
Profiling the Corruption, Drug- trafficking and Violence Triangle in Mexico

Stephen D. Morris

Middle Tennessee State
University

Draft: Do not cite without permission

Prepared for presentation at the Conference on Corruption in Mexico, Russia, and the United States, October 13-14, 2011, Vanderbilt University, Nashville

Introduction

By virtually all accounts, corruption looms large behind the drug trafficking, organized crime, and wave of violence that have rocked Mexico in recent years. In considering the nature and role of corruption in this trilateral equation, three puzzles arise which this paper seeks to analyze: one is largely theoretical, another historical, and the other political. The theoretical puzzle relates to the triangle linking drug-trafficking, violence, and corruption (figure 1 below). A strong consensus links drug trafficking to corruption, and a similar though perhaps weaker consensus fastens drug trafficking to violence: that in both cases the former cannot exist without the latter. And yet, paradoxically, much of this same literature also suggests that violence and corruption are inversely related. Captured in part by the popular expression *plomo o plata* referring really to an individual dyadic relationship the basic contention is that state officials either cooperate, joining forces with DTOs in return for an illegal payment or bribe, or suffer violent consequences if they refuse. The second puzzle deals by and large with the same theoretical issue, but is expressed in more historical terms. Here, a consensus points to corruption as a key factor facilitating a relatively peaceful, non-violent period of drug trafficking operations in Mexico during the long rule by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). And yet, paradoxically, today, corruption is associated with the rise in violence, not its absence. During a public meeting of the *Consejo Nacional de Seguridad Pública* in 2002, President Calderón was quite direct in making this widely shared view, a view he has repeated on many occasions: "El crimen no puede entenderse sin el cobijo de la impunidad y la corrupción de las policías" (*Milenio* August 27, 2008). So whereas corruption was credited for the lack of violence in the past, it is now blamed for its gruesome presence. Finally, the third, political puzzle relates to competing interpretations of recent trends and policy outcomes. By whatever measure, the Calderón government has clearly cracked-down on DTOs and corrupt officials in an unprecedented way. Security spending has skyrocketed as have the number of arrests, killings and extraditions of DTO members, while the list of police, military and other state officials detained or purged for cooperating with DTOs has grown. And yet despite such crackdowns, the government has seemingly made little headway in its efforts to curtail the level of violence

racking the country. How can this particular dynamic be explained? Indeed, to pose this dilemma in its simplest form: is the government winning or losing the battle?

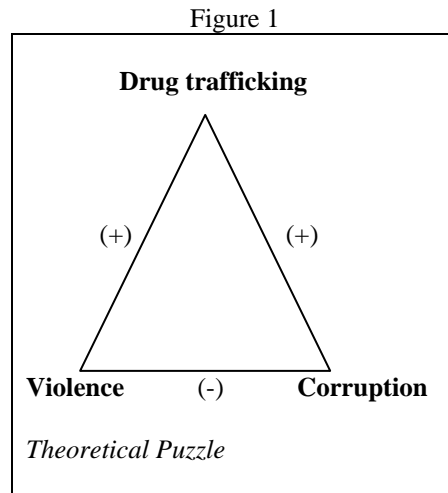
These puzzles raise a number of questions. They beg for greater nuance in our understanding of the complex relationships linking organized crime, violence and corruption. And they present possibilities useful to grappling with the dynamics of the current "drug war" in Mexico. If, for example, the theoretical depiction is accurate, then perhaps an increase in drug trafficking and violence in recent years has accompanied some sort of decrease in the level of corruption. Another possibility, of course, is that the theoretical triangle is simply wrong or at least too simplistic, and that Mexico has experienced both an increase in drug-related violence and drug-related corruption in recent years. If so, then it is crucial to explore the specific circumstances under which drug trafficking feeds both violence and corruption simultaneously, the different forms the violence and the corruption might take, and the determinants of the relationship linking violence to corruption. Such an approach would also help resolve the historical puzzle. Despite blanket statements regarding "corruption," for instance, it is quite possible that the nature or the types of corruption marking the two historic periods are fundamentally different, or that certain circumstances condition corruption's relationship to the other two variables. It is also possible that the corruption touted by scholars and politicians alike to explain past and recent events encompasses a wide range of factors that upon closer examination actually do not constitute corruption and that corruption may be, in part at least, a sort of amorphous and easy scapegoat utilized to divert blame from other policy failings or determinants. The political puzzle, finally, suggests that while the growing violence can be seen as both a sign of failure and a sign of success of the current policy approach, it is also possible that the policy itself has unleashed a perverse dynamic that has inadvertently increased the magnitude and scope of the problem.

This paper explores these puzzles in cumulative fashion to assess the nature of the relationship linking corruption to drug trafficking and drug-related violence, the underlying changes that might have produced the current crisis, and current directions. The first section assesses the theoretical linkages, examining each of the three binary relationships in the triangle. Building on this, the next section focuses on a more historical examination of the broader changes affecting the nature of the triangular relationship and that have been offered by analysts to account for the rise of violence in recent years. Finally, attention turns to an assessment of the

current situation and the potential impact of government policy. As I will show, to grapple with all three puzzles it is crucial to move beyond monolithic positions that treat the state or organized crime as unified and monopolizing actors (Bailey and Taylor 2009). In a similar manner, it is important not to view all corruption as the same, but to differentiate and discern distinct types and patterns of corruption.

The Theoretical Puzzle

In analyzing the theoretical puzzle, discussion focuses on prior studies on of the binary relationships linking the three variables as depicted in Figure 1.



1. Drug trafficking and Corruption. The strongest of the three sides of the triangle seems to be the one connecting organized crime, including drug trafficking, to corruption. A huge literature along with popular rhetoric both support the notion that organizations providing contraband goods and services (aka organized crime, including drug trafficking organizations) cannot operate without the existence of some form of corruption: that the two are intricately and inherently linked (see, for instance, Andreas 1998; Beittel 2011; Hanson 2008; Naylor 2003, 2009; O’Day and López 2001; O’Day 2001; Pimental 2003; Shelley 2005). Studies of prohibition in the US and the operation of gambling and prostitution in major cities today, for instance, all tend to highlight the role illegal payoffs to police and local officials have played and continue to play in not only allowing these businesses to operate, but also in maintaining them within certain bounds (Naylor 2003). In Mexico, of course, scores of analysts echo this point (see

Lupsha 1995). As Laurie Freeman (2006, 12) notes, "Doing business entails bribing and intimidating public officials and law enforcement and judicial agents...organized crime cannot survive without corruption, and it looks for opportunities to create and deepen corruption."¹

