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Territorial Loss to Organized Crime:

Assessing National Security Challenges in Mexico and Brazil

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Table of contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	3
CHAPTER 1	6
INTRODUCTION	6
1.1 BACKGROUND	6
1.2 FOCUS OF STUDY	7
1.3 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES	7
1.3.1 RESEARCH AIM.....	7
1.3.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE	8
1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION	8
1.5 VALUE OF THE RESEARCH	9
CHAPTER 2	10
LITERATURE REVIEW	10
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	10
2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	11
2.1.1 Territorial control:.....	11
2.1.2 The weak states theory	12
2.1.3 Limited Statehood.....	12
2.1.4 Organised crime	13
2.1.4.a Organised Crime in Mexico	13
2.1.4.b Organised Crime in Brazil.....	14
2.1.5 Governance and Hybrid Governance	15
EXISTING LITERATURE	16
2.2 State Weakness, Limited Statehood and The Rule of Law	16
2.3 Hybrid and Criminal Governance	21
2.4. The Relevance of Territorial Control for the State	34
2.5 Organised Crime groups as non-state actors who interfere with the State.....	38
2.6 WHERE DOES THE RESEARCH STANDS?	41
2.7 CONCLUSIONS	41
CHAPTER 3	43
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	43
3.1. INTRODUCTION.....	43
3.2. RESEARCH DESIGN:	43
3.3 DATA COLLECTION:	44
3.4. RESEARCH PROCEDURE:.....	45

3.5. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS:	47
3.6. CONCLUSION.....	47

CHAPTER 4 48

BRAZIL AND THE PCC.....	48
4.1 INTRODUCTION.....	48
4.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	48
4.3 DATA EVIDENCE.....	50
4.4.1 QUANTITATIVE DATA	50
4.4.2 Quantitative Data Analysis.....	50
4.4.2 Descriptive Statistics:	51
4.4.3 Trends in Territorial Control Loss.....	53
4.4.4 Geographic Mapping.....	55
4.4.5 Conclusion.....	57
4.5 QUALITATIVE DATA	58
4.5.1. TRENDS IN THE ANALYSIS OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE PCC IN BRAZIL.....	59
4.5.2 Trend 1: Territorial Control and Governance	61
4.5.3 Trend 2: Social Conditions and Recruitment Strategies	62
4.5.4 Trend 3: Erosion of State Authority and Institutional Weakness	64
4.5.5 Trend 4: Transnational Expansion and Global Connections	66
4.4.6 IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS	68
4.4.7 THE OVERALL SITUATION REGARDING THE FINDINGS OF THE THEMATIC ANALYSIS:.....	70
4.5 BASELINE: HYBRID GOVERNANCE IN BRAZIL?	71
4.6 CONCLUSION.....	72

CHAPTER 5 74

MEXICO'S COMPLEX RELATION WITH ORGANISED CRIME.....	74
5.1 INTRODUCTION.....	74
4.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	75
5.3 DATA EVIDENCE.....	76
5.4.1 QUANTITATIVE DATA	76
5.4.2 Descriptive Statistics	77
5.4.3 Homicide and Crime Across the Country.....	77
5.4.4 Corruption and Impunity Trends	80
5.4.5 Conclusion of Qualitative Section	81
5.5. QUALITATIVE DATA	82
5.5.1 UNDERSTANDING THE LANDSCAPE OF ORGANIZED CRIME IN MICHOACAN	82
5.5.2 THEMATIC ANALYSIS: TRENDS IN THE ANALYSIS OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE CRIMINAL IN MEXICO.....	85
5.5.3 Trend 1: Lack of Institutional Presence and Emergence of Self-Defence Groups	85
5.5.4 Trend 2: Complex Criminal-Political Connections.....	88
5.5.5 Trend 3: Dynamics of Territorial Control and Governance.....	92
5.5.6 Trend 4: Cultural, Community, and Social Impacts.....	96
5.6 BASELINE: HYBRID GOVERNANCE IN MEXICO	99
5.7 CONCLUSION.....	102

CHAPTER 6	104
FINDINGS: THE CASES OF BRAZIL AND MEXICO AND FUTURE NATIONAL SECURITY IMPLICATIONS.....	104
6.1: INTRODUCTION.....	104
6.2 NOTES ON HYBRID GOVERNANCE:.....	104
6.3 NOTES ON ACADEMIA AND PRIVILEGED EXPERTS:.....	106
6.4 NOTES ON BRAZIL-VS MEXICO:	107
6.4.1 Implications for Future Security Policies	110
6.5 CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS.....	110
CHAPTER 7	111
CONCLUSION	111
REFERENCES	114

Chapter 1

Introduction

In recent decades, the persistent challenge posed by organized crime groups has posed a significant threat to states' territorial control and sovereignty, particularly in regions such as Latin America. This research explores how organized crime undermines a state's capacity to maintain territorial control and sovereignty. In focusing on this phenomenon, the study provides insights into the complexities of state-criminal interactions, shedding light on the multifaceted dynamics that hinder effective governance and societal well-being. By examining the cases of Mexico and Brazil, two prominent Latin American countries grappling with organized crime, this research aims to unearth distinct patterns and nuances that can contribute to formulating more robust security policies in the face of this formidable challenge.

1.1 Background

Organized crime's ability to infiltrate and erode state structures has concerned scholars, policymakers, and citizens alike. In Mexico, recent years have seen a concerning escalation in organized crime's ability to permeate various levels of the state apparatus. This infiltration undermines the state's ability to ensure security and uphold the rule of law, leading to pervasive corruption and the failure of public policies. Consequently, power vacuums emerge, creating opportunities for alternative actors to seize control within the state. This erosion of state sovereignty not only compromises the safety and well-being of citizens but

also poses a grave threat to the nation's territorial integrity. This study focuses on comprehending the mechanisms that drive this process, emphasizing the significance of understanding these dynamics in the context of state security policies.

1.2 Focus of Study

At its core, this research seeks to establish itself within the discourse surrounding territorial control, organized crime groups, and state activity. By delving into a relatively underexplored area of study, the research aims to illuminate patterns of behavior and interactions that have far-reaching implications for states' governance capacity and sovereignty, particularly in the Latin American context. The study examines the relationships between institutional weakness, violence, and corruption as triggers and facilitators for losing state territorial control to organized crime groups. Through a comparative analysis of Mexico and Brazil, the research sheds light on the nuances and variances in these processes, thereby providing a comprehensive perspective on this critical issue.

1.3 Research Aim and Objectives

1.3.1 Research Aim

The aim of this study is to investigate the key processes through which organized crime groups undermine a state's territorial control and sovereignty in Latin America, with a specific focus on the cases of Mexico and Brazil. By discerning these processes, the research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the intricate dynamics that enable organized

crime's encroachment on state territories and the subsequent implications for governance and security policies.

1.3.2 Research Objective

To achieve this aim, the research is guided by the following objectives:

1. Identify the factors contributing to losing state territorial control to organized crime groups in Latin America.
2. Analyze the similarities and differences in how organized crime groups gain territorial control in Mexico and Brazil.
3. Evaluate the implications of these processes for future security policies in Mexico and Brazil.

1.4 Research Question

The central research question that guides this study is:

"What are the key processes through which organized crime groups undermine a state's territorial control and sovereignty in Latin America? How do these processes differ in Mexico and Brazil, and what are the implications for future security policies in these countries?"

1.5 Value of the Research

This research holds substantial value in constructing a comprehensive framework elucidating the intricate interactions between organized crime, the state, and the populace. The study challenges conventional paradigms by delving into the profound social, economic, and cultural factors that shape the discourse on this issue. It offers alternative perspectives that enrich the academic dialogue. Furthermore, the research identifies and addresses prevailing gaps in scholarship, offering solutions to challenges that often elude the understanding of foreign researchers. By dissecting the diverse scenarios that unfold as states endeavor to reclaim control over areas commandeered by criminal organizations, the research generates a nuanced understanding that contributes to attaining its objectives.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will contemplate the research aims of this dissertation as presented in Chapter 1, the introduction. This section of the dissertation, also named the literature review, aims to position this study within the existing academic literature and to filter out the literature that is not actively adding to the value of the research. Thus, it will focus on the main theories and topics surrounding organised crime groups that gain control of certain territories within a state, such as criminal governance, territorial control, state weakness, governance theories, **state sovereignty** and limited statehood. Doing a far-reaching review of the existing academic literature on this research topic is essential for a complete understanding of the current State of knowledge. This process will not only allow the identification of gaps within the existing literature but also provide valuable insight into the current State of knowledge. On the same line, it presents an opportunity to produce new knowledge and uncover any biases or limitations in prior research. Additionally, it allows the researcher to assess the relevance of existing academic content, enabling the researcher to highlight key arguments and theories that have already been established. Ultimately, this approach will facilitate a more nuanced understanding of the research topic and enhance the overall research quality.

Moreover, the literature review will fully develop the theoretical framework to expose the theories on which this research is based. Considering several authors and conceptualisations will enable the author to identify the areas where research is needed and guide the analysis process through a set of concepts and categories to interpret the data collected.

Finally, this literature review is as broad and deep as possible; thus, it may include only some existing literature and knowledge related to the research topic. This might be due to the lack of correlation between the literature or simply because it goes beyond the research objectives.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

It is highly relevant for our study to familiarise ourselves with the relevant theoretical framework revolving around the research topic being developed. That is the theoretical knowledge of certain concepts used throughout the literature and the dissertation. Therefore, this subsection is focused on explaining essential concepts and definitions for our study.

Tens, if not hundreds of millions of people live under some form of criminal governance (Lessing, 2020).

2.1.1 Territorial control:

Territorial control is a critical concept that helps us understand several phenomena, such as violent armed conflicts, regional development, migration, and border control; it refers to exercising power and influence over a specific geographic area. In the context of armed conflicts, territorial control pertains to the areas directly controlled by contending parties (Tao *et al.*, 2016). Geospatial analysis techniques can be employed to measure territorial control, which involves calculating service areas around points of control. Regarding regional development, territorial control encompasses financial measures to ensure sustainable development within united territorial communities (Vasylytsiv, Mulka and Shopka, 2021). This entails analysing financial capacity, developing methodological approaches, and identifying spatial features of socioeconomic development.

Regarding migration and border control, territorial control plays a vital role. As seen in the European Union's migration policy, territorial control can be exemplified by implementing a standardised border regime involving neighbouring countries (Bruns, 2019).

2.1.2 The weak states theory

Weak states are characterised by their incapacity to control their territory and population effectively. This often arises due to the dissolution of legal security services or inherent weaknesses within the State. Weak states are frequently associated with the emergence of state-parallel militias, influential militia organisations that operate in parallel with the State, exploiting the State's severe difficulties in maintaining control (Aliyev, 2016).

2.1.3 Limited Statehood

Limited statehood commonly refers to areas or regions within a country where the central government exhibits limited authority, control, or capacity to enforce rules and provide public goods to its citizens (Dreher, Lang and Ziaja, 2017). These areas present challenges in governance, security, and lack of access to resources and services. Moreover, some critical characteristics of limited statehood include the presence of weak or absent central government authority, ineffective provision of public goods and services, security challenges, reliance on external aid, and complex governance structures (Dreher, Lang and Ziaja, 2017). Specifically for the line of study of this research, the essential characteristic is the latter, which considers that when there is no strong central government present, the areas of limited statehood may develop alternative governance structures or systems that can lead to hybrid forms of government (Hamann, Hönke and O'Riordan, 2018).

2.1.4 Organised crime

Organised crime exhibits a significant global threat to security and development. Its conceptualisation is complex and evolving, incorporating traditional and new activities to combat it (Jamaković, 2021). Organised crime can manifest in various forms, such as drug trafficking and cybercrime (Dmitry and Evgeniya, 2020). Modern technologies, intelligence gathering, and special investigative techniques are employed to combat organised crime. Additionally, transnational organised crime operates globally, utilising diverse methods to generate substantial profits.

The traditional understanding and conceptualisation of organised crime tend to derive from the global north perspective. Still, new approaches to the issue let us comprehend that the complex struggle of organised crime is different in the global south (Pereda, 2023). The lack of a straightforward approach to how the issue affects different parts of the globe has led to ineffective strategies to solve the increasing problem, as seen in Mexico (Pereda, 2023).

2.1.4.a Organised Crime in Mexico

Mexico has a long history of organised crime, which has posed considerable challenges to democratic governance (Walker, 2002). The influence derived from weapons has had disastrous effects on security and justice since Mexico's former president Felipe Calderon declared the '*war on drug's*' (Aranda, 2018). Additionally, armed civilian groups have emerged in response to the government's lack of adequate institutional strategy to properly deal with organised crime, leading to complex social violence (Aranda, 2018). Fictional works have also played a role in re-politicising Mexican organised crime, portraying it as an extension of and scapegoat for politicians and law enforcement, where TV

shows glamourise the lifestyle of the cartels, severely affecting society's perception of organised crime (Cantarello, 2020). Furthermore, the emergence of the '*Narco-State*' term in academic literature, characterised by a neoliberal political regime with a strong presence of organised crime representatives within the government itself, has drawn the attention of academics and international organisations equally (González, 2013). The term 'Narco-State' and its popularity within mainstream media nationally and internationally are part of a global issue related to capitalism, where the decrease of institutional legitimacy and economic growth for the last thirty years results in the rise of social violence and public insecurity, leading the government to increase the militarisation of public security (González, 2013). The latter is exacerbated by the large number of criminal organisations which dispute the Mexican territory to operate their illicit activities, 16 of which are disputing the territory dispute (N/A, 2021), affecting agriculture and transporters equally. The same applies to how territorial disputes lead to crossfire dead of innocent civilians and police, leading to the high numbers of deaths in recent years.

2.1.4.b Organised Crime in Brazil

Organised crime has a lengthy and complex history in Brazil, with criminal organisations involved in drug trafficking, extortion, and money laundering (Millard and Hundleby, 2015). Said organisations tend to have a hierarchical structure, with the leaders on top, whereas individual members with lower status are the ones executing daily operations (Espíndula, 2018). Major criminal organisations operate within the country, including the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) and Comando Vermelho (CV). The government has implemented measures to combat organised crime; however, their effectiveness remains limited (Ceccato, Kahn and Vazquez, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has also impacted

organised crime, with drug gangs and paramilitary groups gaining control over regions lacking government presence (Crokidakis and Sigaud, 2021).

2.1.5 Governance and Hybrid Governance

Governance is a fundamental process of governing or steering society, essential for comprehending market architectures, sustainable development, and festival governance (Katsamunskaja, 2016; Beunen and Patterson, 2019; Aswoyo and Sularso, 2020). It involves establishing and maintaining institutional structures to facilitate public problem-solving and decision-making. The study of governance encompasses various dimensions, including political, economic, social, and environmental aspects (Beunen and Patterson, 2019). Researchers often employ theoretical frameworks and empirical methods to analyse governance mechanisms, actors, processes, and outcomes. The exploration of governance contributes to a deeper understanding of power dynamics, institutional arrangements, and the effectiveness of public policy implementation (Katsamunskaja, 2016).

On the other hand, hybrid governance is an emerging concept that acknowledges the combination of formal and informal regulatory systems, recognising the role of both State and non-state actors in governance processes (Meagher, 2012). It has gained prominence in state-building and security governance, where traditional top-down approaches may prove insufficient (Enns, Andrews and Grant, 2020; Villa, Braga and Ferreira, 2021a). In this context, the concept is contested by academics, who struggle to agree on a definitive conceptualisation of hybrid governance. Similarly, hybrid governance combines different rules, norms, and practices from diverse sources to effectively govern complex societies

(Villa, Braga and Ferreira, 2021a). This form of governance incorporates state institutions, non-state actors, and civil society organisations to address multifaceted challenges and promote inclusive decision-making (Meagher, 2012). The effectiveness of hybrid governance is contingent upon the strength of state institutions, the inclusivity of non-state actors, trust-building mechanisms, and the ability to balance the competing interests of all the actors involved.

Nevertheless, they will eventually fail when policies are introduced and do not consider the underlying conditions that generate the more outstanding issue. However, it also presents challenges, such as potential conflicts among different actors and the risk of co-optation (Oosterom, 2017). Scholars and practitioners continue to explore and debate the potential and limitations of hybrid governance to achieve effective and adaptive governance in diverse contexts, making it one of the most promising research topics.

Existing Literature

2.2 State Weakness, Limited Statehood and The Rule of Law

The research shows that the authors agree regarding the relationship between limited statehood and areas where the rule of law cannot be appropriately exercised (Ferreira and Richmond, 2021; Magen and Parcels, 2021). Similarly, the authors mention the relevance of understanding how alternative forms of governance or authority interact (Magen and Parcels, 2021). Considering the latter, we can conclude the relevance of understanding how hybrid governance models interact with traditional governance and how one may prompt the other to rise when the ‘traditional’ governance model does not properly exercise the rule of law within their territory. The following works add a specific insight that will be discussed later in this section.

