

2017

Negotiating Mexican Citizenship: Examining Implications of a Narco-State and Rebellions in Contemporary Mexico

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Recommended Citation

Montes, Nereida Guadalupe, "Negotiating Mexican Citizenship: Examining Implications of a Narco-State and Rebellions in Contemporary Mexico" (2017). *Scripps Senior Theses*. 1006.
http://scholarship.claremont.edu/scripps_theses/1006

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**NEGOTIATING MEXICAN CITIZENSHIP:
EXAMINING IMPLICATIONS OF A NARCOESTADO AND
REBELLIONS IN CONTEMPORARY MEXICO**

by

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**SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELORS OF ARTS**

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APRIL 24, 2017

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost I would like to thank my parents and siblings for their endless support and encouragements during my educational journeys. In the moments I thought about giving up, your strength motivated me to not lose sight of the finish line. Your work and own journeys have always fueled my dreams and research.

I would also like to express my eternal gratitude to professor Miguel Tinker-Salas whose boundless patience and guidance was essential for the completion of this thesis. I truly appreciate the dedication and time you invested in me. Your office was an encouraging place where a lot of growth happened. I value and hold a special place for you for all the times you asked about my grandparents and family! Additionally, I would like to thank you to professor Marina Perez de Mendiola, who encouraged me to pursue all my passions from the moment I arrived at Scripps College. Your guidance and support has always been consistent and endless. I also appreciate all the hugs and words of encouragement that were shared in your office. Thank you for always inspiring me to break rules, boundaries, be radical and revolutionary. And professor Nancy Neiman Auerbach for agreeing to be my third reader.

I would also like to thank all my friends for encouraging me, studying with me and providing me emotional support, especially Maya Salas, Tara Partow, Salem Samson, Shanisha Coram, Eden Amital, Julia Martinez, and Leslie Moreno. I would also like to thank Scripps Associated Students (SAS) for providing me with miscellaneous funding.

Introduction

In recent years the drug war has dominated political discussions of México and has influenced the perception of the country abroad. Engaging in a conversation of México, is to engage in conversations of narco-state corruption, cartel induced violence, and poverty. From 2004-2015 there has been a growing scholarly interest in the relationship between the Mexican state and narcos, the influence and role of the US as well as the role of neoliberal policies. This chapter will look at five text to understand the way scholars of Latin American and journalist have been addressing and constructing an academic and popular narrative of the Mexican drug war. Additionally this essay will look at how these academic accounts not only shape the way academia and media talk about the drug war but also the way a common—and sometimes uninformed—audiences understands the corruption, violence and poverty in contemporary México.

This chapter is divided into three sections, which have been reoccurring trends in the literature reviewed for this project. The first will address the Drug War before 2006, which will be a historical account of efforts to combat drug trafficking in México. The second part will examine the influence and complicity of the US in creating the drug war and, arguably the violence that exist in contemporary México. The third and final section will cover the way neoliberal policy has informed poverty, and subsequently the recruitment of narco-traffickers. The last portion of this chapter will dress narco-state corruption, this section will challenge the ways scholarship has

addressed the narco state, in hopes of gaining a better understanding of how the current this affects the lives of contemporary Mexicans.

Drug War Before 2006

Since 2006 the drug war has been given special attention. Although a drug war had already exist before then, it wasn't until the late 2000s that the disproportionate violence of the drug war had been recognized. However, co-authors Carmen Boullosa and Mike Wallace find an importance situating the drug war before 2006. In their book *A Narco History*, they trace the drug war to the 1900s linking it to US Prohibition efforts. In doing so they also weave the US into México's drug trafficking problem.

Their words:

It is our contention that just as the story of the Forty-Three needs contextualization, so does the drug war itself. We suggest that it, too, is inexplicable if one scrutinizes only the narrow timeframe in which it is customarily confined. The decade has a lengthy and complicated backstory that needs to be situated in the preceding century (1914-2015) of which it was the sanguinary denouncement.¹

Boullosa and Wallace highlight the importance of revisiting the foreign policies that came before 2006 that have enabled and nurtured the Drug War. They also situate the Drug War to have begun under the Nixon administrations and intensified during the Reagan administration. Harper Magazine's Dan Baum affirms this theory in an interview with Nixon's former chief of domestic policy, John Ehrlichman. In this

¹ Carmen Boullosa and Mike Wallace, *A Narco History: How the United States and México jointly created the "Mexican Drug War."* (OR Books, 2015), xxvi

interview Ehrlichman confirms that the Nixon administration used the War on Drugs in the US as a way of subverting people of color. His frank words deserve to be quoted at length:

The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the antiwar left and black people. You understand what I'm saying? We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did.²

Ehrlichman exposes his own work under Nixon to have been a political tool use to purposefully criminalizing black people and associate them with drugs and crime. The Nixon administration essentially racialized drugs and has had a role in shaping who is associated with the use and production of drugs. Further Ehrlichman's words in combination with Bouldosa and Wallace analysis suggest that the Nixon administration—and later the Reagan administration—shaped drug control in and outside the US, and subsequently let to the militarization of México.