Even accepting this strongly asserted proposition, it is perhaps useful to acknowledge, first, that many factors besides corruption facilitate the rise and operation of organized crime. Impunity, a variable often enjoying co-top billing alongside corruption for facilitating drug trafficking, for example, can stem from many factors besides corruption, including gross inefficiencies within the institutions charged with investigating, prosecuting and punishing crimes, the lack of resources relative to the magnitude of the problem, poor or inadequate training and weak professional standards, and competing political priorities, to name just a few. In the case of Mexico, the extremely high levels of impunity found within the criminal justice system to process and punish criminals, estimated to be as high as 97%, cannot be attributed entirely to corruption (see Zepeda 2004).² Nor can the lack of reporting of crime in the first place. In other words, the lack of law enforcement in Mexico to fighting drug trafficking is not exclusively the result of corruption, thus raising the question of whether drug-trafficking indeed even requires corruption in the face of widespread impunity and severe institutional weaknesses. Second, it should also be acknowledged that this symbiotic linkage does not seem to apply to individual criminal acts. Rarely does anyone categorically associate everyday forms of crime (non-organized crime) with corruption even though the level of impunity may be equally high. This suggests that perhaps corruption may be in part at least a scapegoat (see discussion below under hypothesis 5) and the relationship linking organized crime to corruption is not as strong as many believe.

2. Drug-trafficking and violence. Equally widespread is the view linking drug trafficking to violence. Many build this argument on the assumption that since DTOs do not have access to legal means to resolve conflict, enforce internal norms, or prevent law enforcement from intervening in their operations that violence is a natural and inevitable by-product of their business model. As June Beittel (2011, 2) asserts, "violence is an intrinsic feature of the trade in illicit drugs." Phil Williams (2009), in fact, compares the situation to the anarchy of the Westphalian nation-state system where states must utilize power to assert their interests vis-à-vis

other states. The recent uptick in drug-related violence in Mexico merely seems to confirm this intimate connection.

Yet, numerous studies as well as Mexican history suggest otherwise: that there is no inherent relationship linking drug trafficking to violence (Friman 2009, Naylor 2009, Williams 2009). First, violence is costly and bad for business (Bailey and Taylor 2009; Naylor 2009). Criminal organizations consequently try to avoid violence and prefer to operate under the radar by cooperating with one another and "corrupt[ing] enough state officials to maintain sufficient freedom of action for their activities" (Williams 2009, 325). As Andreas and Wallman (2009, 227) succinctly point out, the drug smuggler "prefers to bypass or buy off the police rather than bully them." A second indication of the lack of a clear, strong connection linking drug-trafficking to violence is the considerable variations found across and within sectors of the illicit economy (Andreas and Wallman 2009; Naylor 2009). Businesses operating in such illicit, contraband markets as illegal wildlife, stolen art, counterfeit products, contraband cigarettes, and even marijuana, for example, rarely exhibit much violence despite not having access to legal means to resolve conflict. Indeed, Naylor (2009) finds that only in the drug and sex trades is violence possible though it is still unlikely in all four areas of the business chain (production, marketing, product distribution, and profit distribution). Finally, as noted above and explored in greater detail later, Mexican history itself suggests that the two are not inevitably woven together. The PRI period was marked by a relatively peaceful period of drug trafficking.

Of course not all violence is the same. In considering the theoretical linkages related to violence, it is critically important to distinguish between at least three forms or directions of violence: (a) State violence → DTOs; (b) DTO violence → State officials; and (c) violence within and between DTOs (inter- and intra- DTO violence). Beittel (2011) contends that the violence intrinsic in drug trafficking relates primarily to violence among and within DTOs rather than violence against the state. But while some, including Beittel (2011) see this form of violence as intrinsic, others, such as Friman (2009, 286), suggests that even violence among criminal groups is not inevitable and more likely to occur only under certain conditions, like in disputes over lucrative distribution networks and over market share. Violence against the state, in turn, considered less likely by many, he contends, is more likely when criminal justice is engaged in trying to curtail the business or pursuing broader political goals; in other words, State violence → DTOs.³ But while these distinctions on the surface may seem intuitive, the presence

of corruption complicates matters somewhat, creating potentially grey areas. What may appear as (a) State violence → DTOs (law enforcement), for instance, may actually be a form of (c) inter- and intra- DTO violence if it involves corrupt state officials selectively using the state to go after rival organizations while in the pay of other organizations; and what may seem to be (b) DTO violence → State officials (confrontation) may also be a form of (c) inter- and intra- DTO violence if the organization is targeting corrupt state officials working for rivals (intra-DTO violence) or betraying the "purchased" trust of the state official (inter-DTO violence).⁴

3. Corruption and (drug-related) violence. These two sides of the triangle, then, associate drug trafficking with corruption and violence; and yet, though enjoying far less attention, the literature generally posits an inverse relationship linking corruption to violence: the crux of the theoretical paradox.¹ As just noted, violence is generally considered bad for business, even illegal ones; thus DTO's prefer to evade or corrupt state officials than confront them (Bailey and Taylor 2009). Indeed, over four decades ago Samuel Huntington (1968, 59-64) touted corruption as a substitute for political violence. In Snyder and Duran-Martinez's (2009) more recent and parsimonious model, where corruption forges informal institutions of state-sponsored protection, the level of violence remains low. The absence of violence, of course, occurs on both sides of the equation. This means that bribes paid to state officials in return for protection lessens the likelihood of State violence → DTOs, and of DTO violence → State officials. Under these conditions, public officials refrain from enforcing the law in exchange for a share of the profits (payoffs) or rents, while criminal organizations in return provide the state information about rivals and comply with certain behavioral expectations. For this to occur, however, the state must be capable of carrying out enforcement. As discussed in the subsequent section, many describe the old PRI regime in precisely this manner.

A second scenario where the relationship between corruption and violence may be more closely linked looks beyond a simple dyadic relationship tying one criminal organization to the state. As Bailey and Taylor (2009, 11) point out, the problem with the model characterizing corruption and violence as opposites is that it assumes that both the state and organized crime are unified and monopolizing actors, that they are distinct actors, and that only one tactic is in use at a particular time. Under conditions of multiple state and criminal actors, it is possible for one criminal organization to use payoffs to get state officials not only to refrain from enforcing the

law against that group, but in turn to enforce it selectively against a rival organization using violence. In this case, the corruption/violence nexus turns positive.