Boege et al. (2008) put forth a fascinating argument regarding the vital need for adopting a comprehensive perspective on hybrid political models when addressing the issue of fragile states. He argues that conventional approaches often fall short in externally driven state-building efforts due to their disregard for or opposition to hybridity; said dynamic is a product of positive mutual accommodation among diverse actors and institutions. Furthermore, the authors challenge the predominant notion that fragile states inherently impede development and peace, cautioning against embracing the Western state model as the optimal means for achieving sustainable development and peace across all societies. Instead, he highlights the importance of engaging with local communities and non-state institutions while emphasising the need to establish suitable forms of parallel interaction between traditional forms of governance at the local level and broader national and international initiatives (Boege *et al.*, 2008).

Furthermore, the author presents himself as a reference who understands the main issue with the centralisation in the West concerning how ‘sustainable peace must be established’ and how a state can only be functional according to the standards generally imposed by the Global North.

To complement what Boege et al. argued, the work of Schlichte and Schneckener (2015) brings the concept of legitimacy to the research. Their work is highly compelling and highlights the central role of legitimacy in the context of non-state armed groups. The authors argue that legitimacy is the primary factor in explaining the political triumph of such organisations, characterised by their ability to achieve and maintain political control over a significant period of time (Schlichte and Schneckener, 2015). Despite its fundamental

importance, legitimacy tends to be underestimated in the scholarly discourse on armed groups, warranting closer examination. In this regard, the article explores three primary challenges concerning the politics of legitimacy: firstly, the legitimisation of the use of force; secondly, the utilisation of diverse sources of legitimacy; and finally, the nuanced engagement with distinct target audiences. Overall, Schlichte and Schneckener aim to improve our understanding of the multifaceted dynamics surrounding legitimacy and its significant implications for the trajectory of non-state armed groups.

The authors address a highly pertinent issue concerning how non-state actors rely on legitimacy derived from local community support. This raises an important question and offers an opportunity for further research in the academic discourse. In this context, the concept of legitimacy needs to receive adequate consideration regarding the relationship between non-state armed groups and the communities they operate within. However, it emerges as a critical concept when examining the intricate and complex dynamics between these groups and the communities they interact with. Specifically, it is crucial to recognise communities' significant influence over these groups. When confronted by forces from the State, these groups seek alternative sources of support. At this stage, communities tend to be aware of their willingness to support using violence and other methods. Therefore, a profound exploration of the interplay between non-state armed groups, communities, and the principle of legitimacy is indispensable.

By establishing that legitimacy is a crucial concept to help us understand the establishment and approval of non-state armed groups, the first base upon the first argument of the analysis is built.

On top of that, the work of Magen and Parcels (2021) argues that modern democratic States combine and balance three sets of institutions: the State, the rule of law and democratic accountability. When one or more of these constitutive elements is either weak or absent, the expectation is that the political order will decay or break down. In turn, it is argued that the need for policymakers to approach the challenge of promoting the rule of law in areas where the State is weak or absent with caution and sensitivity to local contexts. The authors argue that there is a need to develop a more nuanced understanding of how different forms of authority interact in areas of limited statehood. Ultimately, the authors want to promote further research into the relationship between statehood and the rule of law in areas where the State is weak or absent while demonstrating how State-centric notions of the rule of law remain and provoke a contrarian perspective on this issue (Magen and Parcels, 2021).

The authors keep reminding us to stop considering the Western centralised understanding of how things should work. This continues to add to a narrative that the scholarship keeps realising when their research focus is not a developed or Western state. The same criteria to deal with these issues will only work effectively if there is a clear differentiation between how developing and developed countries work; the policies must be context specific. On the same line, establishing traditional understandings of how the states work in hybrid governance models, where the State as an institution is not as strong as in the developed world; hence the need for a new set of parameters studied and established in developing countries.

Adding to the previous work, Ferreira and Richmond (2021) contended that criminal organisations in the region had taken advantage of the State's shortcomings or disregard in certain areas, thereby establishing governance systems that alienate the State from its

populace. The convergence of concerns regarding legitimacy linked to organised crime prompted the debate regarding local organisms who could participate in discussions related to criminal activities to influence their resolution. However, the investigation also revealed that criminal organisations face limitations in implementing structural changes. To overcome these challenges, the authors advocate for a post-liberal peacebuilding approach that prioritises the utilisation of local infrastructures for more context-specific and efficacious strategies (Ferreira and Richmond, 2021). This approach highlights the importance of civil society-state relationships in combatting the challenges posed by criminal organisations.

Finally, to wrap up this section, the work of Bingham (2014) explores the increasing prominence of failed states as a significant challenge to global order and security. Bingham notes that despite the ongoing academic discourses on the causative factors and remedies to the issue, there are fundamental gaps, including the absence of a precise definition of what constitutes a ‘failed’ state. Bingham exposes state failure as a deviation from the conventional paradigm of international order. Nevertheless, he observes that despite the persisting academic discourses surrounding the causative factors and remedies to the issue, there are fundamental gaps, including the absence of a precise definition of what constitutes a “failed” state (Bingham, 2014).

Overall, it is possible to identify a series of interrelated factors regarding the relevance of non-state actors and their control over specific spaces. Overall, observing the scholarship on the concepts of legitimacy, weak and failed states, lack of state presence, the rule of law and their interrelation with hybrid modes of governance or criminal governance have a clear connection. There is a clear link between state presence and an effective rule of law where

non-state armed groups take the opportunity where the State is less present to ‘*rule*’ over. Moreover, a weak state who holds weak institutions and cannot provide essential goods to its citizens or protection places a void in the system that is overtaken by said criminal organisations. Additionally, citizens present the best chance to provide legitimacy to the rule of criminal organisations, playing a key role in their establishment and permanence.

2.3 Hybrid and Criminal Governance

According to the theoretical framework, a significant academic debate exists regarding the conceptualisation of criminal or hybrid governance. This subsection explores scholarly papers relevant to the research topic to establish a stable and consistent concept that will endure throughout the study. This concept and its corresponding definition will serve as the fundamental basis for the subsequent phases of the research. By elaborating on the concept and its definition, the author intends to simplify a comprehensive assessment of the leading causes, effects, and strategies associated with the issue under study. Furthermore, it could also aim to supply policymakers with the necessary insights to address the matter appropriately and identify related manifestations within their territories, informing and shaping future public policies. Finally, this section explores essential scholarship regarding hybrid governance, analysing and understanding the issue at hand from the theoretical level.

To begin this subsection, the work of Chouvy (2016) critically examines the concept of a “narco-state,” arguing that it has been widely misused and misunderstood. One of the main issues surrounding the term is the lack of consensus regarding its criteria and definition.

This term has been used in the mainstream media to name phenomena happening to some communities in countries like Mexico, Bolivia and Venezuela (Kamerbeek Romero, 2023; Muñoz Lima, 2023; N/A, 2023; Saucedo, 2023).

Chouvy defines a narco-state, describing it as a state where the illegal drug industry is state-sponsored and contributes significantly to the country's overall economy (Cita (Chouvy, 2016)—additionally, proposing specific criteria for determining whether a country can be considered a narco-state. These include assessing the economic importance of the drug industry relative to the country's economy, analysing the extent of land dedicated to illegal drug harvests in comparison to the arable or cultivated land of the nation, and evaluating the active involvement of the State in the illegal drug economy (Chouvy, 2016).

However, it is essential to note that the article raises particular concerns. Firstly, the proposed criteria for identifying narco-states may not comprehensively analyse the historical and cultural factors contributing to their development. This limitation implies that the understanding of narco-states may be incomplete without considering these broader contexts. Moreover, the article does not clearly define what constitutes a “weak” or “failed” state, which could lead to confusion or disagreement over which countries can be classified as narco-states.

Furthermore, Chouvy takes an interesting approach by incorporating the theory of hybrid governance into the discussion. Exploring the interaction between different forms of governance, specifically focusing on the fluid modes of formal and informal interaction between state and non-state actors in horizontal and vertical governance (Chouvy, 2016).

This theoretical framework provides valuable insights into understanding narco-states' complexities and the interplay between State and non-state actors in governing illicit drug activities.

Finally, Chouvy's (2016) critique of the narco-state concept highlights the misuses and misunderstandings associated with the term. While proposing criteria for identifying narco-states, the article acknowledges the need for a more comprehensive analysis of historical, cultural, and State characteristics. Furthermore, the incorporation of the theory of hybrid governance offers valuable perspectives on the fluid interactions between state and non-state actors in narco-state dynamics. The latter continues to add to the ongoing discussion regarding the need first to understand the social complexities regarding the possible interplay between narco-states and hybrid governance and, second, to detach from western dominated narratives that, instead of understanding the bottom of the issue, bring a westernised focus imitating the range of policies intended to deal with them.

Considering the context of narco-states and the media's using the term, Villa et al. (2021a) article brings another scope to explore the situation in South America. Their article argues that hybrid governance has emerged in South America in regions where state forces cannot ensure physical protection and social security for citizens, resulting in the formation of hybrid governance systems, which are characterised by the coexistence of formal and informal modes of governance, blending State and non-state actors. The paper's central focus is the concept of hybrid governance, which encompasses the fluid interaction between state and non-state actors in both formal and informal modes, leading to alternative forms of governance (Villa, Braga and Ferreira, 2021a)

Moreover, the authors argue that hybrid governance has manifested in South America precisely in those regions where state forces are unable to ensure physical protection and social security for citizens, resulting in the formation of hybrid governance systems characterised by the coexistence of formal (vertical) and informal (horizontal) modes of governance, blending State and non-state actors (Villa, Braga and Ferreira, 2021a). Within these socially bounded spaces, non-state actors function similarly to the State by producing and distributing public goods, mirroring the State's role. Therefore, violent non-state actors challenge preconceived notions of state authority and legitimacy, assuming a prominent role in security governance.

Furthermore, In order to define hybrid governance, the authors emphasise the consolidation of formal and informal governance structures, where State and non-state actors operate hand in hand. As stated above, non-state actors, like the State, effectively produce and distribute public goods in these socially bounded spaces. Nevertheless, the concept of legitimacy becomes contested in hybrid governance formations, as it encompasses the fundamental qualities of modern sovereign states, such as their constitutional status as legitimate political authorities and their monopoly over the legitimate use of violence (Villa, Braga and Ferreira, 2021b).

Ultimately, the emergence of hybrid governance systems represents a significant challenge to the authority of the State. Both forms of legitimacy, involving the constitutional status of political authorities and their monopoly over violence, become contested within

these systems. The article highlights how VNSA in South America play a crucial role in security governance by challenging preconceived notions of state authority and legitimacy. The latter becomes the base for this study, aiming to deeply understand the connection between these systems, civil society and the State (Villa, Braga and Ferreira, 2021b).

The authors show an opportunity to understand not only the threat that hybrid governance models signify to the modern State worldwide but to genuinely understand the root causes that make said models fruitful and emerge. One lacks the state presence, a weak state. The other is when it becomes legitimate to civilians due to a continuous lack of an effective rule of law. VNSA becomes a vial for alternative governance models that become legitimate through civilians.

Despite the perceived connection between these concepts and the mentioned issues, when it comes to an overall assessment of the underlying causes of alternative forms of governance within a state's territory, it is one of the main issues that academia and public policies tend to ignore. It seems easy for authors to assert that there is a need for context-specific solutions for the State to reinforce the rule of law where there is limited statehood and a greater institutional approach to civilians.

Following the case of South America, we come across the work of Felbab-brown is tackling a much-needed approach for the issue at hand, going forward on a topic previously mentioned. In their paper Felbab-Brown (2018) theorises that adopting a multifaceted approach is the most effective means to combat organised crime and illicit economies, highlighting the limitations of a singular reliance on law enforcement measures. The author

highlights the importance of addressing the underlying factors contributing to people's involvement in illegal activities, especially poverty and social exclusion, which are critical in the growth of unlawful economies. As such, the importance of strengthening bonds between the state and marginalised communities to restrain criminal groups' expansion into multi-crime organisations is stressed. It is crucial to recognise that exclusive emphasis on law enforcement policies can engender a perception of hostility among local communities, thereby hindering the State's ability to combat organised crime effectively. Accordingly, the State must reassess its approach and acknowledge that organised crime, illicit economies, and hybrid governance pose significant challenges to state-making objectives (Felbab-Brown, 2018).

The author argues that adopting a multifaceted approach is not a discretionary choice for the State but a compelling necessity. The focus should shift towards addressing the State's economic and social infrastructural deficiencies. By adopting this comprehensive approach, policymakers can effectively address organised crime and illicit economies. However, it is crucial to recognise that the article fails to comprehensively study the political and economic aspects perpetuating organised crime and underground economies in diverse areas. The latter could potentially undermine the effectiveness of policy interventions. Additionally, the author does not thoroughly explore the political and social complexities associated with implementing policy responses to organised crime, such as corruption, vested interests, and power dynamics.

Continuing the vital work of Felbab-Brown closely, de Oliveira and Penev Campo (2011) continue the debate about said criminal organisations, who argue in their study that

the current global order and globalisation have brought about novel forms of governance within and among states. This has led to the emergence of a transglobal arena, where non-state actors, networks, and polities have traditionally undertaken roles that were the State's purview. The authors focus on Colombia, which hosts one of the most expansive and powerful drug trafficking organisations globally. The State's limited presence in the country has led to the emergence of local identities, loyalties, and parallel authorities. This reflects Colombia's deep-rooted mistrust of the State's capacity to manage its society and territory (de Oliveira and Penev, 2011).

Furthermore, the article brings to light the complex relationship between politics and crime in Colombia, involving a wide range of actors, including drug traffickers and other illegal organisations, as well as the government, its bureaucracy, political organisations, and civil society groups. The authors argue that the primary issue is not just the unlawful activities of criminal groups but also the development of institutional and cultural identities anchored in illegality and coercion (de Oliveira and Penev, 2011). The social complexities of the Colombian case can be closely related to the complicated issues in similar countries like Brazil or Mexico, making this case particularly important to understand for the research topic.

Based on the Colombian case, the authors analyse the re-scaling and re-articulation of the State, which involves transferring governance capacities to supra and sub-state levels. This process has created a vast transglobal arena where private, non-state actors, networks, and polities have taken on roles formerly performed by the State (de Oliveira and Penev, 2011). These alternative authority structures are not limited to national or local scales but are evident in multiple overlapping scales within global relations. These connections extend

across state structures and social relations through coercive means. Consequently, efforts to strengthen regulatory regimes often provide organised crime groups with perverse incentives to expand their activities and increase their profits.

Moreover, criminal organisations employ tactics that corrupt the rule of law and the legitimacy of democratic governments. They do this by corrupting state institutions and the individuals fighting crime. This tactic has been utilised in numerous countries, posing a threat to regional governments that do not have an effective rule of law.

This research's value is particularly evident when considering Latin American countries' challenges in exercising sovereignty and upholding the rule of law. These challenges arise from criminal organisations, foreign governments, and international organisations influence. However, a comparative analysis reveals the contextual nuances of Colombia and other countries in the region. Such context-based approaches prove helpful in developing beneficial state responses to criminal organisations and their illicit economies. However, a comprehensive analysis is imperative to comprehend how criminal organisations exploit institutional weaknesses within the State for their benefit.

Overall, the crucial role of this literature has shown us a link between arguments regarding the rise of criminal and hybrid governance to follow the concept of the work of Lessing (2020). His work comprehensively examines criminal governance, a complex subject encompassing how criminal organisations control specific territories and populations.

The author establishes a conceptual framework to define criminal governance and explores its implications, addressing this phenomenon in terms of who, what, and how. This conceptualisation builds upon previous theoretical knowledge, merging it with the author's insights to provide a robust framework for further research. Furthermore, he defines criminal governance as “...*the imposition of rules or restrictions on behaviour by a criminal organisation. This includes governance over members, non-member criminal actors, and non-criminal civilians...*”.(Lessing, 2021).

The author argues that criminal organisations engage in governance activities with the population, including providing public goods and services and exercising political functions. Lessing highlights how even small gangs can exert control over the population, while the police often refrain from challenging or getting involved with these organisations, as doing so can lead to increased suffering for citizens. While the State may occasionally challenge organised crime groups, it frequently ignores their presence or activities.

Furthermore, criminal organisations often function like businesses or organisations the State outsources to fulfil specific tasks and functions. However, the reasons why criminal organisations decide to engage in governance and whether they harbour intentions to take over the State itself remain essential questions. The relationship between criminal organisations and the State can be complementary, with each entity providing certain services or functions.

Examining the “who” aspect of criminal governance primarily focuses on the members of the criminal organisation and their interactions with other criminals, such as local gangs or prison members. Criminal organisations tend to enforce punishment for

specific behaviours and activities within the communities they govern. Additionally, community members may demand specific actions against certain crimes, indicating a complex interplay of governance dynamics (Lessing, 2021).

Examining how these groups act on specific issues is crucial to understanding criminal governance's nature. Lessing identifies different dimensions of criminal governance based on function, categorising them into low, medium, and high degrees of governance. This separation aids in conceptualising a governing structure akin to a criminal “law” that outlines how these organisations govern the spaces under their control. However, it should be noted that while criminal organisations may develop functioning governing structures, they typically leave broader services to the State.