Moreover, Bouldosa and Wallace later continue the argument that Nixon's War on Drugs has shaped foreign policy by citing Operation Intercept. Nixon believed there needed to be tighter border security to prevent the flow of drugs into the US leading to Operation Intercept, which increase border security. The operation is known for shutting down the border and for the meticulous inspection that could last up to 6 hours. Bouldosa and Wallace, argue that this bully-tactic let to Operation Cooperation in which México agreed to intervene in drug trafficking.³ Ultimately, Nixon's policies allowed

² Dan Baum. "Legalize it all: How to win the war on drugs." (*Harper's Magazine*, 2016).

³ Carmen Bouldosa and Mike Wallace, *A Narco History: How the United States and*

for the racialization of drugs domestically and for the militarization of anti-drug efforts abroad.

By providing these accounts Boullosa and Wallace not only weave the US into the history of the drug war but also outline the importance of foreign policy in constructing it. They also provide useful and insightful information for the academic community to understanding the way the US has played a role creating the violence in contemporary México. It also exposes the War on Drugs as a political strategy in maintaining US hegemony in Latin America. Author Dawn Paley furthers this argument in her book *Drug War Capitalism* when she explains that “emerges from a desire to consider other factor and motivation for the war on drugs, specifically the expansion of the capitalist system into new or previously inaccessible territories and social space.”⁴ She later address how drug war policies have benefited transnational oil, gas and mining companies as well as transnational industries such as Wal-Mart. By doing so she reveals the direct profit of the drug war while also addressing how the drug war is used to maintain hegemony.

In a similar way the drug war has also been used by Mexican elites to maintain their own political power. The most recent account of this is the contested election of ex-president Felipe Calderón Hinijosa who declared the Drug War as a political move to legitimize his presidency. Calderón arguably won the presidential seat in 2006 with 35.89% of the vote to the 35.33% received by his runner up Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO).⁵ In order to assert himself as president he used the existing security

México jointly created the “Mexican Drug War.” (OR Books, 2015), 27

⁴ Dawn Paley, *Drug War Capitalism*. (AK Press, 2014), 15

⁵ Carmen Boullosa and Mike Wallace, *A Narco History: How the United States and México jointly created the “Mexican Drug War.”* (OR Books, 2015), 84

apparatus put in place by his former Vicente Fox and Ernesto Zedillo who had engaged in anti-drug trafficking efforts for a long before 2006. This political move allowed him to gain recognition from his neighboring giant, the US and distract from his arguable victory over AMLO. These events give a new meaning to the drug war, making it a political tool instead of the public health gatekeeper it claims to be.

While Boulosa and Wallace offer a scholarly narrative of the history of the Drug War, author Iona Grillo provides more of a journalistic account in his book *El Narco*. He also places efforts to combat drug trafficking under the Nixon administration as a response to 1960's Cold War rhetoric and 1970's counter-culture demands for drugs. However in creating this narrative of the drug war the authors had different approaches. Grillo's journalistic background employed a sensationalist narrative, a discourse Boulosa and Wallace avoided. Grillo states:

During America's drug-taking explosion, the president with the biggest impact on narcotic policy was unquestionable Richard Nixon. The feisty California declared the War on Drugs; browbeat foreign governments on drug production; and created the DEA. His thunderous actions defined American policy for the next forty year—and had a colossal impact on México.⁶

Although the information he provides is useful, his descriptions of the current situation creates a false image of Mexicans and normalizes the death he is trying to critique. Further by doing so constructs the necropolitics⁷ of the drug war that often allow for the impunity of such deaths to occur so ubiquitously. His words:

⁶ Ioan Grillo, *El Narco: Inside Mexico's criminal insurgency*, (Blumsberry Publishing USA, 2012), 43

⁷ defined by Achille Mbembe as the power and capacity to dictate who may live and who may die in his essay "Necropolitics" (Public culture, 2003). His work has since been used by author Deborah Weissman's "Global Economics and Their sProgenies" (Duke University Press, 2010) to address

Anyone on the planet with half an eye on the TV knows there is an orgy of butchery in México. The country is so deep in blood, it is hard to shock anymore. Even the kidnapping and killing of nine policemen or a pile of craniums in the town plaza isn't big news.⁸

Grillo constructs an image of Mexicanness for a broad US audience. Narratives like that of Grillo shape the way Mexican culture is constructed, perceived and as a result accepted by society. Another example of these complicated narratives is evident in the way Grillo addresses the history of opium and marijuana in Sinaloa. While giving this history it almost seems like he is describing an action movie. Although Grillo provides useful information, it can create a dangerous narrative glorifying death and violence. In fact it perpetuates it. Additionally, his work unintentionally normalizes everyday fears of being “just another victim of drug war. The effects and violence of a war such as this one should never be left unchallenged. It also does little work to dismantle and criticize the systems that allow for a drug war. His text is key for constructing an image of the drug war beyond 2006. In fact his work is quoted by Boullosa and Wallace. It also goes to show how important journalistic work becomes in shaping even an academic context, reaching more than a common New York Times audience. All three authors inform and construct the representations of the drug war, which become important in understanding the violence and death occurring in México.

impunity and disposability of the murder women of Ciudad Juárez. Necropolitics is being used under the same framework in this paper.