Here it is important to differentiate at a very broad level two distinct directions or forms of corruption. In one, organized crime uses payoffs to influence policy or its implementation in ways that facilitate the operation of their businesses, reducing costs and increasing profits (Scott 1972) (see Table 1). This form of corruption, referred to simply as bribery, implies a direction of influence wherein a civil society organization penetrates the state. The *plata* side of "*plomo o plata*" represents this form of corruption.⁵ In the other form, however, the state penetrates civil society organizations (Andreas 1998, 161). In this scenario, state officials use (and abuse) their authority to largely control and influence the activities of organized crime, enjoying a portion of the business' profits (rents) in the process through extortion. In this case, corruption constitutes a sort of informal tax on the operations of the illicit business. As we see in the subsequent discussion, this is the type of corruption many associate with the period of PRI rule.

In sum, despite the coexistence of drugs, corruption and violence in contemporary Mexico, the popularly held assumptions regarding the relationships between these are not inevitable, and instead seem contingent on a variety of factors. This not only raises the question of how specific factors have changed to shape the current alignment and collusion of the three in Mexico, but also suggests that targeting the three may first require some sort of de-linkage. I attempt to build on this by turning now to the second dilemma: the historical puzzle.

The Historical Puzzle

The historical puzzle, as noted earlier, credits corruption for facilitating peaceful drug trafficking during the years of the *PRI-gobierno* and yet blames it for the violence marking the Calderón era. The initial part of this argument enjoys substantial support in the literature (see, for instance, Andreas 1998; Astorga and Shirk 2010; Flores 2009; Lupsha 1995; Shelley 2001; Shirk 2010). According to this widely-accepted view, Mexican traffickers operated for years under a single hierarchy with public officials essentially extorting from and protecting them. As Howard Campbell (2009, 271) explains: "During the PRI's seventy-one-year reign, Mexico suffered from endemic corruption and drug trafficking flourished, but at least there was a type of stability, since a small group of powerful traffickers and PRI government officials maintained relatively predictable relationships." Peter Lupsha (1995) further contends that "Mexico's justice agency

was in reality an arm of drug trafficking, and organized crime's government intermediary...Key traffickers and trafficking routes in a centralized authoritarian system like Mexico always needed the '*con permiso*' of those within the Federal District." Exercising a degree of control, the powerful PRI-led state thus enforced certain norms of operations on and among the groups: an arrangement that went beyond the sharing of profits to assisting the police and the political system by helping ensure PRI electoral victories and token cases for the judicial system. As George Grayon (2010, 29) posits, "Relying on bribes or *mordidas*, the *desperados* pursued their illicit activities with the connivance of authorities, frequently through ad hoc pacts that might last days, weeks, or months." Under the prevailing "rules of the game," the authorities "allocated '*plazas*'" based on a formula. "Drug dealers behaved discretely, showed deference to public figures, spurned kidnapping, appeared with governors at their children's weddings, and, although often allergic to politics, helped the hegemonic PRI discredit its opponents by linking them to narco-trafficking." When conflict among organizations emerged, state governors, under the direction of central authorities, would resolve it. Although the dominance of one political party did not contribute to the development of the rule of law, as Louise Shelley (2001, 215) notes, it did contribute to a law of rules, or informal institutions and mechanisms that governed the relationship between drug traffickers and the state. Above all, this state-sponsored racket resulted in lower levels of violence (Snyder and Duran-Martínez 2009, 262). This situation prevailed well into the 1980s and 1990s. According to Celaya Pacheco (2009, 1024), narcoviolence was kept at bay during the "extensively corrupt Salinas de Gortari administration."⁶

The second part of this puzzling argument, however, blames corruption today for the widespread violence. Calderón has asserted this connection on numerous occasions as highlighted earlier. In his speech following the August 25, 2011 attack on Casino Royale in Monterrey, he attributed the work of the criminals to "la enorme corrupción que prevalece en las instituciones de seguridad y de justicia, en distintas regiones del país y en distintos órdenes de gobierno..." (*Milenio*, August 27, 2011). Many analysts echo this point. In reports to the U.S. Congress on the Mexican situation, for example, corruption stands front and center as both directly facilitating the operation of the drug traffickers (the corruption/ drug trafficking link noted earlier), and indirectly aiding it by undermining enforcement efforts. But the key to this dilemma does not really relate to contentions linking drug trafficking to corruption, but rather to the presence or absence of violence and hence the link between corruption and violence.

The theoretical question linking these two was discussed earlier. Here, the question centers more on explaining the changes in the past decade, particularly the stunning rise of violence, and the related role of corruption. The literature presents four main theses that are not necessarily mutually exclusive to account for this dramatic historic shift, to which I will add a fifth.

Thesis 1: Political Changes within the State eliminated the centralized control over DTOs.

Perhaps the most prominent explanation in the literature centers on the underlying political changes taking place in Mexico over the past decade or so. The essential argument holds that the rise of political competition and democratization undermined the prevailing patterns of corruption by hampering PRI's capacity to control the enforcement and non-enforcement of the law (Snyder and Duran-Martínez 2009, 262). As opposition parties began to capture control of state and local governments, this had the effect of increasing the number of potential protectors and prevented a centralized state from being able to guarantee its side of the corrupt bargain. In short, as local power fell outside the PRI-controlled network, federal agents, local police and corrupt officials all began acting more autonomously (Grayson 2010, 31). With upper level officials now unable to fully control lower level officials, according to Vidriana Rios (2011), political decentralization altered corruption from a single-agent game to a multiple agent game affecting the price of bribes, government's incentives to enforce the law, and political violence. This lack of a unified, overarching hierarchy of corrupt state officials also contributed in turn to the fractionalization of the DTOs, furthering the level of violence (Shirk 2010, 11). As O'Neil (2009) starkly concludes, "by disrupting established payoff systems between drug traffickers and government officials, democratization unwittingly exacerbated drug-related violence." Escalante Gonzalbo (2011) offers a similar argument: "La policia municipal, corrupta, ineficiente y abusiva como puede ser, tiene que organizar los mercados informales y los mercados ilegales...Donde falta esa fuerza local, capaz de ordenar los mercados informales e ilegales, el resultado es perfectamente previsible, porque la incertidumbre genera violencia."