Regarding territorial control, drug cartels often govern the territories that encompass drug trafficking routes and areas where cultivation takes place. Furthermore, these criminal organisations often control the communities where they originate. Lessing determines that criminal organisations exhibit characteristics that align with a Weberian outlook, regardless of the style or quality of governance, ranging from personalistic-charismatic to rational-bureaucratic approaches (Lessing, 2021). However, the author acknowledges the challenge of fully empirically validating these theoretical perspectives.

Exploring why criminal organisations decide to govern over civilians and other criminal organisations, Lessing theorises various explanations driven by their interests. These include taxation/extortion, protection rackets, and the desire to crowd out or deter potential competitors. The extent of criminal governance over civilians is often narrow and sporadic,

regulating certain activities while leaving others untouched. Additionally, internal governance mechanisms are employed by criminal organisations to manage their members and address organisational challenges resulting from their illegal nature. These mechanisms may involve hierarchical structures, rules and norms, as well as punishment and enforcement measures to ensure compliance and discipline among members.

Understanding a more developed and built-up concept of criminal governance, considering how they relate to civilians and the State, brings a new light to the operational side of criminal governance. The latter helps establish an idea of situations where the State seemingly agrees to their governance due to their distance from said communities or a lack of proper infrastructure to deal with the criminal organisation's power. As a result of this conceptualisation, some questions arise, like the State's non-spoken nod of agreement with the criminal organisations to let them control some spaces means the State still holds some leverage over them. Is the agreement a situation where the State is overall in control? Once the data is collected, these questions will be debated in the analysis chapter.

To finalise, the last paper regarding the case of Latin America Mantilla and Feldman (2022) provides a comprehensive overview of the concept of criminal governance in Latin America, exploring its origins, relationship with the State, and explanatory perspectives. Contrasting with the conceptualisation developed by Lessing (2021), they define criminal governance as regulating social order by establishing formal and informal institutions that either replace, complement, or compete with the State.

Mantilla and Feldman expose that criminal governance orders are characterised by solid governance arrangements, where state authorities and criminals share, dispute, and alternate power. This leads to the emergence of complex and idiosyncratic local orders. Violence and coercion often play a significant role in maintaining the power and control of criminal governance orders over communities, resulting in high levels of insecurity, fear, and trauma among residents. Moreover, these orders can exacerbate existing social inequalities and undermine the legitimacy and effectiveness of state institutions, eroding the trust between citizens and the State (Mantilla and Feldmann, 2022).

To support their argument, the authors analyse the various dimensions of criminal governance in Latin America and other regions of the Global South. They examine the overlap between State and criminal orders, the intricate relationship between violence and consent, and the management of violence through selective forms of enforcement. The authors emphasise the importance of interdisciplinary work that combines criminology with other disciplines, such as political science, sociology, law, and anthropology. This collaboration enhances our understanding of criminal governance orders' profound impact on contemporary societies.

However, the authors note specific gaps in the criminal governance literature. The focus has predominantly been on urban areas, leaving the exploration of criminal governance phenomena in rural regions largely unexplored. Additionally, there is a need to consider how dynamics of race, class, and gender inform criminal governance, as these factors play significant roles in shaping the operation and impact of criminal governance orders.

Villa et al. 2021 The paper's central focus is the concept of hybrid governance, which encompasses the fluid interaction between state and non-state actors in both formal and informal modes, leading to alternative forms of governance.

Mantilla and Feldman define criminal governance as the regulation of social order by establishing formal and informal institutions that either replace, complement, or compete with the State.

As "*...the imposition of rules or restrictions on behaviour by a criminal organisation. This includes governance over members, non-member criminal actors, and non-criminal civilians...*" ((Mantilla and Feldmann, 2022)

To conclude, this subsection contains theoretical and empirical scholarship regarding several aspects of criminal governance. This section provides a concept that will be used throughout the dissertation, which aims to bring clarity and complexity to the research.

The scholarship presented in this subsection gave us different understandings of what encompasses and is considered to be criminal governance. On the one hand, we come across the reality of the lack of a standardised conceptualisation. The latter brings both problems and opportunities regarding a relatively untouched issue like criminal governance, particularly regarding the development of public policies aimed to target criminal organisations in regions like Latin America surrounded by deep social contexts and political systems.

Therefore, by considering the work of Lessing, Villa et al. and Mantilla and Feldman (2021; 2021b; 2022), hybrid and criminal governance will be referred to as Hybrid Governance, understood as the imposition of a social order between state and non-state

actors, which includes the imposition of formal and informal institutions, rules and restrictions over a specific territory, that can be aimed to replace, compete or complement the State and its functions. This system can be imposed over members of criminal organisations, civilians and members of other criminal organisations.

2.4. The Relevance of Territorial Control for the State

In territorial control, a significant debate arises regarding the State's capacity to create comprehensive policies that establish an effective rule of law. The State frequently undervalues the relevance of territorial control. As such, in this research, territorial control assumes a key role, serving as a crucial indicator of the invasions performed by organised crime groups and highlighting the substantial losses incurred by the State. This notion is intrinsically linked to a fundamental constituent of the State: its territorial dominion, representing the physical expanse where its political authority is enforced.

Tao et al. (2016) present a novel approach to transportation network analysis that combines actual road data with hexagon-fishnet-based artificial road data. This hybrid method effectively represents both on-road and off-road movements, making it particularly valuable for evaluating territorial control of armed groups in Sub-Saharan Africa, where deficient transport infrastructure is prevalent (Tao et al., 2016).

The fundamental discoveries of this paper highlight the significance of measuring territorial control in civil wars and address the limitations of existing studies in understanding the role of territory in armed conflicts. The authors argue that geospatial analysis provides a

critical perspective for measuring territorial control, treating it as an application for calculating service areas around points of control (Tao et al., 2016). This comprehensive analysis aids in understanding the dynamics of territorial control during ongoing conflicts and can potentially contribute to developing a near real-time system for measuring territorial control.

However, the authors acknowledge an important limitation in their approach. They point out that the human factor, including human perception and behaviour within territories, is not adequately considered. While the technological tools provide a means to map and measure territorial control, the authors recognise the need to account for the practical measures contested by civilians, as their perceptions play a crucial role in establishing accurate measurements.

Additionally, the paper explores the expansion of territorial control in the aftermath of violent clashes between rebel groups. When one faction gains dominance over a particular location, its control expands to encompass a certain perimeter around the battleground. To obtain a comprehensive overview of sites likely to be governed, the authors incorporate data from other sources, such as the locations of national and local capitals and military installations. By combining various data types, the authors classify territorial control into distinct categories: uncontested sovereignty, complete control, incomplete control, and contested control.

To contrast the latter, the article by De la Calle and Sanchez-Cuenca (2015a) investigates the correlation between the tactics used by armed groups and their capability to gain control over territory. The authors establish that the level of territorial control primarily influences the decision regarding tactics. Groups with territorial control tend to utilise strategies similar to guerrilla warfare, such as facility attacks, hit-and-run attacks, ambushes, raids, and small-scale battles (de la Calle and Sánchez-Cuenca, 2015a) (cita, rephrase). Conversely, groups lacking territorial control generally rely more on bombings and assassinations. Conversely, groups lacking territorial control generally rely more on bombings and assassinations.

To contrast this, it is discussed by the author that the micro-foundations of conflict lie at the level of tactics and targets (de la Calle and Sánchez-Cuenca, 2015a) (Rephrase, cite). The literature used by the authors shows that civilian targeting in urban settings reduces the armed capacity of the rebels and ultimately leads them to defeat. In irregular war, armed groups resort to civilian targeting when their capabilities decrease and territorial control is more contested (de la Calle and Sánchez-Cuenca, 2015a) (rephrase, cite).

While presenting their argument, the authors also address possible arguments against it; one objection is that territorial control results from specific tactics. The authors counter this by asserting that while specific tactics may be more effective in achieving territorial control, their use does not guarantee success (de la Calle and Sánchez-Cuenca, 2015b). Other factors, such as the underlying social and political causes, also play a significant role in how they obtain territorial control.

However, the paper does not address how armed groups initially acquire territorial control. Even though this is not the paper's central focus, this information is crucial for understanding the dynamics of territorial domination and creating effective policies. Working with the underlying causes that lead to territorial control necessitates a comprehensive understanding of the initial acquisition process. The issue of solely focusing research on understanding the activities of organised crime groups and measuring their advancements is also highlighted. Consequently, it is unusual for scholars to explore the root causes of conflict, especially when existing tools can only measure a small portion of the issue, leaving other possible variables unstudied.

In the context of territorial control, this short section understands the relevance of territorial control as part of the capacities of the State. Nevertheless, it is agreed that criminal organisations can quickly challenge the option. On the one hand, we understand why measuring territorial control accurately in armed conflict areas is highly relevant information for the State. However, as far as technology reaches, the human factor will always impede an exact analysis due to the unpredictable nature of humans. On the other hand, criminal organisations tend to follow specific tactics in order to obtain control of territories, this can be due to their objectives, and when they lack control, they become more violent, although that does not guarantee success in their objectives, it still is relevant to consider these factors.

2.5 Organised Crime groups as non-state actors who interfere with the State.

Organised groups, non-state armed groups, and criminal organisations are the leading actor in this research. The strategies that aim to impose themselves not only as criminal actor but as economic forces, political actors and territorial managers become part of their daily activities, constantly challenging the State and the status quo of a society. Hence, they need to be understood.

First, the work of Pereda (2023), a very recent paper that investigates the correlation between criminal networks and law enforcement in Mexico and its consequent impact on police culture; The study reveals that criminal networks are closely interwoven with law enforcement, resulting in “grey zones” where they interact. This intermixing has a significant impact on police culture, and it shapes the values, attitudes, and beliefs of officers engaged in combatting organised crime.

Pereda highlights the significance of socio-political contexts and analyses accounts from former members of Mexico’s Federal Police. Despite this, the analysis does not investigate how gender, race, and socioeconomic status impact police culture. Moreover, the paper refrains from providing specific recommendations or solutions to tackle the issue of police-criminal network intermingling. Subsequent research should consider these factors and examine strategies to mitigate the influence of criminal networks within law enforcement institutions in Mexico (Pereda, 2023).

Furthermore, going back a few years, Del Pilar Fuerte Celis et al. (2019) have presented an all-encompassing analysis of drug-related criminal organisations in Mexico.

Their particular focus has been on these organisations' characteristics and territorial strategies. The authors have proposed four significant components that enable an understanding of these groups. These components include their economic activities, negotiation abilities, relations with state authorities, and local roots (del Pilar Fuerte Celis, Lujan and Ponce, 2019).

The economic activities of criminal organisations are highly relevant as they play a critical role in their success and expansion. Furthermore, their negotiation skills enable them to form alliances with other cartels and avoid conflicts. These groups maintain relations with corrupt state authorities to provide protection and support. Lastly, the strength of their local roots enables them to establish a presence and gain local support (del Pilar Fuerte Celis, Lujan and Ponce, 2019).

In conclusion, Del Pilar Fuerte Celis et al. (2019) offer valuable insights into drug-related criminal organisations in Mexico. Their analysis emphasises the importance of economic activities, negotiation abilities, relations with state authorities, and local roots in understanding these groups. This comprehensive approach contributes to a deeper understanding of the strategies employed by organised crime groups in territorial disputes and their overall operations.

Lastly, the critical work from Hofmann and Schneckener (2011) thoroughly explores diverse perspectives from international relations theory and approaches for engaging with non-state armed actors. The authors meticulously outline three perspectives, realist, institutionalist, and constructivist, offering distinct methods such as force/leverage, bargaining, and persuasion.

The authors emphasise the role played by international organisations, governments, and NGOs in engaging with armed actors. However, they candidly acknowledge the challenges that often arise due to the diverse forms of armed and external actors involved. To address these complexities, the authors assert that a middle ground must be sought that allows for the independent application of realist, institutionalist, and constructivist approaches while maintaining a fundamental understanding of each other's methods. This approach, the authors contend, can enable a more comprehensive and effective engagement with armed actors (Hofmann and Schneckener, 2011).

The paper concludes by underscoring the importance of constructive communication between parties. It recognises that coercive measures can have potential consequences and stresses the need for meticulous consideration in determining the appropriate approach.

This scholarship, although short and concise, brings vital developments needed to understand the capabilities that organised crime groups or criminal organisations currently hold. Likewise, it is not new that they have become compelling in recent years, leaving states with few non-working strategies against them. Nevertheless, understanding the case of Mexico mainly brings light to the current challenges the Mexican State has. Nevertheless, for this research, we are interested in the relationship the State has with criminal organisations and how their interactions shape the organisations' activities. Finally, understanding the solution must be dealt with caution, aiming to include various approaches and context-specific measures.

2.6 Where does the research stand?

Throughout this literature reviews some trends regarding the treatment of the concept of hybrid governance have become highly relevant to this research, opening a space that this research not only aims to add to, but to motivate future researchers to continue this academic work.

This research stands in the middle of the interaction points between citizens, state authorities, and criminal organizations. The research will aim to cover the gaps on the academic bias and global north focus, criticizing how it affects the development of policies, as well as aiming to point the underlying non spoken relation between the state and the criminal organizations.

2.7 Conclusions

It is essential to this research to understand what has been said about the research topic. The Literature Review process gives us crucial information needed to position ourselves with the applicable theories that can be used to understand the issue being studied. Similarly, we can understand the tight and extreme correlation among the concepts of limited statehood, the rule of law, weak states, the proper protection and enforcement of territorial control and their relationship with hybrid and alternate forms of governance exercised by non—state actors.

The latter is deeply entwined with how organised crime groups exercise their power and capabilities against the State in Latin America, damaging and putting at risk the lives and stability of their citizens. More specifically, the case of Mexico and Brazil, countries that are deeply permeated by the influence and power these groups exercise against them.

Considering the above is where we can understand where this research is positioned within the vast existing literature. The process of an Organised Crime Group taking control,

that being territorial or economic of parts of those State's territories, and how it profoundly permeates the society, culture, and the State's ability to provide goods and services by being replaced by the OCG authority sits right in the middle of all this academic and theoretic knowledge.

Furthermore, the literature at hand understands the need for context-specific solutions to the issues about criminal organisations, that they rarely dive into the root causes of the rise of said criminal organisations and how embedded not only on the territory but in the society and the communities that they become legitimised. **This process happens when the State is blind-sighted and weak, and absent.** Their institutions cannot develop effective policies and strategies to handle the issue. At the same time, criminal organisations started to behave as governors, bringing essential goods and services to abandoned communities. Although beneficial, criminal organisations' high unpredictability behaviour makes them violent and impose on the spaces.

In conclusion, this chapter has touched on theoretical and empirical scholarship to position this research within the current knowledge. Although the scholarship can have a very Westernised focus, they recognise the need for more context-based knowledge. One that is based on similar contexts to the issues being studied.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology used to investigate how organized crime groups establish territorial control and challenge state sovereignty in Latin America, focusing on a comparative analysis of Mexico and Brazil. Our research aims, objectives, and mixed methods approach are outlined, offering a comprehensive study that integrates qualitative and quantitative techniques. This chapter also introduces the comparative case study design, emphasizing the significance of examining both countries to reveal contextual nuances influencing organized crime strategies. In the forthcoming sections, we delve into our methodology, data collection, and analytical techniques, contributing nuanced insights to criminology, political science, and international relations.

3.2. Research Design:

The present study employs an integrated approach of both qualitative and quantitative techniques through mixed methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research topic by analyzing official government media and national/international published statistics, as well as considering the perspectives of individuals and collectives through news and journaling media. By examining official government media and national/international published statistics, as well as considering the perspectives of individuals and collectives through news and journaling media, this design allows for a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

Additionally, the use of a comparative case study methodology can be a powerful research technique that investigates the similarities and differences between two or more cases. It obstructs surface-level examination of individual cases, thus preventing a less

inclusive comprehension of a specific research issue. Through the comparison and contrast of cases, the identification of patterns and trends that might have gone unnoticed if only one case had been studied is possible. Furthermore, this technique allows for the assessment of the impact of different contextual variables on the desired outcomes, leading to more reliable findings.

Moreover, the comparative case study methodology is an exceptionally versatile research design that can be employed across various fields. Furthermore, by comparing the experiences of Mexico and Brazil, similarities and differences in the factors contributing to state erosion and how these factors interact can be identified. This includes similar political systems and regional development, among other similar parts.

3.3 Data Collection:

The data collection process encompasses three primary sources, namely official government media, national/international published statistics, and news/journaling media.

a) Official Government Media: This involves analyzing official government documents, reports, and statements pertaining to organized crime and territorial control. It offers insights into state actions and perspectives on the issue, while also unveiling the current situation each government wishes to portray, both as a narrative and a reality.

b) National/International Published Statistics: This facet relies on existing statistical data on crime rates, perceived crime, corruption statistics, and other pertinent variables from reputable sources like the UNDOC and official channels. This data aids in uncovering patterns and trends associated with organized crime and territorial control, leading up to the potential emergence of hybrid governance.

c) News and Journaling Media: The analysis of news articles, investigative reports, and academic journals helps grasp collective and individual viewpoints. This qualitative data sheds light on public discourse, policy debates, and expert opinions.