⁸ Ioan Grillo, *El Narco: Inside Mexico's criminal insurgency*, (Blumsberry Publishing USA, 2012), 5

US Influence/Complicity

Another common trend in the literature is the relationship between the US and the drug war. While Boullosa and Wallace show how this relationship has a basis in foreign and domestic policy regarding drugs, anthropologist, Howard Campbell argues similarly. He joins this conversation with his book *Drug War Zone*, focusing his analysis on the border communities of Ciudad Juárez and El Paso. He weaves into his narrative the economic, political and ideological policies put in place that have facilitated narco-trafficking. He also addressed the pervasive corruption of Mexican and US officials.

These include cross-border differences in law (for example, the United States prohibited alcohol in the 1920s while México remained alcohol friendly: currently the United States outlaws Marijuana, cocaine, and other drugs, while Mexican government often acts with complicity in smuggling operation); the enactment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which speeded up all manner of transnational commerce and expanded the industrial economy of Juárez; the relative wealth of México's northern states, which has produced an excellent infrastructure for the transportation of drugs⁹

Campbell exposed the collaboration between the US and México in containing (or catalyzing) drug trafficking. However, rather than focusing on a historical moment or policy, like his colleagues, he instead puts a spotlight on testimonies of border communities. His work highlights personal narratives that expose the transnational collaboration of drug trafficking. All three authors argue that US prohibition, neoliberal policies and globalization have impacted drug trafficking. This is an especially relevant

⁹ Howard Campbell, *Drug War Zone*, (UT Press, 2009), 32

argument considering the industrialized city of Juárez, one of the most impacted areas of neoliberal policies, home to many maquiladoras and southern immigrants. Campbell explains there “is virtually a limitless supply of unemployed workers willing to make good money by driving or walking loads of drugs across the border or by servicing as a stash-house guard or a hit man.”¹⁰ Due to the low-level involvement of so many displace and economically disenfranchised players of the drug war, Campbell argues to decriminalize petty drug crimes. He explains that efforts should be focused on the “bigger fish” of drug trafficking, drug bureaucrats. He is also critical of a transnational prison-industrial complex. He speaks of a hypocritical relationship between the US and Mexican officials who profit from this drug war. He explains the relationship as:

mutually parasitic relationship [that] exist between the drug traffickers who profit from the illegal status of drugs such as cocaine and heroin, and the ‘drug warriors,’ bureaucracies, and prison-industrial complexes that justify their existence by reference to the ‘scourge’ of drug traffickers¹¹

Campbell argues that under the guise of a drug war trans-border bureaucrats are able to reap the profits and benefits of produced by the security apparatuses of the drug war. By exposing this Campbell challenges his readers to recognize US complicity in maintaining drug barons in power while punishing low-level traffickers.

Contributing to this narrative is journalist Anabel Hernández with her book *Los Señores del Narco*, where she exposes the collaboration of Mexican and US security apparatuses with narco-traffickers. One of the biggest points among her work is the way the Federal Judicial Police/*Policia Judicial Federal* (PJF), the Attorney General of

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid, 9

México/ *Procuraduría General de la República* (PGR), and the Federal Security Directorate/*Direcciones Federal de Seguridad* (DFS) have facilitated narco-trafficking. Furthermore, Hernández argues that US agencies, such as the DEA played a role in allowing this corruption, an argument echoed by Boulosa and Wallace. All three reveal the ways in which these trans-border organizations benefit from narco-trafficking. Moreover, they explain how these organizations have also protected narco-traffickers. In doing so the three authors also expose state corruption and impunity.

All three authors cite the death of DEA Agent Enrique “Kiki” Camarena in February 1985 as an example of how drug lords controlled the security apparatus in México. Further they explain how Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo, Ernesto Fonseca Carrillo and especially Rafael Caro Quintero were collaborating with authorities in order to ease the transport drugs. However, Camarena's death changed the way such corruption was tolerated by international figures such as the DEA.

Boulosa and Wallace, explain that CIA was collaborating with narco-traffickers under the guise of the Iran-Contra meant to repress counterinsurgency in Nicaragua. In an interview with Phil Jordan, former director of El Paso Intelligence Center, Tosh Plumlee, former pilot for the CIA, and Héctor Bellerez former DEA agent, Mexican journalist J.J. Esquivel reveals that Camarena’s death was conspired by the CIA.¹² The interview reveals that Camarena had become a threat to the network between the CIA and narco traffickers when he discovered that the US government was aiding Mexican narco traffickers in exchange of their help repressing Nicaraguan Sandinistas.¹³ Esquivel argues that the existing corruption of the DFS allowed for the

¹² JJ Esquivel, "A Camarena Lo Ejecutó La CIA, No Caro Quintero," (Proceso, 2013

¹³ Ibid.

murder of Camarena. Boulosa and Wallace take this argument further and claim that the murder of Camarena changed the way the DEA interacted with PJF and DFS, explaining that DEA already knew these two agencies were corrupt. It was known that the DFS would help narco-traffickers move drugs across the country by giving them DFS ID's in order to avoid being questioned. However, the DEA often tolerated this corruption in order to align with CIA efforts. But, after Camarena's death the DEA exposed the all the institutional corruption and as a result the DFS was dissolved under the De la Madrid Administration.

