authority who collaborate with said groups, either through bribery or intimidation, facilitate their illicit undertakings with impunity, thus rendering them immune to capture. This is particularly true in Mexico, where the Sinaloa Cartel exercises significant control over local authorities. On the side of Hezbollah, since it is also a political party, it benefits from local and federal corruption.

Regarding drug seizures, both the Lebanese and Mexican governments have made larger seizures of cannabis and cannabis derivatives, reflecting the importance and preference of this drug for criminal organisations in both countries, specifically for Hezbollah and the Sinaloa Cartel. Most of the profits in the illicit activities of both organisations come from drug trafficking, and the seizure results reflect that both share the greatest profits from cannabis and its derivatives. It is important to note that both groups benefited from the emergence of COVID-19, although in 2020 and 2021, seizures of drugs such as

cannabis were maintained and increased in both countries. This means that both organisations increased their number of products and services in drug trafficking because although the number of seizures increased, which could mean an economic loss for both criminal groups, at the same time it reflects that they increased their operations. Therefore, this could mean that both organisations saw their profits maximised. Likewise, as researcher Celina Realuyo (2020) mentions, both organisations were able to adapt quickly to the pandemic, and one aspect that both the Sinaloa Cartel and Hezbollah took advantage of was the provision of services such as basic goods to communities in which they operate and which the government does not support. Both groups saw the Lebanese and Mexican government's failure to support rural communities during this period as an area of opportunity so that by supporting these communities, they could maintain support and protection from these populations.

Regarding the incidence of homicides, the analysis for Lebanon was predicated on the aggregate number of deaths nationwide, as the available open sources could not obtain data on regional levels. Furthermore, the limitations associated with homicide reporting were duly acknowledged. On the other hand, the states of Sinaloa, Durango, Baja California, Baja California Sur, Chihuahua, and Sonora were scrutinised in the case of Mexico. Despite the disproportionate population in Mexico and Lebanon, the total number of homicide deaths in the latter was lower than that of the combined six Mexican states. The fact remains

that the incapacity of both governments to provide accurate data on deaths related to drug trafficking has led to the absence of precise approaches.

Nevertheless, it is possible to posit that the number of homicides indicates the challenges faced by both governments in reducing homicides, pointing to their institutional frailties in ensuring the safety of their population.

Despite the limitations, this underscores the institutional weaknesses of both countries, with the issue being more pronounced in Lebanon, where the government has not provided any data on the number of deaths in 2021. However, based on the research on the exponential activities of both Hezbollah and the Sinaloa Cartel in drug trafficking, it can be inferred that the number of homicides may be closely linked to the illicit operations of these organisations.

4.3.3. Differences between Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Sinaloa Cartel in Mexico

Lebanon and Mexico represent different contexts concerning their society, economy, politics, geography, and history. In this sense, while Lebanon's predominant religion is Islam, Sunni, and Shia, in Mexico, it is the Catholic Church. Regarding the economy, Mexico has a higher GDP, with 1,414,187.19 US dollars (World Bank, 2022), while Lebanon has only 23,121.94 US dollars (World Bank, 2021). On the other hand, Mexico is a federal republic, while Lebanon has a confessional system where there is agreement on power sharing.

In terms of governance, Mexico and Lebanon represent different contexts, so there is an area of opportunity in a comparative analysis. Mexico is a federal republic with a different institutional framework than Lebanon, which has a complex confessional system due to a power-sharing arrangement. Studying the impact of illicit activities on governance and security in different contexts can provide valuable insights. Detecting common patterns in the different contexts of Mexico and Lebanon is relevant, for example, their political system and geographical location. Differences can be attributed to these and other contextual factors in the dynamics of each country.

Concerning the number of drug seizures in the periods analysed, Mexico outperforms Lebanon. This could reflect two considerations, the first being that the Mexican government is more efficient in combating drug trafficking and that its institutions are more stable than those of Lebanon. The second assertion is that the Mexican cartels, specifically the Sinaloa Cartel, have greater operations than drug trafficking, given that the higher number of seizures does not necessarily reflect the country's socio-economic stability but rather that the criminal organisations know that they have the freedom to operate drug trafficking operations. In this respect, the Sinaloa Cartel may generate greater drug trafficking profits than Hezbollah. In this sense, the US government has estimated that the Sinaloa Cartel's annual profits are 3 billion dollars a year (Beittel, 2022), in addition to the fact that the cartel's main consumer is the neighbouring country, which facilitates its distribution. On the other hand,

although Hezbollah has drug trafficking operations in various regions of the world, its activities in this area are more recent than those of the Sinaloa Cartel.