The media selection process involves designating keywords essential for filtering and selecting content in both English and Spanish. These tags are categorized as Behaviours, Concepts, Challenges, People and State, and Motivations, each aiming to encompass a wide array of possibilities and data to be identified and classified.

In the Behaviours category, tags include violence, territorial control, corruption, order/security, political influence, price control, bribery, and coercion.

Under Concepts, the tags encompass territorial control, drug trafficking, state sovereignty, absent state, criminal governance, and legitimacy.

Challenges category tags encompass denial of power, lack of resources, media attention, state intervention, and public policy.

In the People and State category, the tags consist of teenagers, state authorities, politicians, adults, children, and women.

Lastly, the Motivations category encompasses tags like money, social control, drug trafficking routes, political influence, and state challenges.

3.4. Research Procedure:

The present study utilised a comprehensive research procedure to examine the factors contributing to losing state territorial control to organised crime groups in Latin America. Thematic analysis was selected as the methodological approach owing to its flexibility and inductive nature, which proved ideal for exploring and identifying a wide range of factors that may influence territorial control loss. By analysing qualitative sources, recurring themes

emerged, encompassing various aspects such as governance challenges, socio-economic conditions, law enforcement efficacy, political corruption, and more.

Furthermore, the investigation examined the resemblances and disparities in the procedures through which organised criminal organisations establish territorial dominance in Mexico and Brazil. Thematic analysis facilitated an in-depth exploration and comparison of these processes, enabling the identification of common threads and unique distinctions in each country's experiences.

In addition, the research sought to assess the implications of these processes on future security policies in Mexico and Brazil. A nuanced understanding of these implications was developed through thematic analysis by uncovering underlying themes that delved into the intricate relationship between organised crime and security policies.

Despite the analysis indicating a limited number of sources, it is crucial to acknowledge that a diverse array of local and international media sources in English and Spanish were employed for the thematic analysis. The process involved identifying trends and initial explanations based on these sources. To substantiate and enrich the analysis, additional sources were consulted to provide factual evidence and a broader context.

The overarching methodology involved an initial comprehensive labelling and analysis of numerous available media sources, followed by a meticulous process of cross-referencing and citation to reinforce the narrative. This iterative process allowed for a proportionate evaluation of various sources, bolstering the research's credibility and depth. In summary, this research methodically employed thematic analysis to delve into the multifaceted aspects of organised crime and territorial control, drawing insights from diverse sources and ensuring a holistic understanding of the phenomenon.

3.5. Ethical Considerations:

Ethical considerations are crucial in investigating media content related to organized crime and territorial control. Essential elements include obtaining consent and authorization, ensuring accuracy, and respecting privacy. In addition, unbiased analysis and responsible reporting are guided by objectivity, transparency, and cultural sensitivity principles. A balanced approach to research requires careful consideration of social impact, conflicts of interest, and long-term effects. Adhering to these principles facilitates a responsible and insightful exploration of complex media-related issues.

6. Limitations:

Time serves as a prominent constraint, constricting the ability to conduct a comprehensive exploration and analysis of a given topic. When relying solely on publicly accessible data sources, one might confront limitations in both the quantity and accuracy of information. Furthermore, the inherent biases and subjectivity present in news and journalistic media can significantly impact the perceptions and understandings of individuals and communities, ultimately leading to divergent interpretations and viewpoints. This intricate interplay between time, data availability, and media bias underscores the complex nature of information dissemination and comprehension.

3.6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the research methodology chapter presents a comprehensive and integrated approach to investigating establishing territorial control by organized crime groups and their challenge to state sovereignty in Latin America, specifically focusing on Brazil and Mexico. The analysis incorporates a blend of qualitative and quantitative methodologies to achieve this target. This ensures nuanced insights into the complex dynamics of organized crime and its impact on state governance. The comparative case study design highlights the importance of examining contextual nuances influencing organized crime strategies.

The research design prioritizes triangulation through analysing official government media, national/international statistics, and news/journaling media. A systematic tagging process will categorise and analyse data to identify patterns, behaviours, challenges, motivations, and concepts related to territorial control and state erosion.

Chapter 4

Brazil and the PCC

4.1 Introduction

As we embark on the data collection and analysis part of this research, we must position ourselves concerning our case studies. Firstly, we dive into the case of Brazil; as mentioned earlier, the relevance of using similar countries as a comparative case study brings new opportunities for analysis. These opportunities are based on the broad similarities between the two countries, from their system to their political systems. Therefore, this section will elaborate on several points of Brazil's history, considering political, economic, legal, and cultural factors regarding their policies to deal with organised crime groups.

Firstly, a brief historical background to provide a basic knowledge of the country in question. Secondly, the current state of the country's post-organised crime policies, to establish whether these policies have produced lasting effects that have ultimately benefited the communities previously affected. Similarly, this section will help to establish a possible scenario for governments that may be interested in implementing similar policies, in this case, Mexico.

4.2 Historical Background

Brazil, the most significant country in South America and the 5th biggest worldwide has a rich history, including colonisation by the Portuguese in 1500. Following a lengthy period as a Portuguese colony, Brazil achieved independence in 1822 and became a constitutional monarchy. Nonetheless, its political dynamics progressed, culminating in a sequence of military dictatorships that governed the country until 1985, when democracy was reinstated (Calabresi, 2021).

In recent years, Brazil has confronted a significant obstacle in the shape of organised crime. The nation is home to three major criminal groups: the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC), Comando Vermelho, and Família do Norte (Stahlberg, 2022). Among these groups, the PCC has demonstrated remarkable growth and has firmly entrenched itself in São Paulo (Stahlberg, 2022). These groups have expanded their sphere of influence within prison walls and metamorphosed into transnational criminal organisations (Stahlberg, 2022).

Dealing with this intricate issue necessitates a collaborative effort involving law enforcement, the judiciary, and various institutions responsible for detecting, prosecuting, and penalising criminal activities (Chwiej, 2019). The Brazilian government has taken proactive measures to counteract organised crime, including enacting legislation to prevent and control money laundering (Allen, 2015). Impoverishing criminals of their ill-gotten gains has emerged as a critical strategy in the broader battle against international and organised crime. Brazil has legal frameworks that expedite this process within its criminal justice system (Allen, 2015).

The emergence of the PCC in 1993 within a São Paulo penitentiary sought to safeguard its members from a corrupt and oppressive prison environment. The organisation's principles were formalised in a registered statute published in 1997, emphasising values such as "freedom, justice, and peace." Initially aspiring to humanise the national prison system and challenge the status quo, the PCC's evolution over three decades has seen it transform into one of South America's most perilous and effectively structured criminal entities (Batschke and Santandreu, 2022).

4.3 Data evidence

4.4.1 Quantitative data

In 2017 the Brazilian government adopted a confrontational approach to address public security concerns. However, this strategy has yielded concerning outcomes, notably a surge in violence nationwide, marked by an escalation in both homicides and incidents of police shootings (Amâncio, 2018). Intriguingly, amid this trend, the state of São Paulo has managed to maintain the lowest rates of such incidents, as reported by the Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública (FBSP), a Brazilian forum dedicated to matters of public security.

4.4.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

In this section, we will utilise data and statistics provided by reputable international organisations and NGOs to enhance our understanding of trends and patterns related to the loss of state territorial control to organised crime groups in Latin America, in this case for the territory of Brazil the group known as PCC (Primeiro Comando da Capital).

4.4.2 Descriptive Statistics:

Descriptive statistics form a crucial lens through which we gain insight into the core attributes of our dataset. In our analysis, we focused on key variables that illuminate critical aspects of our investigation:

- The Homicide Rate, derived from the UNODC's comprehensive crime reports.
- The Corruption Perception Index, sourced from Transparency International's meticulous corruption assessments.

These statistics encapsulate the dynamic landscape under scrutiny, facilitating a deeper grasp of the intricate interplay between various factors.

The Organised Crime Index, a key metric, gauges the extent of criminality and resilience to crime. Embracing a scale from 1 to 10, the Global Index evaluates criminality and resilience across nations. Rooted in the aggregation of ten criminal markets and four criminal actor categories, this index envelops the intricate fabric of political, social, and economic systems entwined with illicit trade and exploitation. In parallel, criminal actor scores map the terrain of organised criminal activities, accounting for structure, control, and influence. Higher criminality scores denote intensified criminal conditions (*Criminality in Brazil*, no date).

Brazil's profile emerges within this framework, and its criminal actor presence is delineated at 6.5 on the index scale. This characterisation finds grounding in presence, weapon access, and violence dynamics ((*Criminality in Brazil*, no date).

Surveying homicide rates across Brazil unveils a mosaic of variation, punctuating the nuanced nature of violence. São Paulo, the nation's most populous state, epitomises this complexity. While its population size is significant, its homicide figures remain relatively restrained (Gil, 2023). Qualitative insights shed light on this paradox, attributing the trend to

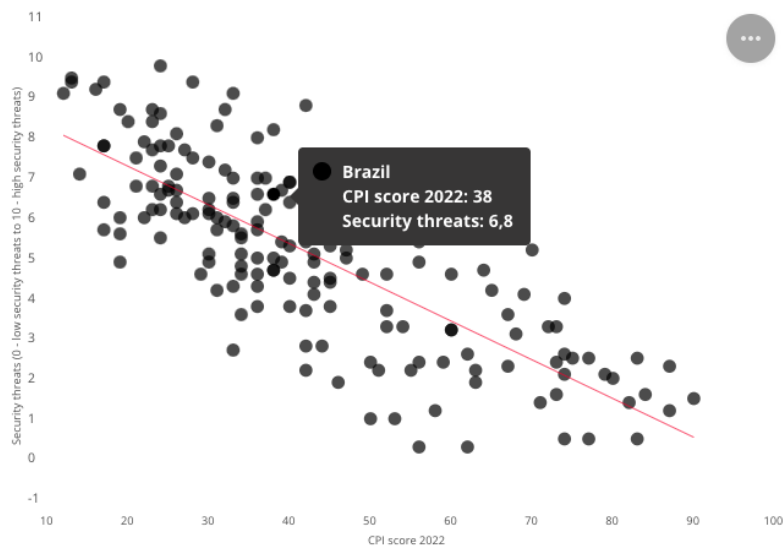
the Peace Command's codes of conduct that regulate markets and amicably resolve conflicts, ultimately curbing violence and homicides.

A congruent trajectory is echoed by the Atlas da Violencia, delineating the plummeting trajectory of gun-related deaths in São Paulo since 2001, crystallised at 3.79 per 100 inhabitants in 2019 ('Ipea - Atlas da Violencia v.2.7 - Mapa', no date).

Directing our focus to Brazil's Corruption Perception Index, its significance is rooted in the recognition that corruption impedes progress and foments social unrest, sowing the seeds of conflict. When entrenched, corruption siphons resources away from public welfare initiatives, favouring specific groups over the collective good (Martínez B. Kukutschka, 2023). In the past years, Brazil witnessed navigating a complex system of anti-corruption dynamics and policies. The disbandment of anti-corruption frameworks, coupled with pervasive corruption investigations, culminated in the revelation of the "secret budget," an institutionalised corruption scheme of unprecedented scale (*CPI 2022 for the Americas: Fertile ground for criminal networks and...*, 2023).

Figure 1 takes centre stage, casting Brazil's stance on the 2022 Corruption Perception Index into vivid relief. This visual depiction highlights Brazil's role as a critical player in the intricate nexus between corruption and security, its posture significantly influencing discourse within these realms. Further, a comprehensive narrative emerges, indicates, and reveals a connection with organised crime, homicides, and corruption, intricately shaping the Latin American landscape.

FIGURE 1: CORRUPTION AND SECURITY THREATS



4.4.3 Trends in Territorial Control Loss

The analysis of territorial control loss trends has been enhanced using quantitative data from various sources. In particular, Figure 2 provides a visual representation of the Homicide Rate across Brazil and its states, offering insights into shifts in patterns of violent crime over the years.

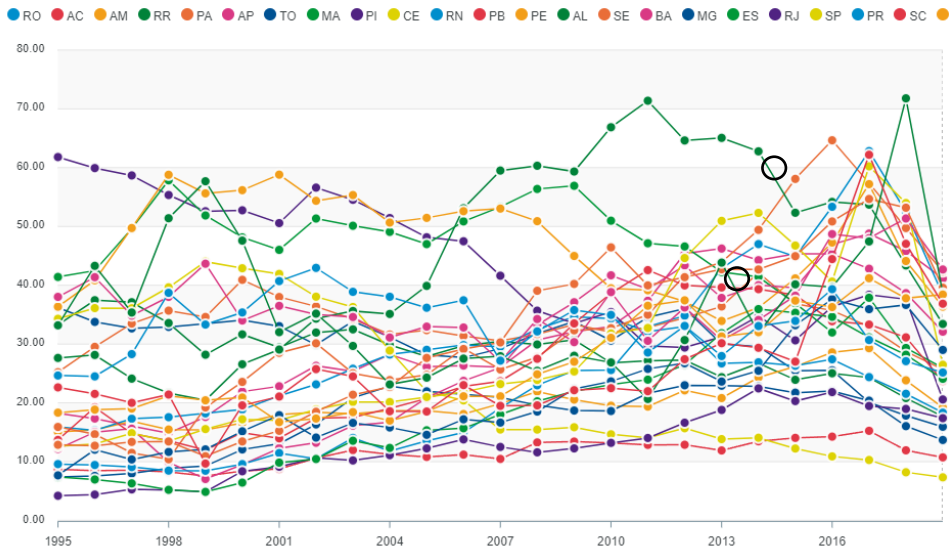


Figure 2: Homicide Rate per 100,000 habitats in each state of Brazil.

The state of Sao Paulo, denoted as "SP" in Figure 2, is particularly significant to our study. While the abundance of data from 1995 to 2019 might appear overwhelming, it becomes clear that there is a discernible upward trajectory in homicide rates, particularly noticeable from the early 2000s onward, with a consistent annual increment. Notably, certain states experienced a peak in their murder rates in 2016, coinciding with the year of the Olympic Games in Brazil and occurring two years after the new government's inauguration, following a congressional decision to remove the president from office.

Interestingly, a distinct trend emerges post-peak, as the homicide rates decline significantly.

DOMÍNIO DA FACÇÃO PRIMEIRO COMANDO DA CAPITAL PCC

Número de integrantes conhecidos pelo número total de pesos por estado da união.

Base: Relatório do Centro de Segurança Institucional e Inteligência do MP-SP ago 2016.

aconteceuemitu.org

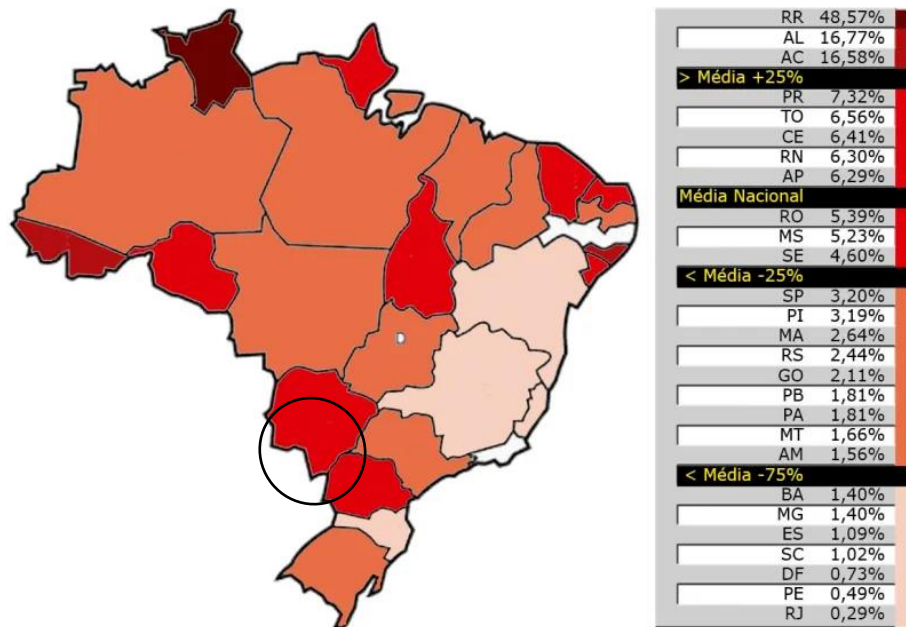


Figure 3: DOMINATION OF FACTION OF THE FIRST COMMAND OF THE CAPITAL PCC. The number of Members is known by the total number of weights per state of the union. Source: Report of the Centre for Institutional Security and Intelligence of MP-SP Aug 2016

What this map shows the homicide rate stats complements us; inside the circled area, the state of Sao Paulo is identified, and we can appreciate that during that year, the state dropped the homicide rate, whereas most states suffered a rise. Although the relation between this quantitative data may not be entirely clear, the qualitative data will contrast and highlight the modus operandi of the PCC in Brazil, Proving that when the criminal organisations in Brazil pact, the violence levels go down and only rise when feeling threatened.