However, Hernández provides a different account creating a narrative centering Rafael Caro Quintero as giving the executive order for Camarena's murder. She provides an inferred dialogue between Caro Quintero and Carrillo Fonseca. The supposed dialogue offers an account of the possible conversation that might have taken place between the two drug barons following Camarena's death. She describes the fear and anxiety that must have been in the room when they realize that their privileges would be revoked as a result. Although, the four authors may disagree over who barred the responsibility for Camarena's murder, they all attempt to show that the impunity the CIA gave narco-traffickers was no longer as easily available. The authors' combine accounts not only address corrupt Mexican security agencies, but also address how the US granted for high-level drug barons benefits in exchange of help maintain US hegemony in the rest of Latin America. In addition, Boulosa and Wallace also argue that Camarena's death provided the perfect excuse to claim drug trafficking a threat to US national security and amplify effort of the War on Drugs left behind by Nixon. Ultimately, this intensified anti-drug trafficking efforts in México. Additionally it

continued to criminalize people of color and contributed to the militarization of México. On the one hand Camarena's death exposed transnational corruption, and on the other hand it changed the way drug enforcement would be tolerated by México's tyrant neighbor, the US.

Neoliberal Catalyst

A third trend in the literature is the relationship between poverty and the War on Drugs. The literature provided an understanding of how neoliberal policies accelerated drug trafficking creating a narco economy. Boullosa, Wallace, Campbell and Hernández thus far have argued that neoliberalism actually made it easier to transport and cross over drugs into the US. In addition, the unemployment and poverty that engulfed México as a result of these neoliberal policies created ready made armies of recruits. Moreover, small farmers were pushed out of the market as neoliberal reforms permeated the Mexican economy and as the state retracted from its revolutionary mission. As a result a displaced and disenfranchised work force turned to the narco economy. All four authors point to neoliberal policies as a catalyst for cartel recruitment and involvement. They also point to Mexican politics as a contributing actor in creating poverty and the perfect field for cartel recruitment. One such example by the magazine *Proceso* outlines how poverty has been a source of recruitment for cartel group los Zetas:

Grupo operativo Los Zetas te quiere a ti militar o exmilitar te ofrecemos buen sueldo, comida y atenciones a tu familia, ya no sufras maltratos y no sufras hambre, nosotros no te damos de comer sopas maruchan, relajos absténgase de llamar, interesados comunicarse Tel 867 1687423 (sic)/ Operative Group Los

Zetas wants to recruit you military men or exmilitary men, we offer a good salary, food and benefits for your family. Don't suffer injustice and hunger, we offer you more than maruchan noodles relax and call Tel 867 1687423 (sic)¹⁴

Boullosa and Wallace tie in this argument of poverty to México's one party system, which has led to the disproportionate participants of the drug war. The authors address neoliberal policies in the context of party history and election in order to expose the effects of poverty and how it has created a narco economy. They often juxtapose neoliberal Partido de la Revolución Institucional (PRI) and conservative Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN) to progressive Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD). One example of how the drug war has been used to distract from state corruption is Calderon's contested election. Under Calderón, not only was the drug war amplified so were neoliberal reforms that further opened México to foreign investment and further economically dislocated Mexican citizens. Their writing makes readers ask themselves: What would have happened to México if López Obrador had gotten elected instead? By linking the drug war to poverty the authors challenge the common narrative of drug-trafficking as an immoral activity and shift focus to the effects of neoliberal policy. However, it hardly addressed alternative paths and it asserts neoliberal poverty as a natural narrative. It in fact naturalizes the narrative that the poor become narco-traffickers because it is their only option. Arguably, asserting neoliberalism as a major cause of the drug war provides what seem to be unpopular suggestions of combating drug trafficking. Perhaps and investment in schools, jobs and government accountability could be more powerful than a military with guns.

¹⁴ "Fracasa Estrategia Para Capturar a Los Cabecillas De Los Zetas - Proceso." (Proceso, 2008)

The literature also argues that the militarization of México is a band-aid resolution to a bigger issue regarding infrastructure, education, jobs, and poverty. The drug war is a way to deal with the impacts of neoliberalism and poverty without actually dealing with what needs to change in order to restructure the way violence operates in México. A notion echoed by Paley. She explains further: “the war on drugs is a long-term fix to capitalism’s woes, combining terror with policymaking in a seasoned neoliberal mix, cracking open social worlds and territories once unavailable to globalized capitalist.”¹⁵

Campbell also addresses the role of poverty in border communities such as Juárez. Campbell states:

I have more compassion for common workers in the drug trade—who, above all work to make a living and provide for their families—than for Washington policy wonk or well-paid drug war bureaucrats, who are often resulted from the dirty work in the streets but whose actions and decisions may negatively affect hundreds or thousands of families, especially those whose members have been incarcerated for selling drugs.