Regarding the number of homicides and seizures, Mexico outnumbers Lebanon and only in the Mexican states analysed. Beyond the difference in population numbers, it is possible that the Lebanese government under-reports the actual number of homicides. This would denote an institutional incapacity of the Lebanese government in terms of security, as it cannot reflect the real figures. This stems from the fact that Lebanon has experienced increased episodes of political violence, institutional weakness, and internal conflicts, which do not match the figures provided, which would be limited. In this sense, both countries socio-economic and political contexts proportionally influence violence and homicides.

Moreover, the dynamics of the Sinaloa Cartel and Hezbollah are distinct, which may influence the nature and extent of homicides linked to them. In this respect, the cartel's levels of violence may be higher than Hezbollah's, given the territorial conflicts with other cartels, criminal organisations, and security forces. In Lebanon, violence may also be attributed to sectarian conflict, which makes the motivations for intentional homicide different.



4.3.4. Impacts of Hezbollah and the Sinaloa Cartel on the Governance and Security in Mexico and Lebanon

The fundamental question at the heart of this investigation posits, "How do illicit activities of Hezbollah and the Sinaloa Cartel in Lebanon and Mexico weaken these countries' governance in terms of security?". The response to this question has been derived from examining the illicit activities conducted by these entities, predominantly drug trafficking, and how they have eroded the institutions of the Lebanese and Mexican governments. To expound further, on one hand, the drug trafficking endeavours of Hezbollah have enabled the group not only to persist in this unlawful practice but also to continue financing other criminal undertakings in which it is involved, thereby facilitating: The challenging of the capacity of Lebanese state security forces by the government has instilled fear. This has resulted in Hezbollah maintaining control over some of Lebanon's territory. The government hesitates to risk the security elements as it could lead to further internal conflict. The Lebanese government may prefer maintaining a status quo with Hezbollah to prevent a severe blow to the already weak government. Besides, protecting social and community interests is crucial for the government. However, Hezbollah has employed the civilian population in its territories, particularly in the south and Beqaa Valley region, to consolidate its position. Consequently, the Lebanese government cannot act against Hezbollah in these regions.

Hezbollah's drug trafficking activity has increased violence and insecurity in the country. Corruption is its main illicit activity that maximises profits. This allows Hezbollah to control part of the population and buy off the authorities. As a result, the autonomy of governance is undermined, making it impossible for security forces to act against the organisation.

In the case of Mexico, the drug trafficking activities of the Sinaloa Cartel have had the following impact on governance and security in the country: The issue of violence and insecurity is prevalent in the territories controlled by the Sinaloa Cartel, which has resulted in the organisation subjugating the population while providing security and economic support to its citizens. Unfortunately, this has had a negative impact on the governability of the Mexican state. Furthermore, The Sinaloa Cartel has maintained corruption primarily at the local level in its operations, thanks to the profits generated from drug trafficking. This has allowed the cartel to maximise profits and strengthen its operational capabilities. As a result, corruption and impunity have become a major concern for the Mexican government. Although drug trafficking remains the main activity of the Sinaloa Cartel, its profits have allowed for the diversification of its criminal activities. This has had a detrimental effect on the economy and violence in the country. To combat the cartel's activities, the Mexican government has had to deploy more security personnel, which has increased violence and deaths.



CHAPTER 5 | CONCLUSION AND FINAL

THOUGHTS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this thesis was to establish a theoretical relationship of how armed non-state actors, in this case, Hezbollah and the Sinaloa Cartel, affect the security governance of Lebanon and Mexico, respectively, through their illicit activities, in this case, drug trafficking. The original idea for this topic came from observing how organised crime groups can have a highly negative impact on the governance of states, to the extent that they can influence their stability and decision-making. In addition to organised crime, the research aimed to explain how, even though two countries with different contexts can share similar problems derived from the actions of criminal organisations in the economic, political, and social spheres of the selected countries. In this regard, the selection was due to the choice of two internationally prominent criminal organisations, one dedicated exclusively to illicit activities and the second not only a criminal actor but an actor with origins in the insurgency. In addition to being a political party, having a recognised military, and primarily being recognised by other countries as a terrorist organisation, this is a convergence of organised crime and terrorism. Specifically, my research focused on how illicit activities can profoundly influence the extent to which the governance and operability of security



institutions in a state can be weakened to the point of producing violence. In this case, my fundamental argument was to prove that drug trafficking could have a significant impact on the operability of security and thus have serious consequences on the functioning of the state in its socio-economic and political spheres.

5.2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Based on the analysis of the deleterious impact of the illicit activities of Hezbollah and the Sinaloa Cartel on security governance in Lebanon and Mexico, certain conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, it is evident that drug trafficking is a pivotal activity for the operations and existence of both organisations, as it not only maximises their profits but also enables them to control de facto territories, officials, security forces, and authorities. This, in turn, results in an atmosphere of violence and hostility in certain regions of Lebanon and Mexico. Additionally, it is crucial to note that supporting the civilian population is imperative for sustaining illicit operations, particularly drug trafficking, for these organisations. Hence, it becomes arduous for authorities and security forces to confront these organisations in their territories.