This thesis suggests, in short, that centralized state authority is necessary for corruption to facilitate non-violent drug trafficking. A centralized state is able to exert a certain degree of control over lower level officials and hence the DTOs, and determine the conditions under which DTOs operate, both of which in turn help check the level of violence. In this way, state officials

engage in a form of extortion (or taxation) via-a-vis the DTOs. Decentralization of the state, however, undermines this system and thus generates competition among the DTOs as they seek to reestablish influence over a wider range of state officials through bribery. Facing a less monolithic state unable now to enforce previously agreed boundaries feeds the instability which coupled with heightened inter-DTO competition triggers intense violence. Under such conditions, violence thus becomes a substitute for the prior corrupt agreements, as suggested by the theoretical triangle. Moreover, the decentralization of the state weakens the state potentially to the point of exposing it to being captured or colonized by DTOs. Rather than a strong state extorting from DTOs and establishing boundaries and assuring stability, corruption increasingly centers on penetrative bribery and state capturing/colonization, but with state officials now unable to maintain corruption within the confines of contributing to centralized, institutional goals.⁷

Thesis 2: Strengthening of DTOs as a result of Changes in their Business model. A second prominent thesis offered to account for the current explosion of violence and the break in the historical relationship linking corruption and drug trafficking to the absence of violence relates more to changes in the nature of the drug business itself rather than changes in the Mexican government. As many analysts have documented, US Government's efforts in the 1980s to upset the Colombian supply chain through south Florida forced the Colombian cartels to turn to Mexican suppliers, resulting in the dramatic growth of their operations and profits (Carpenter 2005). A few years later, NAFTA further eased illicit trade via Mexico (Grayson 2010, 56; O'Neil 2009). Together, these changes funneled vast fortunes to the Mexican organizations which, in turn, heightened the degree of competition among them. According to Grayon (2010, 31), these changes multiplied the number of organizations, raised the stakes, and, in the process, made them more violent. The influx of Colombian traffickers also made the task of coordination more difficult, while increasing the level of brutality. As the number of organizations and competition grew, they began to "vie for influence at both the national and sub-national level" (Shirk 2010, 11). For Louise Shelley (2005), this brought about a qualitative change. The older crime groups, which were dependent on existing institutional and financial structures to move their products (these groups minimized the risk of prosecution and did not fear the power of state institutions because they had "corrupted or developed collusive relations with state institutions")

were replaced now by new criminal groups that do not possess long-term financial strategies and tend to link up with terrorist groups. These new organizations do not profit from state contracts, he contends, and tend to thrive on a shadow economy, and "the violence and disorder of the state" (Shelley 2005, 103). Consistent with this approach, Beith (2010) specifically blames Joaquin "el Chapo" Guzman of the Sinaloa cartel for launching the war among the DTOs. Such strategies by DTOs undermine previous pacts carefully crafted via corruption. "[T]he incursions by the Zetas," for example, "interrupted a long-standing coexistence between the Gulf cartel and the state and local governments in Tamaulipas" (*Justice in Mexico*, December, 2010).

According to this perspective then, the strengthening of the criminal groups facilitated their ability to corrupt state officials, on the one hand, and their use of violence against one another, , on the other. If we assume that these organizations prefer corruption (collusion) over confrontation as Bailey and Taylor (2009) argue, then certainly the level and reach of corruption would grow under these conditions, but not necessarily the violence targeting the state. Given the rise in the number of organizations and increased competition among them, this should make corruption all the more important and actually bid up the prices of buying state officials. This suggests an increase in the role of corruption. But now buying state officials becomes not only part of the day-to-day operations of the enterprises, but also important in the turf battles and inter-DTOs wars. While certainly increased competition feeds inter- and intra-DTO violence, it is here where violence against the state takes the form of DTOs attacks on corrupt state officials. Such a scenario thus envisions both a rise in corruption and a corresponding rise in violence. Some contend, by contrast, that the new groups emerging from this dynamic are simply more violent against the state, although the reason is not always entirely clear. According to Grayson (2010, 31), for instance, these new groups like the Zetas, La Familiar and other new generation groups moved away from old ways of doing business, preferring now to intimidate police and local officials. But according to the *plomo o plata* logic, why intimidate if corruption is so much easier?

Thesis 3: The Weakening of DTOs as a result of Political Changes (simultaneous weakening thesis). In a formal model alluded to in discussing the first thesis related to political changes, Rios (2011) contends that the weakening of the state via decentralization had the effect of actually weakening organized crime (in contrast to thesis 2) because it now faces two levels of

government: at the top level it must deal with prosecution with federal police, while at the lower levels with local police who cannot prosecute, but who can oversee their actions and alert federal authorities. It is within this context that Rios rejects the notion that DTOs have grown stronger and hence a violence/corruption opposition. "Such a theory, which assumes that bribes (silver) and political violence (lead) are substitutes, can only make sense of recent political violence trends by arguing that traffickers have become relatively more powerful over time, which has lead them to substitute bribes for killings." Instead, she argues that over the past five years as violence has increased, DTOs have actually become weaker: "This is the story of an organized crime that boomed quietly, and weakened loudly" (Rios 2011, 11). This weakening stems from now having to confront multiple state actors, an increase in state capacity measured by the capability of government to prosecute, and as a result of intra- and inter- DTO territorial battles. It is within this context of multiple layers of government and the weakening of the DTOs that both corruption and violence increase in unison rather than moving in opposite directions. Under centralized PRI-regime, it was not necessary to corrupt local politicians, for instance. Now even mayors are killed because traffickers need them. "The recent independence of sub-national figures made sub-national corruption a possibility" (Rios 2011, 12). Mayors are being killed not because DTOs are more powerful, but because mayors now have the power to influence the trafficking business by endorsing or rejecting federal policies: a power they acquired with decentralization. "Mexican politicians seem to be increasing their capability to get silver, at the same time that they are getting more lead" (Rios 2011, 12).

The impact on corruption here is clear. First, and consistent with thesis 1, decentralization creates both more points of corrupt contact with state officials and provides fewer and less reliable returns or guarantees to the drug trafficking organization from their bribes. A much more sophisticated and vast corruption network is therefore needed in order to operate. At the same time, however, the weakening of the drug-trafficking organizations makes corruption even more crucial to their continued operations. This pattern combines, however, with the sort of violence noted earlier in which violence among criminal organizations climbs as does the violence against corrupt state officials working for rival groups. Decentralization and weakening of both the state and DTOs thus result in both a pattern of increased violence and increased corruption with key aspects of corruption triggering violence. Under a more centralized setting, a DTO can largely operate without threat from rival DTOs and safely utilize corruption to prevent law enforcement

activities. Yet under extreme decentralization on both sides, competing DTOs will still use corruption to operate, but will now have to compete with rivals to gain the acquiescence of state officials. Under these circumstances, DTOs will rely on violence to target rivals and their corrupt state allies. At the same time, more state officials now face more DTOs who require state allies to operate. Hence under these conditions, the rate of violence and corruption will both increase.