He later goes on to say that “menial workers in the narco-world also suffer from their marginality, frequented low pay and disposability at the bottom of drug-cartel operations” explaining how involvement drug trafficking is a result of economic circumstances in many cases.

Musicologist Mark Edberg also addresses about the relationship between poverty and narco-traffickers in his book *Narcocorridos*. Although his book is the most dated book being referenced some of the content it offers still manages to provide useful

¹⁵ Dawn Paley, *Drug War Capitalism*. (AK Press, 2014), 16

insight about the way poverty is manipulated by narco-traffickers. In doing so he explains how poverty enables a narco culture to exist. He also argues that the narrative legitimizes violence. He brings us to this point when he writes:

The corrido is deeply symbolically intertwined with the practice of violence in the community, serving three discursive task: celebration, regulating, and then healing the violence. The corrido itself is thus a key component of the ongoing cycle of violence.¹⁶

Edberg challenges the idea that poverty produces unforgiving violence like the one that is seen in contemporary México. Instead he invites the academic community to evaluate the way cycles of violence are perpetuated through forms of pop culture.

Hernández also relates involvement with cartels in Sinaloa to the harsh conditions of growing up rural and poor. However, her journalistic background, similarly to Grillo made for a very sensationalist narrative, and can become a dangerous representation of narco-traffickers. Although remaining critical, she creates a image of Joaquin “el Chapo” Guzmán as modern day Robin Hood, characterizing narcos as hardworking and goal orientated. When describing other drug lords such as Amado Carillo Fuentes and Rafael Caro Quintero, Hernández describes them as handsome, charming, and charismatic. By doing so she constructs their authority as drug barons as attractive. It is narratives like these that lead to telenovelas like *El Señor de los Cielos* and *La Reina Del Sur* that exotify and normalize narco culture. Although her work provided crucial details for understanding the drug war in México and informing even academic narratives, her work walks a thin line between normalizing the narcos and

¹⁶ Mark Edberg, *El Narcotraficante: Narcocorridos and the Construction of a Cultural Persona on the US-Mexico Border*, (UT Press, 2004), 43

criticizing them. Her journalistic approach seems to naturalize this violent culture as attractive, something Edberg addresses and warns audiences about in his work. Although both authors have different audiences and approaches both shape the way the Drug War is perceived and talked about, especially the perception of a narcocultura.

Although most authors do address and question the relationship between narco-trafficking and the neoliberal induced poverty, their work leaves readers wondering about the way academia gives attention to individuals, their agency and how they negotiate their citizenship. Some of the results of the drug war have been the emergence of *autodefensas* and an increased outward migration in areas deeply affected by violence. However, this has been given minimal attention from the literature. Information like this is important in order to understand what the implications of a drug war have had among Mexican citizens.

Conclusion

The arguments addressed thus far contribute deeply to the way the drug war in México is understood and represented. Revealing the relationship between drug trafficking and that poverty created by neoliberal reform is a crucial part of understanding the drug war. Recognizing US complicity has also been important in contextualizing the drug war in Mexico. All these arguments are important to understand the violence and disenfranchisement occurring in contemporary Mexico, however, in trying to contextualize this violence there needs to be an understanding of the way the state interacts with narco-traffickers,

Although the literature provides great insight on how the drug war was constructed through US foreign and domestic policies, neoliberal reforms and state corruption there are a few gaps. There is lack of context thus far given to gender, necropolitics, and the implications of a narco-state. Furthermore, little attention has been given the normalization and naturalization of violence under the narco-state. Even though most authors did recognize that a narco-state existed in México, it was left unchallenged and unquestioned. There was one author, Hernández, who address the collaboration between drug lords and state officials deeply. However, Hernández simply addresses the narco-state in order to give context to the power behind drug lords, there were so many questions about the relationship a corrupt state has in regard to citizenship that were left unanswered. In trying to understand the ways in which the Drug War has affected and continues to affect Mexican citizens there needs to be a better understanding of the narco-state. What are the characteristics of a narco-state? How does the drug war reshape the Mexican state? How does it call into question Mexican legitimacy and democracy? How does it affect Mexican citizens? The narco-state needs to be challenged not normalized in scholarly conversations. My research hopes to fill in these gaps and further explore the implication of a narco-state.