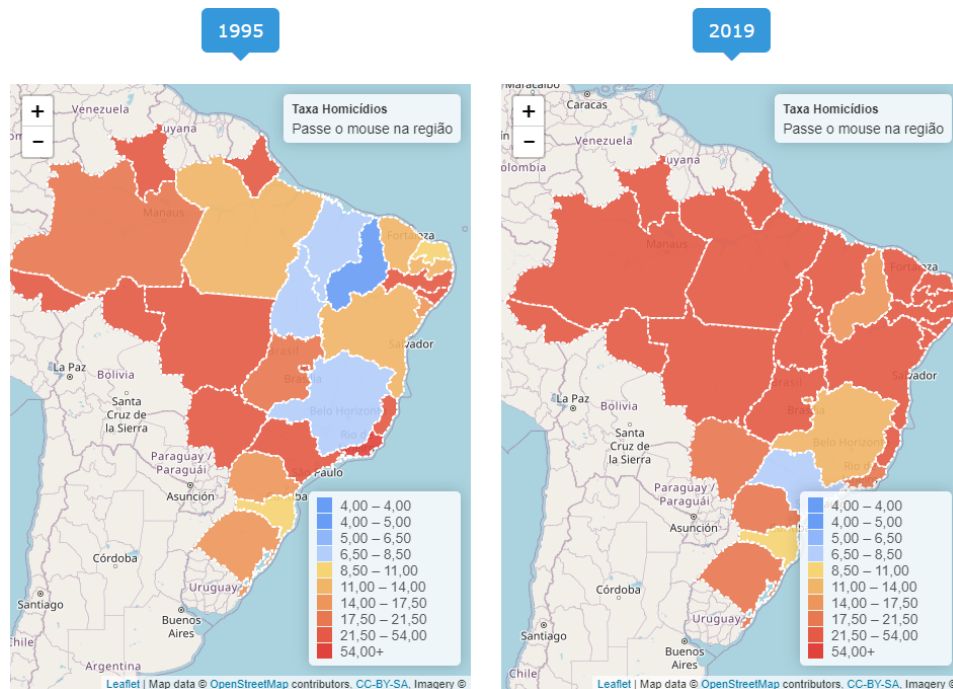
4.4.4 Geographic Mapping

Geographic mapping has dramatically benefited from comprehensive data provided by third-party sources. This is evident in Figure 4 and Figure 5, where choropleth maps

showcase the impact. Specifically, the Atlas de Violencia presents a choropleth map illustrating the homicide rate per 100,000 inhabitants in Brazil from 1995 to 2019. This graphical representation not only captures the fluctuations in violence across the years but also highlights the regions with higher levels of violence.

Furthermore, the map draws attention to areas within Brazil that continue to be contested by different criminal organisations involved in drug trafficking. This stark contrast between violent and contested regions reflects the complex dynamics of criminal activities. Moreover, the varying rates over time are closely intertwined with the country's evolving political landscape. This encompasses formulating policies to address the surge in violence and organised crime nationwide.

Finally, a more profound comprehension emerges regarding the intricate interplay of nationwide violence trends. For instance, in various states, such as Sao Paulo, the PCC competes for control alongside other criminal entities, showcasing the multifaceted nature of criminal dynamics. Notably, Sao Paulo stands out as the state with the lowest homicide rate in Brazil, underscoring its unique status amidst these trends.



4.4.5 Conclusion

The section presented herein features a quantitative data analysis that sheds light on the intricate relationship between numerous factors that affect public security and crime dynamics in Brazil, focusing on the state of Sao Paulo. Despite a nationwide surge in violence and incidents of police shootings due to a confrontational approach to public security, Sao Paulo stands out as an anomaly with relatively lower rates of such incidents. The analysis delves into several essential variables, including the Homicide Rate, Corruption Perception Index, and Organised Crime Index. These numbers reveal the complex nature of criminal dynamics and how they relate to socioeconomic factors.

Sao Paulo's exceptional profile is highlighted, partly attributed to the Peace Command's codes of conduct that regulate markets and conflicts, thus reducing violence and homicides. The quantitative data is complemented by qualitative insights, showcasing how criminal organisations like the PCC can impact violence levels. Geographic mapping further

illustrates the varying rates of violence and contested regions, emphasising the complexity of criminal activities.

In conclusion, the data analysis highlights the intricate connections between organised crime, homicides, corruption, and broader socio-political dynamics in Brazil. The state of Sao Paulo's distinct position within these trends is a compelling example of how specific approaches to public security and criminal governance can influence outcomes.

4.5 Qualitative data

This section highlights the central discoveries derived from the data collected for this particular case. The proliferation and advancement of organised crime groups within the context of Brazil present a highly intricate yet captivating scenario. Therefore, it becomes imperative to comprehend the origins and activities undertaken by the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) to lay the foundation for the initial phase of our analysis.

The comprehensive examination of the accumulated data has revealed a series of distinct and recurrent themes that offer invaluable insights into the nuanced dynamics of the PCC and its pervasive influence across affected regions. These themes have emerged as key patterns interwoven with interconnected concepts, shedding light on the organisation's

strategic manoeuvres, societal ramifications, and governmental authorities' multifaceted challenges. The data underscored conventional knowledge and established measures the Brazilian government took in response to the PCC's actions. This encompasses the group's ascendancy since its inception in the 1990s and the gradual shifts in its behaviour and objectives over time.

As elaborated in the Research Methodology chapter, the employed tagging (coding) system, initially tailored to extract specific information about the PCC in Brazil, spanned a broad spectrum. However, the outcomes of the data collection process unveiled an unexpectedly pronounced prevalence of distinct words and linguistic constructs. This unforeseen linguistic dominance prompted a more thorough exploration, leading to the identification of overarching trends.

It is essential to note our focus on the state of Sao Paulo. While national trends hold significance for shaping our overall stance and argument, our primary aim revolves around scrutinising cases where the specific territory falls under PCC control.

4.5.1. Trends in the Analysis of the Activities of the PCC in Brazil

This section highlights the central discoveries derived from the data collected for this particular case. The proliferation and advancement of organised crime groups within the context of Brazil present a highly intricate yet captivating scenario. Therefore, it becomes imperative to comprehend the origins and activities undertaken by the PCC to lay the foundation for the initial phase of our analysis.

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4.5.2 Trend 1: Territorial Control and Governance

Firstly, it is crucial to emphasise the transformation of the PCC from a prison gang to a socio-political entity, thereby carrying significant implications for established governance frameworks. Supporting this trend is crucial: the influence of the PCC demonstrates an inverse relationship to the presence of other predominant factions. Sociologist Camila Nunes Dias notes that when the PCC has low influence in a state, it indicates the existence of other dominant criminal groups, thus revealing the PCC's role in shaping the criminal landscape and exerting control (Costa and Adorno, 2018).

Furthermore, in Sao Paulo, the PCC's control over the crime scene contributes to stability in terms of violence and crime, mainly because it avoids conflicts with other criminal organisations. This is demonstrated by how the PCC's territorial dominance leads to a form of governance that manages criminal activities and minimises conflict (Costa & Adorno, 2018) (Costa and Adorno, 2018). Moreover, the PCC's territorial expansion model, as proposed by Dias, presents a chronological evolution of the organisation's territorial reach. The faction established its dominance within prison walls, progressively expanding its influence across various penitentiary units. This strategic progression demonstrates the PCC's deliberate efforts to gain control within specific territories.

Additionally, the expansion beyond prisons to the streets and peripheries of São Paulo further highlights the PCC's territorial control. The faction's leaders, originating from these areas, facilitated the transition from prison to street operations, focusing on illicit activities such as the retail drug trade and robberies. Notably, the PCC's control is characterised by a unique order system imposed on members and residents of controlled regions. The

organisation enforces a code of conduct containing 45 rules backed by “crime courts” or internal chessboard proceedings for violations (Henrique, 2023).

The latter further emphasises the PCC's governance role, as it establishes and enforces its rules within its territories. The PCC's objective of creating order aligns with its financial goals, aiming to earn and reinvest money to expand its influence and opportunities. This financial-driven governance model highlights the PCC's multifaceted approach to control, combining territorial dominance with economic pursuits (Dalby, 2020).

4.5.3 Trend 2: Social Conditions and Recruitment Strategies

A compelling and recurrent theme pertains to the profound influence of prevailing social conditions on the organisation's recruitment strategies. The dataset consistently illustrates a discernible pattern of the PCC targeting economically disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals, particularly youth. This thematic trend unveils an intricate interplay between the organisation and the socioeconomic setting, where systemic disparities are exploited to bolster the PCC's ranks. The implications of this theme extend to broader societal considerations, encompassing the perpetuation of cycles of criminality and marginalisation.

The initial piece of evidence highlights the significant impact of social relations on the operations of the PCC. The data illustrates that the CCP employs extreme violence towards rival groups, politicians, and law enforcement, which can be viewed as a strategic response to the challenging socioeconomic circumstances. In this regard, the organisation seeks to establish dominance and control through fear and coercion.

Furthermore, Diogo's observation emphasises the PCC's resilience and adaptability, highlighting the interplay between the organisation and its socioeconomic environment (Diogo, 2022). The data suggests that the PCC's behaviour varies depending on the territory it expands into, demonstrating a deliberate strategy to align its activities with the specific conditions of each area. This adaptive approach reveals a nuanced understanding of the socioeconomic landscape, enabling the PCC to maximise its influence and power.

Diogo's analysis provides a deeper understanding of the interrelation between the organisation's behaviour and the socioeconomic setting (Diogo, 2022). The PCC's transformation from a mediator or governance structure in specific contexts to a more restricted entity in others highlights the organisation's responsiveness to its actual possibilities of exercising power. This observation highlights the organisation's strategic calculations in exploiting systemic disparities, reinforcing the overarching thematic trend of leveraging socioeconomic conditions to shape recruitment strategies.

One of the key manifestations of the PCC's exploitation of socioeconomic conditions is apparent in the contrast between the PCC and the CV (Comando Vermelho). The PCC's provision of legal assistance, arms and drug loans, and better prison conditions reflects a calculated approach to attracting and retaining members in an environment characterised by systemic inequalities. This strategic offering appeals to individuals seeking protection and resources, perpetuating cycles of criminality and marginalisation.

Lastly, the PCC's functioning as a network of crime "entrepreneurs" illustrates the organisation's engagement with socioeconomic conditions. Members who operate their

criminal enterprises and pay into the "fraternity" underscore the organisation's role in providing a framework for individuals to navigate and thrive within a challenging socioeconomic environment. This multifaceted approach to recruitment aligns with the overarching theme, revealing the intricate ways the PCC exploits systemic disparities to its advantage.

In conclusion, the evidence presented offers a comprehensive perspective on the dynamic relationship between prevailing social conditions and the PCC's recruitment strategies. The data highlights how the organisation's behaviour, resilience, adaptability, and strategic offerings are intricately intertwined with the socioeconomic setting, ultimately contributing to the perpetuation of cycles of criminality and marginalisation, as outlined in the thematic trend.

4.5.4 Trend 3: Erosion of State Authority and Institutional Weakness

Another notable theme that has emerged prominently relates to the gradual erosion of state authority and the organisation's adept exploitation of institutional vulnerabilities. The analysis of official crime statistics and government reports highlights instances where the PCC fills critical governance and law enforcement voids, cementing its sphere of influence. This theme accentuates state institutions' pressing and intricate challenges in countering the organisation's expansion, raising pertinent questions concerning requisite policy interventions. The latter was seen when the state was forced to negotiate with the group to reduce violence.

The emergence of the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) as a formidable force in São Paulo's criminal landscape is closely intertwined with allegations of its relations with the government and politicians. The PCC's de facto governance of communities within São Paulo is a testament to its ability to impose its rules and resolve conflicts through its criminal tribunals, effectively replacing the state's judicial system in areas with solid influence (Gimenez Stahlberg, 2021). This shift in authority highlights the gradual erosion of state power, a prominent theme in the analysis.

Urban violence, a manifestation of power and territorial control by criminal organisations, serves as a response to aggressive security policies and as a show of force against rival groups (Quirós, 2019a). Establishing pacts or truces between organised crime and the state arises when both actors fail to independently exert control over the effects of their actions (Quirós, 2019a). This dynamic highlights the delicate balance between criminal organisations and state authority, contributing to state institutions' challenges in countering the expansion of such entities.

Contrasting with the narcos of Rio de Janeiro, the PCC demonstrates a concern for regulating crime and promoting internal pacification to maintain its structure and prevent factional divides (Batschke and Santandreu, 2022). This strategic approach further accentuates the PCC's adept exploitation of institutional vulnerabilities as it navigates its relationships with the state and other criminal entities.

The deficient prison system in Brazil serves as a critical factor in both the success of the PCC and its ongoing recruitment efforts. Poverty and inequality in Brazilian society

contribute to the penetration of groups like the PCC in deprived areas, where they often organise neighbourhoods and contribute to a paradoxical paralysis of violence (Cueto, 2020). This phenomenon highlights the PCC's influence in filling governance and law enforcement voids and points to state institutions' challenges in countering its expansion.

In the context of Bolsonaro's government, the potential consequences of stringent policies are examined. Compacts between criminal factions and fleeting feelings of safety resulting from government actions could exacerbate brutality due to escalated state coercion on organised criminal entities (Quirós, 2019b). This analysis sheds light on state institutions' intricate challenges in addressing the PCC's expansion and the complex interplay between government policies and criminal dynamics.

In summary, the evidence presented demonstrates a clear relation between the data points and the overarching trend of the gradual erosion of state authority and the PCC's adept exploitation of institutional vulnerabilities. The PCC's de facto governance, the establishment of pacts, its strategic approach, the influence of the deficient prison system, and the potential consequences of government policies all contribute to the theme of state institutions' challenges in countering the organisation's expansion.

4.5.5 Trend 4: Transnational Expansion and Global Connections

The analysis has also illuminated a compelling trend characterised by the PCC's transnational expansion and its establishment of interconnected global networks. The data highlights cross-border criminal activities, money laundering operations, and recruitment

efforts beyond national borders. This thematic exploration highlights the PCC's ambitions beyond localised contexts and poses significant inquiries into potential repercussions for regional and international security dynamics

The analysis reveals a compelling trend characterised by the PCC's transnational expansion and the establishment of interconnected global networks, with evidence emphasising the relationship between the data and this trend:

The PCC's expansion into Paraguay is a significant strategic move, providing tangible support for its transnational ambitions. By establishing a presence in Paraguay, the PCC gained access to substantial drug trafficking routes and resources, illustrating the group's efforts to extend its influence beyond national borders.

Within Paraguay, the PCC's takeover of drug trafficking operations following the assassination of Jorge Rifaat Toumani highlights its cross-border criminal activities and the exploitation of power vacuums in neighbouring regions (Batschke and Santandreu, 2022). This event highlights the PCC's ability to capitalise on vulnerabilities beyond its home country and reinforces the trend of transnational expansion through controlling illicit enterprises.

The PCC's discovery of a unique market niche further accentuates its global reach and cross-border activities. The group recognised an untapped opportunity distinct from the established markets dominated by Mexican and Colombian cartels, showcasing its ability to adapt and expand beyond localised contexts. This innovation speaks to the PCC's capability

to engage in cross-border criminal endeavours and diversify its criminal portfolio, contributing to the more significant trend of interconnected global networks.

The evidence highlights the PCC's transnational expansion, interconnected global networks, and engagement in cross-border criminal activities. The group's strategic moves in Paraguay, exploitation of criminal power vacuums, and identification of distinct market opportunities collectively exemplify its ambitions beyond localised contexts. These findings raise necessary inquiries into the potential repercussions for regional and international security dynamics.

4.4.6 Implications and Future Directions

The exposed themes collectively provide an intricate panorama of the PCC's multifaceted influence, encompassing its intricate organisational strategies and the broader societal consequences. The identified themes are a foundational platform for formulating informed policies and targeted interventions to counter the PCC's influence. Future research endeavours could delve more comprehensively into each thematic domain, offering granular policy recommendations, societal interventions, and law enforcement strategies tailored to mitigate the organisation's influence and restore the authority of state institutions. Comparative analyses with similar criminal organisations may provide a deeper contextual understanding and inform effective strategies to address this complex challenge.

The thematic analysis of the qualitative data establishes a clear link between the provided evidence and the overarching trend discussed earlier. The evidence highlights

critical aspects of the PCC's influence and organisational strategies, aligning with the multifaceted panorama outlined:

Firstly, parallels between the PCC and Italian mafias emerge, evident in the code of conduct (1), remote control of activities (2), and territorial dominance (3), reflecting the intricate organisational strategies. The expansion to neighbouring countries and violent disputes (4) resonates with the broader societal consequences, mirroring the earlier trend. Furthermore, the employment of advanced money laundering techniques (5) and support systems for members and their families (6) underscore the extensive reach and societal implications, affirming the multifaceted influence.

As a criminal state successor, the third phase aligns with the trend, emphasising organisational evolution and influence. Challenges faced by authorities contextualise the societal consequences, echoing the need for targeted interventions. Governor Márcio França's perspective reinforces this theme. Further, the internal power struggle following fundamental figure isolation (Batschke and Santandreu, 2022) highlights dynamic organisational strategies and potential vulnerabilities.