Thesis 4: Weakening of DTOs as a result of the Strengthening of State Enforcement. Arguably one of the most significant changes from the past is not the broader political changes per se or changes in the DTOs, but rather increased law enforcement. Amidst growing pressures from the United States dating as far back as the Nixon administration, Mexico has progressively dedicated more of its scarce resources and energies to fighting drugs. Between 1987 and 1989, it tripled its federal anti-drug budget, and tripled it again in the 1990s (Andreas 1998). During the following decade, public security budgets increased 565 per cent, while the number of federal police climbed 51 per cent (between 1999 and 2007), and the number of agents within the AFI shot up almost 100 per cent. The budget for the federal public security ministry doubled again from 2000 to 2008 and the PGR budget increased 94 per cent over the decade (*Latin American Mexico & NAFTA Report*, September 2008 RM-08-09). Such changes have come with major administrative reforms. This began, as Snyder and Duran-Martínez (2009) point out, with reforms within the PGR prior to the collapse of the PRI that transformed the geography of enforcement, altering the ratio of protectors to organizations, and shortening the time horizons of public officials. Such reforms included restructuring, mandated relocation of personnel and mass firings of corrupt officials. It included purges, increased turnover and swifter assignment rotations. And it encompassed decentralization including the creation of three new *subprocuradurias* with each controlling non-contiguous states, and increased responsibilities and autonomy of state governments and PGR field offices. This change allowed hometown cops to act with greater independence from the PJF.

And then came President Felipe Calderón, who has clearly taken enforcement to the next level, employing tens of thousands of military troops to police the streets of key states, arresting or stripping the influence of local municipal police, arresting and extraditing numerous cartel leaders, etc. According to this thesis, such heightened enforcement has had multiple effects. First, it has essentially forced the DTOs on the defensive and to fight back by whatever means

available against an aggressive state. This includes the use of violence against the state and corruption to buy state officials largely as defensive tactics to protect themselves from capture, death, or loss of product. Second, the increased enforcement has triggered inter- and intra-DTO violence. The attack on rival groups by the state clearly set the stage for efforts by other groups to contest control of key *plazas*, while the removal of cartel leaders set in motion internal battles for control of the organizations. Or as Grayson (2010, 51) notes, the capture of some cartel leaders was tantamount to kicking around hornets' nests without having the means to spray the rattled insects."

As for corruption, similar to the situation described in thesis 4, the weakening of the DTOs reinforces their need to employ corruption not only to operate the daily business, but more importantly now to defend themselves against an aggressive state and opportunistic rivals. Such enforcement, however, implies the lessening of the types of corruption marking the PRI period that tended to stabilize drug-trafficking operations and restrain the violence.

Thesis 5: Corruption as Scapegoat. A fifth hypothesis to account for how corruption prevented violence during one historic period and facilitated it under another is that both or either contentions exaggerate the role of corruption. This can occur at various points in either argument. As noted in discussing the first puzzle, even while corruption may be a necessary condition for contraband trade, it is not a sufficient condition for its existence. As such, its role may be exaggerated. Similarly, corruption's role behind violence or non-violence may be important, but not crucial. Indeed, political rhetoric tends to hint at this exaggeration and scapegoating tendency, pointing in turn to yet another non-featured dilemma or puzzle embedded in the current debate. On the one hand, as noted earlier, rhetoric points to corruption as facilitating drug trafficking directly by allowing DTOs to operate and indirectly by undermining enforcement measures needed to detect and capture the criminal operatives. It thus seems to blame corruption for the problem itself and for the challenges in resolving it. And yet, on the other hand, the rhetoric captured in the idea of *plomo o plata* largely suggests that the corrupt officials supposedly facilitating this evil essentially have no choice in the matter and are simply acting rational. In circular fashion, then, corruption is blamed for the problem and then dismissed as a result of the weight of the problem itself.

Before exploring the final puzzle related to different interpretations of the effects of the current policies, it is important to emphasize that the five theses just explored focusing on change are certainly not mutually exclusive (though some are) and can be pulled together in a number of different ways. In terms of corruption, the changes over the past decade or so have wrought a shift in the dominant pattern. First, the weakening of the centralized power of the state coupled with the growing power and presence of DTOs fundamentally altered the balance of relative power, resulting in a move away from extortion forms of corruption that seemed to characterize the PRI years to a more pernicious form of bribery today. Now rather than centralized political authorities "managing" the drug businesses and keeping the DTOs within certain boundaries, as once occurred, the DTO's increasingly call the shots, dictating the terms of the relationship, and perhaps maintaining the State within certain boundaries. As O'Neil (2009) notes: [Under Fox] "drug-trafficking organizations took advantage of the political opening to gain autonomy, ending their subordination to the government. They focused instead on buying off or intimidating local authorities in order to ensure the safe transit of their goods."

Second, the decentralization of authority coupled with stepped-up enforcement has opened up many more points of corrupt entry and in a sense effectively decentralized corruption. By blurring the lines of authority it has become necessary to grease more palms. According to Snyder and Duran-Martínez (2009, 264), there has been an "increase in the number of actors who needed to be bribed and it became far more difficult to determine whom to bribe in order to guarantee the transit of drug cargoes across the country." With the proliferation of rival groups and their use of corruption to enlist the support of state officials, this has pitted state actors against one another, fueling even more violence across lines.

Third, the growing strength and prowess of DTOs has led it to flex its political muscle at different and deeper levels. As Lupsha (2005) notes, "rather than protection percolating up through the PJF, PGR, or military to the party and the private secretaries and bag men around 'Los Pinos,' it now appears transnational organized crime and narco power are attempting to operate directly in public and private sector board rooms, with Cabinet level staff and secretaries to plan and coordinate activities for mutual benefits, development, and free trade." The growing concern here is that the influence of DTOs extends beyond the criminal justice system to elected officials at the local and national levels. Indeed, concerns that drug-related funds are being channeled into political campaigns have grown manifold in recent years.