Chapter 1

Les quitaron su vida y su luz... Y eso nos hizo encender con más fuerza la nuestra;
Matan al pueblo y dicen que no, gobierno y narco la misma mierda son;
Por los compañeros caídos de un gobierno que ejecuta;
Ni perdón ni olvido. ¡Justicia! Si Peña como Aguirre no puede, ¡que renuncie!;
Peña, culero, venimos de la Ibero. Peña, por asesino, fuera de Los Pinos;
Los padres de los desaparecidos exigimos justicia. El Estado mexicano es un Estado fallido, fracasado.
Hoy nos sentimos respaldados por el pueblo¹⁷

“Fue el Estado!” Echoed in the streets of México as students and protesters demanded the Mexican government be held accountable for the 43 missing students from Ayotzinapa. Behind the protest was the narrative of 43 students that were abducted on September 26, 2014 in the state of Guerrero. It inspired protesters and activist, teachers, parents, and students all over the country to demand answers and accountability for the missing students. The disappearance of the 43 inspired a political outcry and revealed the symbiotic relationship between the state and drug cartels. Ayotzinapa also became a signifier of military violence and the existence of a *narcoestado*.¹⁸

Even before the abduction of the 43 students news headlines in México and the US have been filled with concerns over the proposed *narcoestado*. Headlines read from “El terror del narcoestado”¹⁹ and “Ayotzinapa y el Narcoestado”²⁰ to “I’ve Had Enough:

¹⁷ Santiago Igartúa, “¡Fue el Estado!, clamor por desaparecidos de Ayotzinapa.” (Proceso, 2014).

¹⁸ translation: Narco-State

¹⁹ “‘Vivos se los llevaron, vivos los queremos’, clamor nacional.” (Proceso, 2014)

²⁰ “Ayotzinapa y el Narcoestado.” (TeleSUR Videos, 2014)

Mexican Protesters Decry Years of Impunity”²¹ and “Impunity and Mass Disappearance in Ayotzinapa.”²² Soon after, the journalistic accounts that followed pointed to the mayor of Iguala, José Luis Abarca, and the police, the cartel Guerreros Unidos, and the military as responsible for the disappearance of the 43 students. This type of impunity mobilized Mexicans everywhere to denounce state corruption. Ayotzinapa gave visibility to the relationships state officials and narco-traffickers maintain in order to keep power and enforce hegemony. It unveiled their strategic allegiances, their symbiotic rule and the extent to which the *narcoestado* has coexisted with the Mexican state.

Recent debates about México have reveal concern over the *narcoestado* often regarding México as a failed state for its impunity, death toll, feminicidio, military violence, violence against journalist and freedom of speech. The following chapter will delve into the evidence available in order to help determine México as a *narcoestado*. This evidence will further expose the ways in which the state has failed Mexican citizens. However, before the *narcoestado* is defined, what are the characteristics of a state? And, what are the responsibilities of that state to has to its citizens?

In his article Michael Mann’s “The autonomous power of the state: it’s origins, mechanisms and results” Mann takes the definitions of various thinkers such as Rousseau, Tocqueville, Lenin, Marx, Tily and Weber to define the state as:

- a. a differentiated set of institutions and personnel embodying,
- b. a centrality in the sense that political relations radiate outwards from the center to cover,

²¹ "I've Had Enough": Mexican Protesters Decry Years of Impunity After Apparent Massacre of 43 Students."(Democracy Now, 2014)

²² Laura Carlsen,"Impunity and Mass Disappearance in Ayotzinapa." (NACLA, 2014)

- c. a territorially-demarcated area, over which it exercises,
- d. a monopoly of the means of physical violence²³

Mann also explains that “the state’s infrastructural power, the greater the volume of binding rule-making, and therefore the greater the likelihood of despotic power over individuals and perhaps also over marginal, minority groups.”²⁴ The more defined, nationalistic, and dependable the state is, the easier it is for it to maintain power. However, what happens when you have underdeveloped states such as México. In 1988 México shifted to a neoliberal model and abandoned its revolutionary legacy and withdrew from its nationalist mission in order to favor foreign investors and corporations. The PRI distanced itself from social reform and allowed for a neoliberal market to replace it. Neoliberal reforms in conjunction with a weakened state produced a vacuum that enabled the growth and expansion of transnational drug cartels. This vacuum also allowed for drug trafficking to become an alternative response to the ongoing crisis. Furthermore, as México moved towards a neoliberal strategy, the government further withdrew from basic social services such as education, 1917 constitution rights, and cultural projects thus augmenting the void. That vacuum is increasingly filled by emerging narco trafficking.

The sexino of Carlos Salinas de Gortari begins with efforts to rewrite history and México’s revolutionary memory. Gortari leads efforts to rewrite public education in order to reframe México’s relationship with the US. Gortari’s administration is led efforts to rewrite article 27 of the constitution in order to privatize ejidos and open up for foreign investment. By replacing México’s revolutionary rhetoric he made México’s

²³ Micheal Mann, "The autonomous power of the state: its origins, mechanisms and results." *European journal of sociology* 25, no. 02 (1984), 185-213.