The qualitative evidence corroborates the intricate panorama of the PCC's influence, validating the organisational strategies and broader consequences discussed. This alignment highlights the thematic foundation for effective policies and interventions, restoring state authority (Costa and Adorno, 2018).

4.4.7 The overall situation regarding the findings of the thematic analysis:

“The analysis of the collected data in this section aims to establish a baseline for several essential concepts. Firstly, it seeks to determine whether the OCG (Organized Crime Group), known as the PCC (Primeiro Comando da Capital), holds territorial control over certain portions of the Brazilian territory. Secondly, the analysis aims to understand this group's illicit undertakings' methods, activities, and objectives. This involves identifying potential patterns they use to assert control, including political interactions, bribery, violence, and other forms of engagement.

The third aspect of the analysis focuses on identifying the reactions of the government and media to the presence of the OCG. It aims to uncover strategies employed to address the issue, exploring whether there is an acknowledgement of the group's control or an admission of challenges in dealing with the situation. Additionally, it seeks to understand how the international media perceives and reports on this matter, as well as any suggested solutions and their effectiveness.”

However, it is essential to note that while the objectives of this section were evident at the outset of data collection, the process yielded unexpected findings and highlighted additional issues and trends that were not anticipated based on the initial literature review. This highlights the notion that theoretical knowledge provides a foundational framework for examining the available data. Nevertheless, the outcomes have brought forth several crucial focal points that warrant careful consideration and analysis to meet the research objectives fully.

Moreover, the concluding part of this chapter will reflect upon the section's findings, contrasting them with the preliminary assumptions before data collection. This reflection aims to establish a baseline understanding of the Brazilian context. This baseline will then be

juxtaposed with the subsequent chapter's discussion in Mexico, enabling a comparative analysis of both cases, their findings, and the illumination of shared patterns and trends. This comparative approach accentuates disparities between initial research assumptions and the findings.”

4.5 Baseline: Hybrid Governance in Brazil?

The case of Brazil has presented itself within the research spectrum as a base for analysis, whether this means that Brazil has and still is currently struggling with the widespread phenomenon of organised crime within their territory, and more specifically for the case of the PCC. The data collection has shown how easy it is for an organisation to shift its interests and objectives depending on the reaction not only of the government but especially the people. This becomes relevant when we consider the theories explored in the literature review, and we understand that the people give the support needed; this support might be given by its members through their loyalty but also from the communities they ‘control’.

The PCC has shown great potential for resilience, adaptability, and intent of evolution, aiming to fulfil their objectives, whether based on the obtention of money through drug trafficking or money laundering, representing another issue. However, since its foundation, the PCC has shifted the main objective of their activities from caring for the prisoners to almost controlling a region with a presence in several neighbouring countries and harnessing the membership of + 30,000 members through a well-thought loyalty program

and targeting vulnerable individuals, their power and influence is undeniable. Nevertheless, that becomes irrelevant if not considered the part the state has.

The research does not distinguish between governments, presidents and their political interests but aims to understand the overall picture regarding the actions and reactions taken to tackle the group. On the one hand, the Brazilian government, over the years, has tried to ignore the seriousness of the issue. However, on the other hand, the government seems unmoved by the decrease in homicide and violence due to the pacts between criminal organisations over the years. It is rather advantageous for the government that such an occurrence occurs, even though the cases of government officials who have shown relations with the PCC look to be independent and not a common link between them. The latter is also contrasted when studying how an ‘iron fist’ policy aiming to go ‘war’ with said groups rarely positively reduced the group's influence and power within prisons and communities.

Finally, Sao Paulo has demonstrated on a small scale the impact the PCC can have in the long term; whilst it has certainly reduced the violence and homicide rate over the years, its presence looks unbothered by the state. Bringing up questions about the state's interest in removing them.

4.6 Conclusion

Within organised crime discourse, a divide emerges: academia recognises territorial control by groups like the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC), while politicians tend to

refute it. A coherent narrative emerges by intersecting the four conceptual pillars from the literature review, affirming territorial control's reality.

Social conditions, a central pillar, crucially shape territorial dynamics. This research solidifies the PCC's territorial dominion through intricate thematic analysis, crime statistics, media reports, and governmental responses.

The Quantitative analysis strengthens this understanding. Sao Paulo, an exception amidst nationwide violence, exemplifies the intersection of factors influencing public security. Variables including Homicide Rate, Corruption Perception Index, Homicide Rate, and Organised Crime Index depict the complex interplay of crime and socioeconomic factors.

Sao Paulo's unique profile aligns with the PCC's territorial control theme. PCC's conduct codes curbing violence find resonance. Qualitative insights and geographic mapping further highlight criminal organisations' influence.

The thematic and quantitative analyses converge, illustrating the PCC's territorial control intricately interwoven with socio-political dynamics. Sao Paulo's case highlights the impact of distinct security and governance strategies. The conclusion reaffirms the PCC's territorial control's role within Brazil's criminal landscape, its nexus with social conditions, and its broader implications.

Chapter 5

Mexico's Complex relation with organised crime

5.1 Introduction

As we delve into the case studies and initiate the data collection process, the focal point shifts towards the case study that initially sparked the inspiration for this research. Mexico emerges as an exceptionally compelling case study, offering insights into the activities of organised crime and their intricate interactions with government officials and serving as a persistent testament to the violent capacities exhibited by these organised entities.

The research methodology highlights Mexico and Brazil's shared developmental and contemporary aspects. However, the purpose behind employing Brazil as a foundational framework to scrutinise and comprehend Mexico's prevailing organised crime scenario differs significantly. While comparing these two nations is not novel, employing Brazil as a reference point for assessing Mexico's current state represents an innovative approach.

This chapter follows a parallel structure to its predecessor, commencing with a succinct historical backdrop that aims to situate the reader within a comprehensive context of Mexico's overall landscape. This serves the dual purpose of providing a broader understanding of Mexico and shedding light on the country's ongoing struggle against organised crime. Subsequently, the quantitative data illuminates the initial depth of the trends unveiled in the qualitative segment, which was developed through thematic analysis.

Moreover, this chapter leverages the foundation established in the preceding case study to highlight the disparities between Brazil's context and the existing body of literature while juxtaposing these findings with the newly acquired data.

4.2 Historical Background

Mexico has a rich and diverse history that has spanned over three millennia (La Botz, no date). Prior to the arrival of the Europeans, the region that is now known as the indigenous population inhabited Mexico. These indigenous communities developed advanced civilisations, including but not limited to the Olmec, Maya, Zapotec, and Aztec cultures. In 1492, Spanish explorers discovered the New World, and the Aztec Empire was brought down by the army led by Hernan Cortes (Lambert, 2021). Spain dominated Mexico for three centuries until the early 1800s when Mexican revolutionaries revolted against Spanish rule.

The impact of organised crime on Mexican society has been profound and has caused many problems for the country in recent times. Organised criminal activity in Mexico has increased steadily since the 1980s, presenting a significant challenge for the nation and leading to unparalleled social unrest and public insecurity in modern-day Mexico (González, 2013). Notable organised crime groups in Mexico include the Sinaloa Cartel, Gulf Cartel, Jalisco New Generation Cartel, Juarez Cartel, and La Familia Michoacana (Salazar and Olson, 2010). The violence associated with these groups has resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and has created new tensions and divisions in vital U.S.-Mexico relations (Salazar and

Olson, 2010). The effect of organised crime on Mexican society has been disastrous, impacting the economy, social structure, political stability, and even cultural identity (Salazar and Olson, 2010). The government's response to organised crime has been mixed, with some successes but many failures. The government has engaged in a futile war against drug trafficking, and the growing militarisation of the state apparatus has failed to curb the violence (Gonzalez, 2013). In addition, the government has been implicated in corruption and partnership with organised crime groups, which has additionally sapped public faith in the government's ability to address the problem (Jones and Sullivan, 2019).

5.3 Data evidence

5.4.1 Quantitative data

Continuing our exploration, this section delves into the quantitative dimension of our study, shedding light on the organised crime landscape through a spectrum of data in Mexico and especially in the state of Michoacan. By examining homicide rates, drug trafficking incidents, corruption levels, transparency, trust in government, and the geographic presence of criminal groups, we aim to unravel the nuanced dynamics at play.

This quantitative analysis serves as a crucial lens for understanding how organised crime groups exert control over territories. By scrutinising these metrics, we seek to unearth patterns that highlight the influence of these criminal entities within local contexts.

However, it is essential to acknowledge potential limitations. Biased statistics or limited information could impact the accuracy of our results. Therefore, as we interpret the data, we remain mindful of the broader local context, ensuring that our conclusions are grounded in a holistic understanding of the intricate interplay between organised crime, governmental structures, and societal dynamics.

5.4.2 Descriptive Statistics

5.4.3 Homicide and Crime Across the Country

In examining the prevalence of organised crime, it becomes evident that many homicides mar Mexico. In 2016, a staggering 6,087 homicide victims were attributed to organised crime nationwide, with a noteworthy concentration of 922 cases within Michoacan. To comprehensively comprehend the crime incidence landscape, data from the Secretariado Ejecutivo del Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública (SESNSP) proves invaluable. This institution meticulously aggregates crime data from various states, classifying and quantifying criminal activities annually, a notable focus being on homicides and drug trafficking.

However, it is essential to acknowledge the issue of underreported crimes due to Mexico's prevailing impunity crisis. A confluence of factors, ranging from resource limitations to political influences, contributes to the underreporting or discontinuation of criminal cases. This issue impedes an accurate reflection of crime statistics, as highlighted in Figure 6 (Aguilar Pelaez, 2023), depicting the evolving trend of unreported crimes from 2013 to 2021. Additionally, a study on Latin American homicides highlights Michoacan as among

the states with the highest homicide rates per 100 inhabitants, as illustrated in Figure 7 (Appleby, 2023).

The quantitative data highlights the urgency of delving deeper into the underlying causes of these homicides, a subject that will be explored further in the subsequent section.

Most Crimes Go Unreported in Mexico

During 2021, there were an estimated 28.1 million total crimes committed in Mexico. 93.2% of those crimes went unreported and only 1.1% of were resolved.



Source: National Institute of Statistics and Geography's 2022 National Survey on Victimization and Perception of Public Safety in Mexico

Figure 6: Unreported Crimes in Mexico. Source: Global Press Journal

Mexico Homicides in 2022 *insightcrime.org*

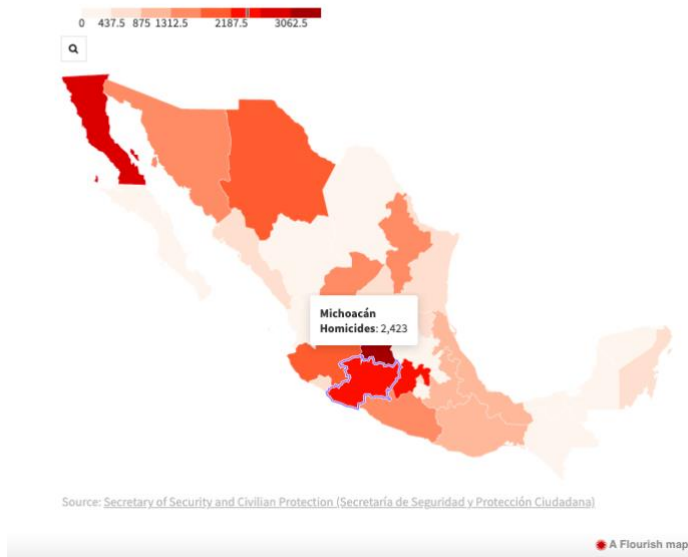


Figure 7. Source InSight Crime

To clarify further, Figures 8 and 9 offer an insightful visual representation of reported violent homicides and drug trafficking cases in Michoacan, utilising data from SESNSP.

	Total 2015		Total 2019
Homicides	766	Homicides	1680
Drug trafficking	1136	Drug trafficking	2327
	Total 2016		Total 2020
Homicides	1262	Homicides	1976
Drug trafficking	1101	Drug trafficking	2010
	Total 2017		Total 2021
Homicides	1249	Homicides	2233
Drug trafficking	2016	Drug trafficking	2514
	Total 2018		Total 2022
Homicides	1338	Homicides	1969
Drug trafficking	2240	Drug trafficking	2031

Figures 8 & 9. Source, own creation with data from the SESNSP (Executive Secretariat of the National Public Security System in English)

5.4.4 Corruption and Impunity Trends

A comprehensive understanding of Mexico's organised crime landscape necessitates an exploration of corruption and impunity trends. Mexico's corruption perception index reveals 31 out of 100 scores in 2020, with incremental improvement from the previous year. Despite this progress, Mexico's standing still needs to improve compared to its global counterparts. The Global Organized Crime Index highlights Mexico's criminality and resilience scores, illustrating the sophisticated nature of its drug-trafficking organisations. These groups exert influence over vast territories, often co-opting state institutions through bribery and intimidation to facilitate their illicit activities. The resulting impact on trust in

government is significant; a survey by the OECD reveals that only 52.9 per cent of respondents expressed confidence in the national government.

Organised Crime Presence Along the Territory

The Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) and the Michoacan Familia stand as critical players within the intricate framework of criminal organisations operating in Mexico. The CJNG commands a pervasive influence nationwide, engaging in confrontations with local and regional criminal entities, as depicted in Figure 10 (Global, no date). This mapping of organised crime presence highlights the complex dynamics within Mexico's territories.

5.4.5 Conclusion of Qualitative Section

In summary, examining quantitative data in this segment has provided insight into various numerical aspects of crime and organised crime in Mexico. The data has revealed the significant presence of organised crime groups and the alarming levels of impunity prevalent in the country. These findings improve our understanding of the public's scepticism towards the government's capacity to tackle security concerns effectively. Although the numerical analysis has given valuable insights, it is essential to note that the qualitative information presents a more comprehensive investigation of the problem, highlighting the complex social and economic dynamics.

The complexities of Mexico's social and economic landscape give rise to multifaceted causes that contribute to power vacuums and the proliferation of organised crime. While

existing literature has provided a foundational understanding, empirical context is critical to generate meaningful recommendations. This analysis demonstrates that a comprehensive assessment integrating quantitative and qualitative perspectives is essential for a more nuanced comprehension of the challenges of organised crime in Mexico. In moving forward, scholars and researchers must emphasise the necessity for more comprehensive numerical data to illuminate the broader impact of organised crime on Mexico's economy, social fabric, and cultural spheres. This collaborative effort will undoubtedly contribute to a more informed approach to tackling the complex issue of organised crime in Mexico.

5.5. Qualitative data

5.5.1 Understanding the Landscape of Organized Crime in Michoacan

In the intricate framework of Mexico's organised crime landscape, the state of Michoacan emerges as a focal point of significance and complexity. Over decades,

Michoacan has occupied a crucial role, marked by its prominence as a drug trafficking hub and a crucible for Mexico's anti-crime endeavours. Former President Felipe Calderón designated Michoacan as the epicentre of the nation's battle against cartels, setting the stage for a tumultuous struggle (Felbab-Brown, 2021). This designation is not without reason; Michoacan's strategic geographical features, encompassing fertile terrains for poppy and marijuana cultivation, alongside the establishment of methamphetamine laboratories, have rendered it a vital nexus in the criminal underworld—the mountainous terrain, offering environmental concealment, further compounds its appeal to criminal entities.

In this context, the state's contested terrain has a dual significance. On the one hand, the fragmented nature of organised crime groups in Mexico has impeded governmental efforts to track territorial advancements. The consequences of this fragmentation are acutely felt by Michoacan's avocado farmers, who often find themselves ensnared in extortion and scams, indicative of the region's tumultuous dynamics. On the other hand, Mexico's current conflict is characterised by two interwoven dimensions—a protracted counterinsurgency campaign waged by state security forces against paramilitary squads of drug cartels and a volatile internal struggle among criminal militias vying for territorial dominance and control over illicit trades. This irregular warfare between non-state subnational actors further compounds Michoacan's intricate scenario (Alonso-Trabanco, 2022).

Moreover, Michoacan's narrative is intertwined with a long-standing debate surrounding the government's response to escalating criminal power and the perceived inaction of local and federal authorities. Against this backdrop, prominent criminal groups have emerged, each contributing to the multifaceted narrative.

- La Familia Michoacana: A distinctive case within organised crime, La Familia Michoacana arose in response to escalating violence from Los Zetas. Initially portraying

itself as a benevolent force for the people, this group, led by Nazario Moreno, transformed, revealing its true identity as a ruthless conglomerate of killers, traffickers, and criminals. While its influence waned following the fall of its leader, La Familia's presence endures (Ferri, 2022).

- CJNG (Cartel de Jalisco Nueva Generación): Though its influence in Michoacan may not be primary, CJNG, led by a figure linked to U.S. authorities, is noteworthy due to its leader's Michoacan origins. The region of Tierra Caliente, a strategic crossroads for drug trafficking, has witnessed fierce confrontations, with CJNG aiming to move drugs through the area. At the same time, rival groups seek control for extortion purposes (Abi-Habib and Berehulak, 2022).