The Political Puzzle

By whatever measure, the Calderón government has cracked-down on both DTOs and corrupt officials. The level of spending on security as well as the number of arrests, prosecutions, extraditions and killings of those involved in drug trafficking and organized crime have all increased dramatically in recent years. Similarly, the number of police, military, customs officials, and even mayors arrested for cooperating with DTO's as well as the number of purges of federal and local police, customs officials and others have all climbed. It is impossible to provide all the details here, so a few examples will have to suffice. According to México Evalúa, public security spending has increased seven times the rate under Calderón as during the Fox administration (*Justice in Mexico*, August 2011). The number of extraditions of cartel leaders to US has gone from 15 in 2000 to 63 in 2006, 95 in 2008 and 100 by November 2009 (*Justice in Mexico*, November 2009). In late August 2010, Federal Police dismissed 3,200 agents or 10% of the workforce due to failure to conform to internal norms such as passing exams that test honesty and reliability (*Justice in Mexico*, September 2010). In 2009, the customs service replaced all of its 700 inspectors with new agents trained to detect smuggling (*Justice in Mexico*, August 2009). In 2009, 357 Mexican law enforcement officers were detained, 90% of which belonged to local police force (see *La Reforma* September 25, 2009, "Halla nacro socio dentro de Policia" cited in *Justice in Mexico*, October 2009).

Such crackdowns suggest three possible scenarios: the crux of the political puzzle. The first possible scenario, occupying the pessimistic end of the continuum, posits that the arrests/purging of criminals and their state allies simply pale in comparison to the sheer magnitude of the problem and thus have had little net effect. As Tim Padgett (2008) contends, referring to *Operación Limpieza* in which dozens of local officials in the state of Michoacan were arrested for aiding organized crime but eventually released, the breadth of the corruption "seems to make a mockery of Calderón's efforts to stamp it out." Indeed, despite the periodic dissolution of entire federal police forces like the INCD (eliminated in 1997) and FEAD (eliminated in 2003), the purging of local police, or the thousands of sanctions against public officials, the level of corruption within the criminal justice sector and the political system overall seems largely unchanged (Morris 2009). As Charles Bowden (2010, 109) cynically notes, "In over a half century of fighting drugs, Mexico has never created a police unit that did not join the traffickers."

On the more optimistic end of the continuum, however, lies a second possible scenario: that the arrests and purges are weakening the DTOs ability to operate, while simultaneously strengthening the ability of the state to effectively fight them. Within this scenario of slow but steady progress, the heightened violence is an indication of the growing weakness of the DTOs as suggested by officials within the Calderón administration and even some in the U.S. government (see Beittel 2011). The violence is also an indication that the measures to disrupt the corrupt alliances are working, forcing the DTOs more and more to confront the government with violence since corruption is no longer as effective. This scenario embraces the assumption that corruption and violence are polar opposites.

A third scenario, however, avers that both the increased arrests and purges feed a dynamic in which they paradoxically contribute to the growth of the problem, making it virtually impossible to make any headway; where every step forward merely expands and magnifies the scope of the problem itself. Indeed, many analysts agree that greater enforcement has done little to stem the flow of drugs and actually has increased both the level of corruption and the level of violence. According to Andreas (1998, 161), as enforcement increases, so too does the need to corrupt those doing the enforcing: the reality is that the business "has thrived in the face of intensified Mexican drug control efforts."⁸ In like manner, increased enforcement heightens the degree of violence. Celaya Pacheco (2009), for instance, attributes the rise in violence to increased enforcement particularly along the US-Mexico border, while Grayson (2010) and Snyder and Duran-Martinez (2009) link the increase in violence to the administrative changes. This has certainly been the pattern with the recent Calderón crackdown and his non-negotiating position (Celaya Pacheco 2009).⁹ Commenting on specific actions, Ted Carpenter (2005, 3) posited that the federal takeover of law enforcement in Nuevo Laredo in June 2005 "had no meaningful impact on the violence" and that instead the number of killings went up. Overall, Bricker (2009) argues that the quantitative results of the crackdown have been poor.

The tendency for increased enforcement to generate both violence and corruption occurs in a number of ways as suggested in much of the prior analysis. First, the proliferation of enforcers and erosion of centralized control lead cartels to acquire their own means of protection and to create paramilitary structures, so in the absence of state-sponsored protection rackets, the violence increases (Snyder and Duran-Martínez 2009, 264). Second, the increased enforcement undermines business operations and triggers violence within and among DTOs (Shelley 2001).

The arrests or killings of key figures in the drug organizations creates power vacuums that frequently ignite conflict within organizations as the lieutenants vie for internal control, and among DTOs vying for control of *plazas*. As these internal struggles grow, DTOs in turn enlist the support of corrupt state officials to help tilt the balance in their favor. But as Freeman (2006, 6) notes, "anything public servants do that is interpreted as benefiting one group – such as trying to take down its rival – makes them the target of the other." Shelley (2001, 214) highlights the inherent paradox: that combating one or two organizations only strengthens the capacity of their rivals, but launching a simultaneous attack on all is beyond the state's capacity. Finally, increased enforcement leads more directly to violence as the state employs it to fight DTOs and the DTOs, in turn, fight back. Though most of the killings are among DTOs (with cops and enforcement officials often working for the DTOs), Rúbén Aguilar and Jorge Castañeda (2009) contend that perhaps what are portrayed as violence among drug traffickers may really be the work of state officials.¹⁰

Conclusion

A review of the literature and the rhetoric reveals, rather paradoxically, that corruption is widely blamed for drug trafficking and organized, and yet characterized as a consequence of the operation of organized crime; it is blamed for the eruption of violence, and yet credited for smoothing drug-trafficking operations under the relatively peaceful era of PRI-domination; it is touted as an alternative to violence, and yet admonished for nurturing it; and it is systematically attacked and yet seemingly flourishes. The foregoing discussion highlights and analyzes three puzzles that lay behind the current drug wars in Mexico: a theoretical puzzle linking corruption, violence, and drug-trafficking; a historical puzzle whereby corruption is credited for the peaceful past and blamed for the violent present; and a political puzzle in which increased enforcement and attacks on corruption seem to yield limited results.

In considering these puzzles, the discussion highlights that despite widely held assumptions, corruption and violence may not be polar opposites and that under certain conditions both may increase; however, it notes how the heightened violence may relate less to violence by DTOs against the State and much more to violence among and within DTOs and against corrupt state officials. Such fragmentation of DTOs heightens their need to rely on corruption to operate, but also increases the dangers of corrupt state officials working on behalf

of a particular DTO. So just as decentralization within the state means that bribes paid to state officials may not guarantee the total lack of enforcement at all levels, so too does the decentralization and fragmentation of DTOs mean that bribes to state officials does not mean they will not escape the cross-fires of inter-DTO violence. In addition, the linkages seem to suggest that as the forms of corruption changed in Mexico, the connections linking corruption and violence also changed. Whereas a centralized and strong state could once set the terms, the balance has shifted with the DTOs now setting the terms, colonizing segments of the state and pitting parts of the state against itself. Finally, discussion notes how the results of greater enforcement and even greater anti-corruption are unclear and that the increasing violence has been touted as both a sign of success and failure. Beyond the possibilities of too little or too soon, it is possible based on the earlier discussion that the policies are having the perverse and unintended effect of exacerbating the problem itself, facilitating even more violence and corruption.