²⁴ Ibid.

modernization dependent of free trade and the US. All these efforts have had a direct impact on the countryside, often creating and perpetuating poverty. The direct abandonment of the countryside, Boullosa and Wallace argue in their book *A Narco History* create the conditions that allow for the countryside to open up to narco trafficking. To show this relationship they write, “the cartels hired the unemployed to serve as everything, from mules to murderers, an appealing prospect (given the lack of alternatives) especially for youth, who tumble out of school into the streets.”²⁵ They outline how the old pillars of support had been weakened by neoliberal reform leaving narco trafficking as an option to fill what once corresponded to the state.

In a way by retracting from its historic mission the state lost grip over its power. Neoliberal reform also weakened the state power creating the conditions that have made it the contemporary *narcoestado*. Mann further explains how the power of the state is defined as the capacity to control civil society and implement logistical and political decisions throughout the nation. This reflects taxing income, record keeping, education, enforce the state’s will within its domains, provide employment, pensions, ensure safety and influence the overall economy. However, in México there are now competing interests that have reform some of these same functions. The neoliberal policies put in place as of 1988 made it so that the Mexican state and narco traffickers co-inhabit some of these functions. Narco trafficking in many parts of the country has taken over some of the basic functions of the state. In many places they collect quotas as if they were a form of taxes, for many narco-traffickers are the main providers of employment, and over all, narcos imposes their will and hegemony over large domains of the nation. In

²⁵ Carmen Boullosa and Mike Wallace, *A Narco History: How the United States and México jointly created the “Mexican Drug War.”* (OR Books, 2015),

March 11 of 2009 *Proceso* magazine published an article that focused on the ways in which narcos have replaced the state by providing employment, stating that “el narco en México da empleo directo al menos a 450 mil personas que se dedican al cultivo y comercialización de marihuana y opio y en un momento de crisis económica, esta industria del crimen organizado representa ya una opción para los miles o quizá millones que quedarán desempleados en estos años.”²⁶ By providing employment to most of the disenfranchised, narco-traffickers weaken the state and assert themselves as the benefactors of the communities they control. There is also a connection between unemployment rates and neoliberal policies claiming those monopolies are exactly what facilitate this. Narco traffickers fill the gaps left behind by the state making them an integral part of state functions. Further this economic dependency grants narco-traffickers unquestionable power that use to belong to the state. In Michoacan, for example “la Familia [Michoacana] es quien controla la venta en 113 municipios de Michoacán, generado 27 millones de pesos mensuales.”²⁷ Narco trafficking has replaced some of the essential functions of the state and they have arguably become a regulating and governing entity.

The financial coopting of organized crime has in a way mimic functions that belong to a sovereign government. Narco-traffickers have taken over state characteristic such as taxation. Or more accurately in the context of organized crime is the implementation of quotas, which are used as a bully-tactic to intimidate local establishments to pay money in exchange of security. December of 2011 *Proceso* editors expanded on the ways narco traffickers governed in the state of Michoacán. In

²⁶ "Narco, una esperanza de empleo." (Proceso, 2009)

²⁷ Ibid

Michoacán narco-trafficking entities such as La Familia Michoacana and Los Caballeros Templarios tax local business like the tortilla industry collecting about 20 thousand to 30 thousand pesos monthly.²⁸ What is frightening is not the taxation of local business itself, but the way these organizations have asserted themselves as the local authority, and have attempted to redirect civilian loyalties to themselves. The *Proceso* publication states: “La Familia Michoacana como los Caballeros Templarios presumen, a través de mantas y cartulina, que su misión es ‘proteger’ a la sociedad y no permitir que otros grupos de la mafia, sobre todo foráneos, vulneren la seguridad de los michoacanos.”²⁹ In this way narco-traffickers in Michoacan have tried to coopt the function of the state by providing safety in exchange of compliance to regulation imposed by themselves. In this case paying a tax or quota. What is alarming is that they are not providing safety just an exemption on being murder or kidnapped. However, the hijacked power narco-traffickers have given themselves can also be used as a way of collaborating with weak local governments to maintain power and impunity. Journalist, José Gil Olmos explains how narco traffickers in Michoacán are “dueños de todo” owners of everything for their tax on everything from hotels to the trains that pass by the port Lázaro Cardenas. But most importantly note Olmos makes for his audience drawing a connection between weak governments the appearance of autodefensa groups.³⁰

Through their intimidating and self imposed quota system they have coopted some of the functions of the state. Michoacán, however, is not the only state in which this happens, other examples extend across the country and even ex-president Calderón

²⁸ "Para pagar "cuota" al narco, suben kilo de tortilla en Michoacán." (Proceso, 2011)

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ José Gil Olmos, "Vallejo entregó Michoacán a los narcos: 'Cocoa'" (Proceso, 2013)

admitted during the VI Cumbre de las Americas in 2012, that narco trafficking quotas had taken place over state functions.³¹ Examples of these can also be found in states like Tamaulipas,³² Guerrero,³³ Chihuahua, and Morelos.³⁴ Even in regions where narco trafficking is perceived to be under better control such as Mexico City, there have still been recordings of intimidation by narcos to comply with their imposed quotas.³⁵ Quotas are just another way for narco-traffickers to imposed their will upon large regions of the country. It has also been a way for them to maintain a monopoly on violence and power as the state is traditionally intended to do.