- Carteles Unidos (CU): Born out of an alliance between various criminal factions, including Cartel de Tepalcatepec and Los Viagras, CU arose to counter the encroachment of CJNG into Michoacan. This alliance, entrenched in the state, contends with CJNG in a battle for drug trafficking routes and control over local illicit economies, notably the production of drugs and the extortion of avocado producers (Crime, 2021).

These groups' convergence, clashes, and impact on the state's inhabitants crystallise the complex narrative of organised crime in Michoacan. This multifaceted panorama, where criminal organisations vie for territorial control and dominance, supports the trends and insights gleaned from the data analysis in subsequent sections. By examining the intricacies of their intent and actions, we unlock a deeper understanding of the dynamics shaping Michoacan's organised crime landscape.

To further elucidate this phenomenon, the following section presents a visual depiction, offering insights into the state's geographic distribution and territorial dynamics.

Further, the trends will be presented in no particular order but to show the key themes that have been constant throughout the research process.

Figure 10: Visual Representation of Organised Crime Presence in Michoacan.



Figure 10. Source: Global Guardian.

5.5.2 Thematic Analysis: Trends in the Analysis of the Activities of the Criminal in Mexico

5.5.3 Trend 1: Lack of Institutional Presence and Emergence of Self-Defence Groups

As we delve into the intricate web of analysed data, a resounding truth emerges, revealing a central theme in Mexico's current struggle against organised crime. This theme resonates in the research findings and the media portrayals, a portrait of institutional frailty and absence in the fabric of smaller communities. A stark reality comes to light: the deficiency in social programs, insufficient police force, and a dearth of robust state presence. These elements intertwine to create a void that invites the emergence of self-defence groups within these vulnerable communities. Faced with unrelenting violence and the oppressive grip of organised crime factions, communities are driven to a breaking point. Fed up and cloaked in fear, they collectively decide to take up arms and reclaim their territories from the clutches of malevolent forces.

Nevertheless, this defiance against criminal dominance treads a precarious path, traversing the fine line between defiance and transgression of the established legal framework. The clash between these grassroots efforts and the governmental structure paints a complex landscape where community action stands above conventional legal paradigms. Within this intricate dance, the narrative unfolds as criminals attempt to counter these actions by asserting a narrative that implicates communities in collusion with their rivals. In the following sections, we delve deeper into the evidence that highlights this multifaceted trend, shedding light on the dynamics and repercussions of communities forging their paths amidst a sea of challenges.

The Michoacan landscape presents a fascinating blend of data that highlights the interplay between criminal organisations, government authority, and the emergence of self-defence groups. Forming a collective "block" such as *Carteles Unidos* is a testament to the collective reaction against the advances of the CJNG in Michoacan (González Díaz, 2021). The genesis of such groups highlights the absence of robust state authority, which creates a

vacuum that criminal organisations are quick to exploit (Ochoa and Torres, 2019). These groups adopt a dual perspective, seeking to consolidate economic and territorial control over the state while emphasising the importance of controlling key drug trafficking routes (Ochoa and Torres, 2019).

The intricacies of this phenomenon intertwine with the political landscape. The nexus between criminal activity and electoral campaigns becomes evident, with criminal entities recognising the potential benefits of political participation (Ochoa and Torres, 2019). Municipal elections, in particular, emerge as a strategic avenue for exerting political influence and securing access to financial resources, thereby shielding criminal enterprises from federal and state intervention (Ochoa and Torres, 2019). The absence of institutional strength and effective governance creates fertile ground for organised crime groups to vie for control, as exemplified by the emergence of self-defence movements like the *autodefensas* (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2023).

As a result of the insufficient faith in governmental protection, local communities have taken it upon themselves to address the matter. The example of Tancítaro, known as the "capital mundial del aguacate," highlights this trend as the population established a self-defence unit in response to extortion, abuse, and kidnapping by cartels (Abi-Habib, 2022). A candid acknowledgement by Guerrero Gutierrez resonates—despite the alarming power wielded by criminal groups, the Mexican government lacks the resources and institutional capacity to effectively counter the co-opting of territories (CNN, 2023). As we delve deeper into the following sections, the layers of evidence will peel back to illuminate the nuanced

dynamics and complex narratives that embody this crucial trend, shedding light on the intricate balance between criminal influence and grassroots community response.

The communities and the population, driven to their limits by the unrelenting challenges that plague their lives, are compelled to establish self-defence groups to ensure their safety and restore a semblance of justice. In this context, the state's failure becomes evident as the imperative for social justice and self-preservation transcends the confines of legality. The emergence of these self-defence groups illuminates a complex interplay between the villagers and the state, mainly when clashes arise due to the absence of state support.

The practical manifestation of these theoretical concepts in the lived experiences of these communities offers a perspective that surpasses the grasp of academic discourse. The decision to forgo reliance on established institutions and opportunities within communities beleaguered by criminal organisations appears almost inherent, despite the villagers' awareness that while the state might deploy armed forces to expel criminals, lasting security necessitates robust governance and the provision of essential services. The comparative analysis with Brazil reveals a contrasting scenario, as the state's presence could be more conspicuously lacking. Notably, the PCC's efforts to maintain order underscore the differing operational methods of these organisations in the two countries.

5.5.4 Trend 2: Complex Criminal-Political Connections

Our analysis delves into a complex network of interconnections, revealing a conspicuous pattern: the intricate interdependence between criminal elements and community politicians. This mutually beneficial relationship serves the interests of criminal factions, providing them with a protective layer of familiarity in positions of power. The impetus for this alliance arises from the criminals' desire to operate without hindrance, leveraging their political counterparts for protection. Therefore, politicians are confronted with a stark choice: either submit to the criminals' demands or face severe consequences, often resulting in death, regardless of their political affiliation.

This web extends beyond individuals and manifests in a broader strategy, where politicians endorse candidates from diverse parties to safeguard their interests. This intricate dynamic contrasts corruption and limited sovereignty, presenting a formidable challenge for aspiring candidates. The amalgamation of criminal influence and political manoeuvring casts a shadow over governance. In the subsequent sections, we scrutinise evidence that unravels the complexities and consequences of this trend, examining the intricate interplay between criminal elements and the political landscape.

Our investigation of the second trend exposes a convoluted network of evidence, emphasising the intricate relationship that binds criminal organisations and politicians in Michoacan. Authorities have meticulously monitored the activities of these groups, identifying individuals such as José Alfredo and Johnny Hurtado as key figures of interest (Ferri, 2022). The scope of this relationship extends beyond mere intimidation, as Mexican criminal groups have evolved to actively influence the outcomes of elections (Felbab-Brown, 2021). Their tactics range from coercing local populations under their control to vote for their

preferred candidates to eliminating rival politicians through intimidation and violence (Felbab-Brown, 2021).

Criticism of governmental inaction resounds loudly within the communities of Aguililla, as locals accuse officials of colluding with organised crime and failing to ensure their freedom (Gonzalez, 2021). The enduring influence of criminal organisations over the political landscape is highlighted by firsthand accounts revealing the necessity of securing their support for a political career (Ochoa and Torres, 2019). This symbiotic dynamic often compels politicians to negotiate with criminals to ensure their campaigns proceed unhindered (Ochoa and Torres, 2019). Once in power, mayors are embroiled in a web of clandestine meetings held under darkness, where heavily armed criminal groups exert influence (Ochoa and Torres, 2019).

These intricate interactions reflect the evolution of a symbiotic alliance between criminal elements and political actors, where power dynamics dictate strategic manoeuvring and influence peddling. As we delve deeper into the following sections, the evidence shall further illuminate the nuanced dimensions of this complex trend, revealing the mechanisms through which criminal entities leverage political machinery to further their interests and secure their dominance.

The population should trust the state, its authorities, and the police as security providers, a fundamental pillar in societal governance. However, a deeper analysis of available information reveals a rather unconventional and concerning relationship. This

analysis uncovers the unsettling phenomenon of criminal entities transcending their operational boundaries to infiltrate the Mexican political landscape.

This situation sheds light on the state's apparent desperation in maintaining peace and curbing violence. Paradoxically, this desperation underscores a deficiency in the state's capacity to thwart these criminal groups' activities effectively. This raises pertinent questions about the true extent of the state's authority and its ability to address the looming threat. Concurrently, the evolutionary trajectory of these criminal organisations introduces a disconcerting dimension. In their quest for dominance and control, these groups have exhibited a shrewd inclination to establish connections with governors, mayors, and other influential figures. These affiliations serve as a strategic advantage, affording them a proactive stance that shields them from legal consequences and enables them to anticipate and evade potential crackdowns.

Both aspects, when scrutinised, cast doubt on the effectiveness of the prevailing mechanisms. Firstly, the state's reliance on negotiations and interim measures to mitigate conflicts paints a picture of compromised authority and an inability to address the core issues decisively. This undermines the very essence of its power and mission in ensuring citizen security. Secondly, the analogical comparison of criminal organisations to businesses is strikingly accurate. These groups engage in calculated agreements to expand their reach and cement their control over illicit activities, particularly drug trafficking. This pursuit of criminal monopolies further erodes the citizenry's well-being, as the state's failures intersect with the criminal apparatus, allowing these groups to extend their influence within the government structure.

In essence, the casualties of this intricate web are the ordinary citizens. The state's shortcomings fail to target the root causes, while the tenacity of criminal organisations results in their pervasive infiltration of governmental frameworks. This confluence of shortcomings on both fronts has precipitated a dire situation where trust is eroded, security is compromised, and the population is caught in the crossfire of a complex power struggle.

5.5.5 Trend 3: Dynamics of Territorial Control and Governance

The focus of our investigation now shifts to a crucial trend at the heart of our inquiry, namely the intricate realm of territorial control. The previous chapter's exploration of the complex interplay between the Brazilian government and the PCC serves as a foundation for our analysis of the Mexican landscape, which is characterised by a diverse framework of criminal entities. The significant influence wielded by groups such as La Familia Michoacana, the CJNG, and the comparatively less prevalent Carteles Unidos are of particular interest. The convergence of these criminal objectives and interests with the state's capacity for effective governance results in collateral damage being borne by citizens in this complex equation.

This collision of disparate forces has led to the media dubbing this state of affairs a 'narco-state'. Our exploration of this trend is nuanced, tracing narratives that unfold across the press and capturing the intricate ways criminal organisations exert their power and authority over the citizenry. As we navigate this terrain, we uncover the multifaceted dynamics underpinning this trend, shedding light on the strategies and mechanisms employed to achieve territorial dominance and the implications of this struggle on the governance fabric. In the forthcoming sections, we delve into the evidence that animates this trend, weaving together threads of insight to comprehend the intricate interplay between criminal entities and the very essence of governance.

The multifaceted dimensions of territorial control reveal the symbiotic relationship between criminal dominance and the erosion of state authority in Michoacan's intricate framework. Traditional paradigms of territorial dominance surpass mere homicide rates as criminal organisations establish their hold through informal roadblocks, pervasive extortion, and the insidious proliferation of illegal activities (Guerrero Gutierrez, 2023). The formation of groups such as La Familia Michoacana manifests in response to perceived governmental ineptitude, with their mission being to protect their fellow citizens from external forces that employ violence and terror (*El Mundo.es*, 2010).

The criminal landscape is a domain where economic interests and territorial dominance intertwine. The CJNG's persistent endeavours to establish a primary criminal dominion in Michoacan and the Tierra Caliente region underscore the lucrative allure of

methamphetamine production, fentanyl smuggling, and a variety of extortion rackets (Felbab-Brown, 2021). Distinct criminal entities compete for supremacy, with the Familia Michoacana's control over Lazaro Cardenas port serving as a strategic nexus for methamphetamine precursor acquisition (Appelby, 2023). As authorities navigate the intricate power dynamics, CJNG's presence looms large, engaging in fierce competition with organisations like Los Viagras and Caballeros Templarios (Vela, 2019).

This struggle for control reverberates through communities, shaping their daily lives. Residents of Aguililla recount harrowing tales of desperation as criminal groups withhold vital resources, which is an unsettling testament to the power wielded over their existence (Gonzalez, 2021). The implications of territorial control extend further, infiltrating even the economic and political realms. Reports indicate that the Familia Michoacana's dominion over the Tierra Caliente region is facilitated through intricate links with authorities and economic groups (Grupo, 2023).

The repercussions of this struggle for control resonate deeply, ushering forth a state of perpetual vulnerability and powerlessness among residents (Guerrero Gutierrez, 2023). Within this intricate interplay of power, Mexico's landscape becomes a crucible of conflict—a dual narrative of security forces countering organised criminal groups. At the same time, these entities themselves engage in fierce battles to monopolise illicit trades (Alonso-Trabanco, 2022). The ensuing exploration shall further unravel the multifaceted dimensions of territorial control, revealing the symbiotic relationship between criminal dominance and the erosion of state authority within the intricate framework of Michoacan.

The extensive context significantly shapes the interactions between cartels, the population, and the state, which contributes to our understanding of the situation. Over the past decade, criminal groups have refined their dynamics with clear intentions, interests, and strategies, which are crucial for their business model. This model relies on maintaining stability and control over the territories where drug production and trafficking occur. Although each group imposes its authority differently, the imposition of fear remains a consistent factor. The level of control and authority they establish varies depending on the community they seek to dominate. For instance, when dealing with agricultural communities, they may exploit these areas to manage harvests, channelling profits into illicit activities, or repurpose the land for marijuana or poppy cultivation.

The coercive methods used by these groups generate panic, effectively isolating communities in their constant battles with the state. Citizens find themselves caught in the crossfire with limited recourse, whether it is to prevent rival criminal groups from advancing or evading the military's intervention. This situation transforms residents into bargaining chips, caught in conflicts but seemingly without anyone claiming responsibility. The state, intentionally or otherwise, ignores the issue, while the criminal groups exploit the population for their ends, regardless of their consent.

Furthermore, this scenario highlights a conflict in understanding the extent of the criminal groups' power and the state's authority, which surpasses the boundaries set by existing literature. Although it was previously suggested that sometimes the population legitimises criminal organisations' governance, in the case of Michoacán, it appears that the state itself grants legitimacy. However, this perspective hinges on the assumption that either

party agrees to be governed. Considering the violent nature of these criminal regimes and their interactions with civilians, the situation in Michoacán resembles more of a dictatorial regime than the conventional governance parameters.

5.5.6 Trend 4: Cultural, Community, and Social Impacts

Our exploration now unveils a distinct yet vital facet. These profound repercussions unfold after incessant threats posed by Mexico's criminal organisations, with Michoacán as a focal point. While this trend may not directly correlate with the causative factors contributing to the loss of territorial control by the state, it delves into a complex and often overlooked dimension—the intricate interplay between the state and its less-developed communities. These inherently vulnerable communities find themselves ensnared in a web of violence that casts a shadow over their culture, lifestyle, and existence.

This dynamic inexorably propels residents towards the confines of their towns, a consequence borne of necessity rather than choice. The vacuum left after this migration becomes fertile ground for the expansion of criminal organisations, perpetuating a cycle of vulnerability and exploitation. In the upcoming sections, we immerse ourselves in a nuanced exploration, delving into this trend's lived experiences and palpable impacts. By disentangling these threads, we gain insight into the profound consequences rippling through cultural, community, and social dimensions, underscoring the intricate interplay between criminal influence and the fabric of society.

The fourth trend presents a complex landscape wherein a compelling collage of evidence highlights the profound cultural, community, and social implications criminal organisations inflict on the people of Michoacan. These implications go beyond territorial conquest and reach the core of societal cohesion and individual well-being.

The strategic calculations of criminal organisations are manifested in their strategic practice of depopulating local communities. This approach is primarily utilised in strategically important military or smuggling locations and areas with valuable land that can be repurposed for avocado plantations or mining. However, it is essential to note that the overall income of groups like CJNG relies on extracting economic gains by taxing the activities of these same local populations (Felbab-Brown, 2021).

The impacts of these dynamics are felt throughout the region, as violent intimidation and clashes among various criminal factions culminate in the internal displacement of thousands and the frightening forced disappearances of hundreds. Communities are left as veritable battlefields, as attested by firsthand accounts that paint a grim picture of daily life. In Aguililla, the epicentre of the conflict, a staggering exodus unfolds as residents, deprived of sustenance and trapped amidst a violent maelstrom, flee their homes. A chilling estimate by local clergyman Vergara suggests that Aguililla's population has decreased by almost half, with approximately 800 to 900 families seeking asylum in the United States, a harrowing testament to the ravages of conflict (Gonzalez, 2021).

The story of Naranjo de Chila amplifies this narrative, revealing a stark episode wherein military and criminal forces besieged the village for eight months. During the siege, the CJNG organised the distribution of essentials to the beleaguered inhabitants, dispensing medicines and sustenance via a small propeller-driven plane. Such accounts serve as stark reminders of the extent to which daily life has been infiltrated by the actions of criminal organisations, creating an atmosphere of desperation and strife (Abi-Habib, 2022).

Perceptions of government involvement or collaboration with these criminal entities further complicate this tumultuous landscape. In the face of territorial conflict, a paradox emerges as the government's military advances are met with scepticism and fear by residents who, despite their aversion to criminal groups, express a disquieting preference for their presence over the governmental alternative (Abi-Habib, 2022).