Furthermore, corruption, as a derivative of drug trafficking influence, plays a fundamental role in perpetuating Hezbollah and the Sinaloa Cartel, as local authorities are often co-opted and influenced to receive larger amounts of money. This allows for stable operability for these organisations. Moreover, the

number of drug seizures can be perceived as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it demonstrates the effectiveness or weakness of state authorities in combating these groups. On the other hand, it denotes the high operational capacity of these organisations to traffic drugs. In the case of Lebanon, it indicates the weakness of the security forces in confronting Hezbollah. Whereas, in the case of Mexico, while drug seizures demonstrate the government's effectiveness in curbing drug trafficking, they also reflect the power of the Sinaloa Cartel's operational capacity to sustain itself and the difficulty that the state's armed forces would encounter while combatting the organisation directly. Additionally, the number of homicide deaths in Lebanon and Mexico provides evidence that drug-trafficking activities are directly and indirectly linked to Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Sinaloa Cartel in the Mexican states of Durango, Baja California, Baja California Sur, Chihuahua, Sinaloa, and Sonora. These violent actions could lead to internal conflicts and create distrust in the inoperability of the state to protect its citizens.

5.3. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

In the literature of research on the theoretical approaches to civil warfare and organised crime, some linked studies have allowed for the development of diverse academic research, especially on the convergence of civil warfare with non-armed-state actors in organised crime issues or the crime-terror nexus, the latter mostly directed towards Hezbollah. Several limitations emerged during



the research process, such as access to reliable data, as the number of drug seizures and homicides can vary, even from those published by the government. One of the main obstacles that researchers face is the acquisition of precise and dependable data pertaining to these variables, which is particularly crucial in comparing strategies derived from the unlawful operations of criminal organisations. It is worth mentioning that these figures may need to be revised, given the transparency of countries' official reports, especially those where corruption is prevalent, as was the case in Lebanon for this research. Future research should require developing alternative methods without compromising the researcher's security.

Future research should consider a multidisciplinary approach and combine different perspectives, not only from the security field but also from other fields such as economics, politics, and sociology, to integrate theoretical approaches and provide a more comprehensive analysis of this study, in this case, the importance of armed non-state actors in the governance and security of countries and the international context. Regarding the research question, it would be advantageous to interview experts in academia and officials employed by security agencies in Mexico and Lebanon. However, the latter option presents some challenges due to the sensitive nature of these issues relating to national security in both countries. Nonetheless, interviews could be conducted to avoid divulging specific names or activities that might compromise security for the researcher and participants. Despite the potential risks, fieldwork may be



the most effective approach to gathering first-hand information. However, conducting research in areas controlled by criminal organisations and interviewing their members would pose a danger to the researcher, who could become a target for security agencies domestically and abroad. Therefore, requesting statistical information from the respective governments through intermediary agencies or directly would be more appropriate. However, this process may take time due to the necessary governmental approvals.

5.4. RECOMMENDATIONS

This research provided helpful information for understanding the negative impact of criminal organisations on state governance in terms of security, especially in countries where violence by armed non-state actors is present. For policymakers, it is important to implement policies that combat these organisations, although not to eliminate them, to reduce their power capacity. In this regard, some recommendations are:

1. The governments of Mexico and Lebanon ought to initiate outreach efforts towards populations where Cartels hold sway and provide greater trust and assistance in social and economic welfare to the citizens therein. These individuals provide the tools that maintain drug trafficking activity for both the Sinaloa Cartel and Hezbollah. The process of rapprochement should be conducted directly, but not precipitously, without resorting to confrontational violence or



negotiation with these organisations. The Lebanese and Mexican governments should strive to undermine these factions by curtailing drug manufacturing and distribution. In order to achieve this, they must interact with the local population and avoid using violence. Although the results of these efforts may take time to be apparent, they will emerge in the medium and long term. Gaining the local population's trust will enable the government to confront these organisations without excessive violence.

2. The governments of Lebanon and Mexico should fortify border security, particularly in Lebanon's case, as preventing drug trafficking and other illicit activities by these groups would undermine them and diminish their economic capacity to finance themselves. This would necessitate greater investment in surveillance equipment and border training, and both governments could seek greater international cooperation to achieve these ends.

5.5. FINAL THOUGHTS

Indeed, differences between Hezbollah and the Sinaloa Cartel make comparison complex due to different socioeconomic and political contexts. However, their drug trafficking practices are like a transnational organised crime organisation, as both seek to maximise profits. Regardless of the different contexts in which they find themselves, both actors provoke violence and



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instability in their countries of operations. Therefore, cooperation from the authorities and the civilian population is necessary to weaken their operations. Only in this way will it be possible to attack these international criminal organisations.



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