Though often exaggerated, corruption has long played an important role in shaping the nature of Mexican politics. This includes molding the dynamics of the recent drug war. Understanding the role of corruption, its different patterns, how it changes and adapts, and its complex relationship to crime and violence are all important in considering different approaches to the current problems Mexico faces.

References

- Ackerman, John (2009) "Mexico on the Brink." *Guardian.co.uk*. January 30.
- Aguilar, R ben V. and Jorge G. Casta eda (2009) *El Narco: La Guerra Fallida*. Mexico: Punto de Lectura.
- Andreas, Peter (1998) "The Political Economy of Narco-Corruption in Mexico." *Current History* April: 160-165.
- Andreas, Peter and Joel Wallman (2009) "Illicit Markets and Violence: What is the Relationship?" *Crime, Law, and Social Change* 52: 225-229.
- Astorga, Luis and David A. Shirk (2010) *Drug Trafficking Organizations and Counter-Drug Strategies in the U.S.-Mexican Context*. Woodrow Wilson International Center for

- Scholars Mexico Institute, Working Paper Series on U.S.-Mexico Security Cooperation, April.
- Bailey, John and Matthew M. Taylor (2009) "Evade, Corrupt, or Confront? Organized Crime and the State in Brazil and Mexico." *Journal of Politics in Latin America*. 2: 3-29.
- Beith, Malcolm (2010) *The Last Narco: Inside the Hunt for El Chapo, the World's Most Wanted Drug Lord*. New York: Grove Press.
- Beittel, June S. (2011) *Mexico's Drug Trafficking Organizations: Source and Scope of the Rising Violence*. Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report for Congress, 7-7500 (June 7).
- Bowden, Charles (2010) *Murder City: Ciudad Juárez and the Global Economy's New Killing Fields*. New York: Nation Books.
- Bricker, Kristin (2009) "The Numbers Don't Add Up in Mexico's Drug War" *The Narcosphere* (posted November 29) (www.narcosphere.narconews.com/notebook/kristin-bricker/2009/11/numbers-dont-add-me...)
- Campbell, Howard (2009) *Drug War Zone: Frontline Dispatches from the Streets of El Paso and Juárez*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Carpenter, Ted Galen (2005) "Mexico is Becoming the Next Colombia." *Foreign Policy Briefing* 87. Cato Institute (November 15).
- Celaya Pacheco, Fernando (2009) "Narcofearance: How has Narcoterrorism Settled in Mexico?" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32: 1021-1048.
- Escalante Gonzalbo, Fernando (2009) "Homidicios 1990-2007." *Nexos*, September, pp. 25-31.
- Flores, Carlos (2009) "Drug Trafficking, Violence, Corruption and Democracy in Mexico." November.
- Freeman, Laurie (2006) "State of Siege: Drug-Related Violence and Corruption in Mexico." WOLA Special Report, Washington Office on Latin America, June.
- Friman, H. Richard (2009) "Drug Markets and the Selective Use of Violence." *Crime, Law and Social Change* 52: 285-295.
- Grayson, George W. (2008) "Los Zetas: The Ruthless Army Spawned by a Mexican Drug Cartel." E-Notes, Foreign Policy Research Institute (May) (www.fpri.org/enotes/200805.grayson.loszetas.html)
- (2010) *Mexico: Narco-Violence and a Failed State?* New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.
- Hanson, Stephanie (2008) "Mexico's Drug War." Council on Foreign Relations. November 20.

- Huntington, Samuel P. (1968) *Political Order in Changing Societies*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Kelly, Robert J. (2003) "An American Way of Crime and Corruption." In Roy Godson, ed. *Menace to Society: Political Criminal Collaboration around the World*. Piscataway, NJ: Transaction, pp. 99-136.
- Llana, Sara Miller (2010) "Halting Drug War Corruption: What Mexico can learn from Colombia" *Christian Science Monitor* January 12.
- Lupsha, Peter (1995) "Transnational Narco-corruption and Narco Investment: A Focus on Mexico." *Transnational Organized Crime* 1.
- Morris, Stephen D. (2009) *Political Corruption in Mexico; The Impact of Democratization*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Naylor, R. T. (2003) "Predators, Parasites, of Free-Market Pioneers: Reflections on the Nature and Analysis of Profit-Driven Crime." In Margaret E. Beare, ed. *Critical Reflections on Transnational Organized Crime, Money Laundering, and Corruption*. University of Toronto Press, pp. 35-54.
- Naylor, R. T. (2009) "Violence and Illegal Economic Activity: A Deconstruction." *Crime, Law and Social Change* 52: 231-242.
- O'Day, Patrick (2001) "The Mexican Army as Cartel." *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 17: 278-295.
- O'Day, Patrick and Aneglina López (2001) "Organizing the Underground NAFTA." *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 17 (3): 232-242.
- O'Neil, Shannon (2009) "The Real War in Mexico." *Foreign Affairs* 88 (4): 63-77.
- Padgett, Tim (2008) "In Mexico's Drug War, Bad Cops Are a Mounting Problem." *Time* November 22.
- Pimental, Stanley A. (2003) "Mexico's Legacy of Corruption." In Roy Godson, ed. *Menace to Society: Political Criminal Collaboration around the World*. Piscataway, NJ: Transaction, pp. 175-198.
- Rios, Viri. 2011. "Why are Mexican mayors getting killed by traffickers? A model of competitive corruption." Unpublished.
- Scott, James C. (1972) *Comparative Political Corruption*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Serna, Enrique (2009) "La corrupcion invicta." *Nexos* April, pp. 19-22.

Shelley, Louise (2001) "Corruption and Organized Crime in Mexico in the Post-PRI Transition." *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 17 (3): 213-231.

----- (2005) "The Unholy Trinity: Transnational Crime, Corruption, and Terrorism." *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 11 (2): 101-111.

Shirk, David (2010) "Drug Violence in Mexico: Data and Analysis from 2001-2009." Trans-Border Institute.

Snyder, Richard and Angelica Duran-Martínez (2009) "Does Illegality Breed Violence? Drug Trafficking and State-Sponsored Protection Rackets." *Crime, Law, and Social Change* 52: 253-273.