At its inception, La Familia Michoacana purportedly held values that aligned with the welfare of citizens, prohibiting drug consumption, alcohol consumption, and reckless driving among its members. However, disillusionment set in as the group's true nature was revealed, engaging in drug trafficking, violence, extortion, and kidnappings, exposing the gap between rhetoric and reality (Infobae, 2022).

The intertwined threads of culture, community, and society in Michoacan show a framework of struggle and resilience against criminal encroachment. This evidence underscores the pervasive impact of organised crime, as it extends beyond the geopolitical to infiltrate the very essence of daily life, challenging the resilience and cohesion of Michoacan's communities.

5.6 Baseline: Hybrid Governance in Mexico

In response to the escalating danger posed by threats like extortion and "cobro de piso," apprehensive communities have established autonomous defence groups to safeguard themselves. These groups find themselves at a critical juncture, as they must either cultivate trust and resilience or risk dissolution or transformation into criminal entities. Vigil indicates that their approach emphasises gradual growth and the consolidation of power, in contrast to the cartel's previous rapid expansion. Arrieta adds that the cartel's influence has diminished, particularly in its stronghold of Michoacán, which is locked in a fierce struggle against the CJNG for supremacy. This conflict underscores a delicate interplay between civilians, the state, and criminal factions. This situation raises questions about how fear-driven citizen support resembles the relationship between dictators and their nations. We are pondering whether the beleaguered state can effectively intervene against overwhelming criminal activities. Criminal organisations respond violently to stringent government policies in these complexities, while the state's response is often selective. This underscores the contradictions between self-defence groups, the state, and cartel interactions. A distinct perspective emerges from a decade-long study in Michoacán, which suggests that the proliferation of violent actors such as drug traffickers and autodefensas does not portend complete state withdrawal. Instead, it reveals a transformed landscape in which negotiations among public authorities, armed civilians, and criminal groups vying for control have significantly changed (Le Cour Grandmaison, 2023).

The complex interrelationship among the state, criminal organisations, and self-defence groups enables us to comprehend how individuals in the middle, particularly the community's populace, anticipate a resolution. Figure 11, presented below, visually demonstrates how this system of interactions and conflicts operates. Firstly, it delineates a triangle, symbolising that interactions in this context are restricted to these three actors. Secondly, due to their limited number, it also illustrates how they can create alliances to realise their objectives. For instance, criminal groups collaborate with the government to dismantle self-defence groups. Another example reveals that criminal groups align with self-defence units to keep the state out of their affairs. This concept arises from the understanding that these interactions and conflicts are necessary for the system to persist in its current violent and civilian-impacting state. This is evident as even self-defence groups have shifted and ventured into the criminal realm, blurring the lines concerning their primary objectives.

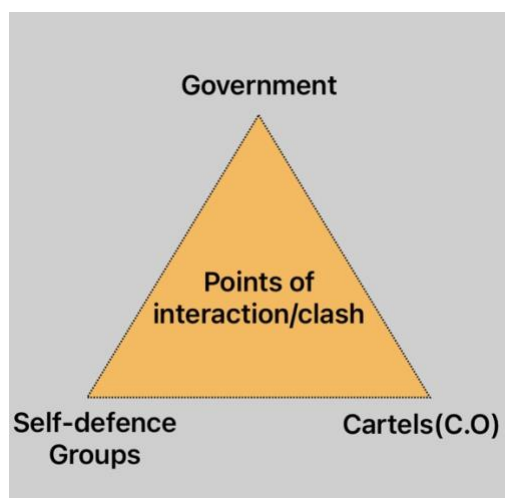


Figure 11: Own creation

As a state actor, Mexico perpetuates a self-sustaining system fueled by its own interests, encompassing authorities, criminal organisations, and self-defence groups. This

intricate social landscape, tainted by corruption, inadequate social programs, and a lack of essential services for community development, gives rise to a system that employs violence against its citizens as a means of advancement. While drug-trafficking criminal enterprises have long existed, their persistent prevalence and evolution can be attributed to governments whose priorities fail to focus on enhancing opportunities for the less privileged.

The data underscores how violent criminal organisations employ tactics such as violence, threats, and financial coercion against targeted communities to exert control for drug trafficking or production. Conversely, the state struggles with the delicate balancing act of determining when and how to deploy its armed forces to confront these criminals. Some leaders advocate for a less intrusive and aggressive approach, emphasising financial measures as a primary focus and targeting their operations. Others opt for directly engaging the armed forces to address the issue head-on. Unfortunately, these strategies often lack a comprehensive analysis of the underlying causes, being more influenced by external factors, including the impact of countries like the United States. Consequently, foreign influence hampers the development of complementary public policies that could tackle the problem through a grassroots approach.

Finally, considering the different factors that converge within the complex case of Mexico and the question of whether or not the country functions under a different governance regime is actual. Let us remember that the definition we are working on establishes that hybrid governance is the imposition of a social order between state and non-state actors, which includes the imposition of formal and informal institutions, rules and restrictions over a specific territory that can be aimed to replace, compete or complement the state and its functions. This system can be imposed over members of criminal organisations, civilians and

members of other criminal organisations. Considering this definition, we can settle that a hybrid governance system is taking place in Michoacan.

5.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, organised crime in Mexico presents a complex and multifaceted issue involving intricate interactions among criminal groups, the state, and self-defence units. Quantitative data analysis has revealed the alarming prevalence of organised crime and the challenges posed by impunity. At the same time, the qualitative examination has emphasised the nuanced sociopolitical and economic dynamics at play.

The identified trends reflect the challenges communities face in protecting themselves without effective institutional presence. Intertwining criminal interests with political actors is a worrisome nexus that could hinder legitimate governance. The territorial battles and their impact on local populations underscore the gravity of the situation, and the blurred lines between criminal and community entities reveal a complex hybrid governance system emerging in the state.

As Mexico navigates these intricate dynamics, it is evident that a holistic understanding requires a synthesis of both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. Going forward, it is crucial to have comprehensive and nuanced data to devise targeted strategies to address the multifarious challenges posed by organised crime. By promoting cooperation among academicians, researchers, and decision-makers, a better informed and more

productive method can be devised to tackle the complicated problem of organised crime, safeguarding the welfare of Mexican populations and fostering a more secure and robust future.

Chapter 6

Findings: The cases of Brazil and Mexico and future national security implications

6.1: Introduction

This chapter delves into our research findings, focusing on the critical processes through which organised crime groups undermine a state's territorial control and sovereignty in Latin America. The overarching research question guiding our investigation is: What are the key processes through which organised crime groups undermine a state's territorial control and sovereignty in Latin America? We also undertake a comparative analysis to discern how these processes differ between Mexico and Brazil, and we examine the implications of these findings for future security policies in the region.

6.2 Notes on hybrid governance:

In this analysis, hybrid governance emerges as a pivotal subject encompassing the imposition of social order by state and non-state actors. This imposition involves establishing formal and informal institutions, rules, and restrictions across a specific territory, aiming to replace, compete with, or complement the functions of the state. This intricate system extends its reach to various actors, including criminal organisations, civilians, and even other criminal entities, embodying the essence of hybrid governance.

While hybrid governance broadly applies to these spaces, a deeper examination reveals a complexity that challenges conventional interpretations. Pursuing financial gains and power is evident, yet questions arise concerning the motives driving criminal organisations to exert significant control, allocate resources, and engage in political

manoeuvring. Despite their potential to challenge the state overtly, the inclination to avoid confrontation becomes apparent.

Delving into electoral dynamics, the criminal organisations' strategic intervention becomes evident. Instead of overtaking the government directly, they aim to exert influence behind the scenes, orchestrating alliances with political candidates sympathetic to their cause. These manoeuvring targets control over governmental policies, the judicial system, and other critical aspects without assuming the public face. This contrasts with the prevalent media depiction of narco-states, reshaping our understanding of power dynamics.

Moreover, examining specific territorial cases in Sao Paulo and Michoacan unveils distinctive struggles and strategies for territorial control. Each locale's interpretation of territorial dominance shapes the approach to dealing with the complex issue. Literature provides insights into instances where organised crime fills gaps left by the state, such as the example of the PCC's management of Brazilian prisons. The PCC's ability to organise within the chaotic prison environment underscores its role in maintaining stability, thereby indirectly aiding the state.

Our analysis reveals that organised crime's impact on territorial control and sovereignty is intricately tied to hybrid governance. Hybrid governance entails the imposition of social order by state and non-state actors, often resulting in the establishment of formal and informal institutions that may replace, compete with, or complement state functions. In Brazil and Mexico, criminal organisations exhibit a profound capacity to exert significant control over specific territories, potentially challenging the state's authority. However, a deeper examination uncovers nuances that challenge conventional interpretations.

6.3 Notes on academia and privileged experts:

The research presented challenges the assumption that policies and recommendations with a Western bias, supported by academics, are in line with actual realities. The literature recognises the presence of governing groups within states yet lacks a comprehensive understanding of how, why, and what this term represents for individual countries.

The act of asserting authority from a privileged background, wherein academics and experts from the global north believe they possess the ultimate solutions, is insensitive and self-centred. The presumption of having all the answers, and the resulting recommendations being the only viable solutions, needs to include the diverse values and shared ideals of the regions in question. Historically, privileged regions have benefited from the slower development of areas like Latin America. Their propagation of narratives and political frameworks akin to their own inadvertently perpetuates imperialistic endeavours rooted in the mistaken belief that their understanding is the only valid path.

Academics strive to transcend such inclinations by recognising the need for context-driven approaches, yet they seldom propose a concrete starting point. This theoretical aspect remains detached from empirical realities. While attempts are made to expound upon social phenomena, comprehending the intricate complexities of the social realm proves crucial. Hence, the authors acknowledge the necessity of context-specific analyses in some issues, as theories predominantly exhibit a Western focus and fail to encompass diverse realities, relying solely on their perspectives. Although theories may capture certain facets of reality,

they must grasp the empirical intricacies. Their approach remains academic rather than locally rooted. The peril lies in advocating for solutions tailored to the “first world,” as these solutions are unlikely to be effective or adaptable.

6.4 Notes on Brazil-vs Mexico:

Comparing the dynamics of two distinct countries, we encounter the fraternity system in Brazil and the recruitment pyramid in Mexico. In Brazil, the fraternity system operates on a unique premise - membership fees grant access to fraternity, serving as a stepping stone towards potential leadership roles. This structure is embedded in their horizontal approach, fostering a sense of unity and shared goals.

Contrastingly, Mexico employs a recruitment and pyramid system. Notably resilient to leadership disruptions, this system must have a cohesive fraternity observed in Brazil. This disparity can be attributed to differing attitudes and approaches towards citizen interactions and conflict resolution. Saborio’s territoriality criteria shed light on the territorial boundaries of these groups, dovetailing with the concept of criminal governance expounded upon in the literature review (Saborío, 2019). This analytical framework aids in dissecting the intricacies of both cases.

Moreover, a critical dimension that warrants exploration is the inherent variability in the interests and behaviours of criminal organisations. We can glean insights into this divergence by delving into the enduring clash between Brazil and the PCC. The PCC employs

a loyalty-based membership approach, carefully cultivating allegiance among its members, often preying on vulnerable individuals such as migrants and prisoners. Operating with a mindset of having nothing to lose and “everything.” to gain, they exploit these dynamics to their advantage.

A similar tactic is employed in Mexico, targeting vulnerable communities devastated by violence. Recruiting children and teenagers is incentivised, desensitising them to violence and perpetuating a cycle. Additionally, these criminal organisations extend their influence by granting other groups the franchise to use their name in exchange for benefits, illustrating a business-like model.

Both cases exhibit a keen understanding of their target audiences and government dynamics. They are adept at gauging the limits of government intervention and exploiting weak institutions and corrupt officials to their advantage. The expansion of their operations beyond national borders underscores their adaptability. When confronted by state interference, their responses differ. A preference for calm scenarios is evident in Brazil, characterised by implementing codes of conduct. In Mexico, a fear-based methodology aims to suppress opposition and discourage rebellion.

Ultimately, Mexico’s experience, particularly during the tenure of former President Felipe Calderón, demonstrates the extent to which these criminal organisations are willing to escalate violence when met with resistance, leading to the proliferation of more such groups and exacerbate the existing challenges.

In Brazil, criminal organisations, such as the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) strategically engages in a loyalty-based membership approach. By cultivating allegiance among members, often exploiting vulnerable individuals, they establish a foothold within marginalised communities. This approach allows the PCC to influence territorial dynamics, sometimes filling gaps left by the state, as evidenced by their management of Brazilian prisons. Despite criminal organisations' capabilities to maintain stability, their actions reveal an inclination to avoid confrontation with the state.

Contrastingly, in Mexico, criminal organisations adopt a recruitment and pyramid system that targets even younger generations, desensitising them to violence and perpetuating a cycle of criminal activity. Furthermore, the Mexican criminal landscape illustrates a complex web of alliances and franchises, where criminal groups extend their influence by granting others the right to use their name. These divergent strategies demonstrate a keen understanding of government dynamics and the vulnerabilities within their respective societies.

Both cases underscore the symbiotic relationship between weak institutions, corrupt political elements, and economically and socially disadvantaged citizens. These elements create fertile ground for the growth and sustenance of such criminal entities, each adopting distinct strategies yet united by their exploitation of vulnerabilities.

6.4.1 Implications for Future Security Policies

The implications of these findings for future security policies are profound. Our analysis underscores the symbiotic relationship between weak institutions, corrupt political elements, and economically and socially disadvantaged citizens. To effectively address these challenges and prevent undermining territorial control and sovereignty, security policies must recognise the adaptability and resourcefulness of criminal organisations.

Furthermore, we challenge the assumption that one-size-fits-all security solutions, often rooted in Western paradigms, apply to the unique contexts of Latin American nations. Instead, context-driven approaches that acknowledge historical, cultural, and social realities are essential. Future security policies should be informed by a nuanced understanding of hybrid governance dynamics and tailored to the specific challenges faced by each nation.

6.5 Conclusion and Future Research Directions

In conclusion, our research provides valuable insights into the critical processes through which organised crime groups undermine territorial control and sovereignty in Latin America. By comparing Brazil and Mexico, we illuminate distinct strategies criminal organisations employ and highlight the implications for future security policies. This study is a foundation for further research to explore the complexities of hybrid governance, the role of historical legacies, and the development of context-specific security solutions.

As we move forward, it is imperative to recognise that addressing the challenge of organised crime's impact on territorial control and sovereignty requires a multidimensional approach that engages with Latin American nations' diverse and dynamic realities. By doing so, we can pave the way for more effective and adaptable security policies that safeguard the sovereignty and well-being of these societies.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

This dissertation undertook an ambitious task with the determination to unravel the intricate relationships between organised crime, territorial control, and sovereignty in the unique context of Latin America. Addressing gaps identified during the literature review, a mixed methods strategy was employed during data collection, yielding multifaceted insights that have enriched the understanding of this complex nexus. The investigation centred on the research question, "What are the key processes through which organised crime groups undermine a state's territorial control and sovereignty in Latin America?" and yielded profound findings that bear implications for future research and security policies in the region.

Adopting a mixed methods approach proved instrumental in deciphering the complex interactions among organised crime entities, government structures, and the citizenry in Brazil and Mexico. By employing quantitative and qualitative methods, a comprehensive exploration captured the multifarious dimensions of this intricate web. In Brazil, the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) emerged as a focal point, while in Mexico, the dynamics surrounding the Familia Michoacana, the CJNG, and other criminal organisations were unravelled. This multifaceted strategy allowed capturing the subtle nuances that drive the interactions between these entities, shedding light on the underlying factors contributing to the erosion of territorial control and sovereignty.

The qualitative phase of the investigation, which utilised thematic analysis, proved pivotal in unearthing unexpected trends that eluded initial contemplations. This approach, guided by an exploration of media and data sources, unearthed intricate patterns that aligned with existing theories and revealed hitherto unexplored dynamics. The qualitative insights allowed for bridging the gap between abstract theoretical frameworks and the tangible realities of the empirical world, facilitating a deeper comprehension of the forces at play.

This comprehensive methodology uncovered the symbiotic relationship between the theoretical constructs studied and their manifestation in the empirical realm. The data affirmed the relevance of theoretical paradigms and facilitated the identification of nuanced linkages that underscore the influence of organised crime on territorial dynamics and sovereignty.

In conclusion, this journey expanded my horizons and deepened my understanding of Latin America's intricate relationships between organised crime, territorial control, and sovereignty. The mixed methods strategy, encompassing quantitative analysis and thematic exploration, provided a robust foundation upon which future research can build, standing on the precipice of future inquiries, equipped with insights that propel toward a more profound comprehension of Latin American nations' challenges. Armed with knowledge and a commitment to contextual sensitivity, collective striving for security policies responsive to the intricate tapestry of forces shaping these societies is possible.

In the quest to safeguard territorial control and sovereignty, this work serves as a clarion call for further exploration and action. A new era of scholarship is poised to emerge

through integrating interdisciplinary perspectives and utilising mixed methodology. This will illuminate the present challenges Latin America faces and facilitate transformative change in the region and beyond.

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