Williams, Phil (2009) "Illicit Markets, Weak States and Violence: Iraq and Mexico." *Crime, Law and Social Change* 52: 323-336

Zepeda Lecuona, Guillermo (2004) *Crimen sin castigo: Procuración de justicia penal y Ministerio Público en México*. Mexico City: Centro de Investigación para el Desarrollo and Comisión Federal de Electricidad

Zimring, Franklin E. (2008) "Violence and Drugs: Divide, Then Conquer?" *Brekeley Review of Latin American Studies*. Spring.

ENDNOTES

¹ Despite the almost axiomatic connection tying drug-trafficking and corruption, the direction of causality remains unclear and may move in both directions. One view, perhaps the more commonly-held position, is that organized crime corrupts state officials through the seductive power of bribes (that organized crime → corruption). The 1967 Task Force Report on Organized Crime was quite explicit on this point: "all available data indicate that organized crime flourishes only where it has corrupted public officials" (cited in Kelly 2003, 128-129). Examples from Mexico are (too) abundant. *Operación Limpieza* in October 2008, for example, uncovered payments, some as high as US \$450,000 a month, to over 30 officials of SIEDO (*Subprocuraduría de Investigación Especializada en Delincuencia Organizada*) in return for providing confidential information on law enforcement operations to the Sinaloa cartel, including those of the DEA (*Latin American Mexico & NAFTA Report*, November 2008; Padgett 2008). But as Peter Andreas (1998, 161) points out, corruption is a two-way street and "involves not only the penetration of the state, but also penetration by the state." Indeed, a second type of linkage reverses this causal error and depicts corruption as an independent variable that produces and hence promotes drug trafficking operations (corruption → organized crime). Rather than envisioning organized crime exerting its influence and control through payoffs, this pattern finds state officials using (and abusing) their authority to largely control and influence the activities of organized crime, enjoying a portion of the business' profits in the process. Though at times

difficult to distinguish bribery from extortion, as we see later, this sort of theoretical linkage seems to have great historical significance to Mexico. A third way of linking the two envisions them as largely indistinguishable. This includes instances where police directly engage in criminal activity, but not in a way that most would call corruption (see *SourceMex* June 26, 2006 and September 3, 2008). Citing statistics from the SSP, *Excelsior* reported, for example, that 56 of the 897 kidnappers arrested from 2001 through the first half of 2008 were active or former members of a police department or the military (*SourceMex* September 24, 2008). Indeed, initial investigations into the high-profile Fernando Marti kidnapping and killing in August 2008 pointed to the involvement of federal agents and judicial police from the Federal District (*Milenio* August 18, 2008; *Latin American Mexico & NAFTA Report*, September 2008 RM-08-09). This blurring of the lines can also be seen in revolving-door corruption where state officials leave office to work for the companies they had been policing. Indeed, many former police and military officers in Mexico have gone on to pursue careers with DTOs, including the infamous Zetas drawn largely from the ranks of the Mexican military special forces (Grayson 2008, 2010).

² Ackerman (2009) cites an independent study showing that only 17% of suspects arrested for drug offenses were actually brought to court in 2008.

³ Franklin Zimring (2008) contends that drug violence is contingent in part on the degree of violence within the culture. Enrique Serna (2009, 20) makes a similar argument with regards to corruption and illegality. Portraying the government as a reflection of society, he contends that "Ningún sermón cívico ha podido erradicar del alma nacional la propensión a ver el erario como un botín...Ningún funcionario pierde amigos cuando se enriquece de la noche a la mañana; por el contrario, su éxito social aumenta en la misma proporción que su cuenta bancaria." In the end, he posits, the culture applauds delinquent activity.

⁴ Unfortunately, it is difficult to quantify violence along these lines. It is known that despite the high number of violent deaths in the past few years, only a small fraction involves state officials. The government contends that only 7% of killings are law enforcement (*Justice in Mexico*, Jan-10). But the extent to which this involves officials refusing to participate in corruption (the classic *plomo o plata* scenario) or who are targeted for being in the corrupt pay of rival organizations, or for betraying the trust purchased through a bribe is not known. Of the 34,612 murders from 2006 to January 2011, for instance, 30,913 were registered by the government as "execution-style killings," 3,153 were considered the result of "shootouts between gangs," and only 546 deaths involved "attacks on authorities." If the situation is indeed one of *plomo o plata*, then apparently most officials act rationally and accept the latter.

⁵ Of course, at some point, intimidation can prevail without even paying the bribes. "*Plomo o plata*" is in some ways generous on the part of the drug traffickers since mere intimidation without the bribes might actually be cheaper. This point may have been reached in parts of Mexico. Reports surfaced in 2008 that in 12 municipalities in the state of Mexico organized crime operated a protection racket that extended to local and federal deputies. Officials claimed they cannot make declarations because they have them "identified and threatened" to harm their families (*Milenio* October 6, 2008).

⁶ Former President Ernesto Zedillo called it foolish ("una tontería") to think that earlier governments had pacted with the cartels, claiming that what is occurring today has nothing to do with what happened 15 to 20 years ago (*Milenio* October 8, 2011) (<http://impreso.milenio.com/node/9040114>).

⁷ This view certainly fits the historic patterns. One problem, however, relates to Calderón's efforts from the beginning to federalize the fight by empowering the military and federal police, normally eclipsing the role of local and state police, and thus reverse the degree of decentralization. If decentralization broke the link between corruption and non-violence, these efforts to concentrate and recentralize power had the potential to reduce the violence; but Calderón seemingly had no intention of returning to the corrupt pacts that characterized the PRI, though some suggest that he should. Of course, perhaps at this point it has become too late to return to the patterns of the past.

⁸ More troubling, the deployment of military forces to contain drug trafficking have wrought an increase human rights abuses. "Troops dispatched to try to wrest control of states where the drug trade has escalated are also accused of violations against the very civilians they are sent to protect" (*SourceMex* March 4, 2009).

⁹ Aguilar and Castañeda (2009) question Calderón's strategy and reasoning for launching the war. They present data that fail to confirm the supposed increase in the use of drugs in Mexico or even a dramatic increase in violence. What has changed, they contend, is the perception of violence. One reason for launching the war, they note, is for the state to regain control: that the state has lost its monopoly control over the legitimate use of force, to collect taxes, etc (Aguilar and Castañeda 2009, 51; see also Escalante Gonzalbo (2009).

¹⁰ Though I have seen little evidence to support this allegation, given the weakness of the judicial system to process and prosecute criminals, it seems plausible.