While the narco-quotas replace the state in state such as Michoacán, in states like Sinaloa, narco trafficking has replaced the state in different ways by providing employment. In a study conducted by the Universida Autónoma de Sinaloa (UAS) it was disclosed that in the year 2012 8% of state income, about 22 thousand 880 million pesos come from inexplicable sources most likely linked to narco trafficking.³⁶ This comes from a history of narco-state collaboration, Journalist Patricia Dávila writing for *Proceso* in March 2014, cites that the ex-governor, Juan S. Millán of the state admitted that 62% of the economy in Sinaloa was linked to drug trafficking.³⁷ Sinaloa is known as the birthplace of narco-trafficking. Often representations of Sinaloa are of narco glorifying and loyal Sinaloans. However, Sinaloa is also the eye of the storm. It's capital, Culiacan is the second most dangerous city in México, following Acapulco in

³¹ "El narco ya sustituye al Estado; cobra." (El Sur, 2012)

³² Luis Cárdenas, "Tamaulipas: el infierno olvidado; te secuestran aunque pagues derecho de piso." (El Universal, 2016).

³³ Reforma. "Piden condonar impuesto por pago a narco en Acapulco." (El Diario de Juárez, 2016)

³⁴ "Narco cobra." (Aristegui Noticias, 2013)

³⁵ "A ver, cabrón, ¿vas a cooperar o qué?", historias de extorsión y derecho de piso en el DF." (Aristegui Noticias, 2015)

³⁶ Patricia Dávila, "La droga, riqueza de Sinaloa." (Proceso, 2014)

³⁷ Ibid.

the state of Guerrero. Although Sinaloa is an example of how narco-traffickers have weaved themselves into society by offering financial stability the narrative that the Sinaloans are naturally loyal to narcos must needs to be challenged. Stephen R. Niblo describes in his book *México in the 1940's: Modernity, Politics and Corruption*, corruption is a result of poor income distribution. He argues that it can be used by some to mediate between poverty and survival.³⁸ With an extremely unequal income distribution and the added neoliberal structures as the ones in México it is no wonder the state has been replaced by narco-traffickers. A quite literal example of this, not too far away from Sinaloa is in Tamaulipas, where the Zetas cartel recruited military personnel offering high-income incentives. Mocking the military that if they work for them instead of remaining loyal to the government they could eat a steak every night instead of roman noodles.³⁹ Although this particular example occurred in Tamaulipas, similar recruitment undoubtedly takes place in Sinaloa and other similar states as well. The income disparities put forth by México's neoliberal policies have allowed for narco-traffickers take over roles that once belonged to the state.

A *narcoestado*, however, is not only nurtured by the functions of the state that get coopted by narco-traffickers. Ayotzinapa alerted us to a more explicit relationship between the state and narco-traffickers. An interview by Julio Scherer Garcia with capo Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada reveals that narcotráfico is so imbedded into every aspect of the Mexican state that a war against drug trafficking would be violent and useless. Scherer Garcia quotes Zambada:

³⁸ Stephen R. Niblo *Mexico in the 1940s: modernity, politics, and corruption*. (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999)

³⁹ "Fracasa Estrategia Para Capturar a Los Cabecillas De Los Zetas." (Proceso, 2008)

El gobierno llegó tarde a esta lucha y no hay quien pueda resolver en días problemas generados por años. Infiltrado el gobierno desde abajo, el tiempo hizo su “trabajo” en el corazón del sistema y la corrupción se arraigó en el país. Al presidente, además, lo engañan sus colaboradores. Son embusteros y le informan de avances, que no se dan, en esta guerra perdida⁴⁰.

Zamabada not only reveals how extensive the *narcoestado* corruption is, he also crushed any hope of combating it. Perhaps his brutal honesty is an intimidation tactic meant to discourage police from looking for him, but over all Zambada is suggesting the *narcoestado* has penetrated and corrupted the Mexican state in every aspect. He further explains how it would not even matter if he was detained or killed, nothing would change and proceeds to say: “Un día decido entregarme al gobierno para que me fusile. Mi caso debe ser ejemplar, un escarmiento para todos. Me fusilan y estalla la euforia. Pero al cabo de los días vamos sabiendo que nada cambió.”⁴¹ Getting rid of one capo will not matter. There are plenty more power-hungry individuals to replace him. What Zamabada is describing is the failure of the king pin strategy, which is mainly a failed media strategy that targets high-profiled leaders of narco-trafficking. However, this has created a vacuum of violence among cartels. Further it has made it so that once Mexico had 4 or 5 cartels not it has multiple small cartel, who fight among themselves for territory augmentation the already existing violence. The recent capture of drug tycoon Joaquin “el Chapo” Gúzman provides an example of how this strategy has failed. Since the capture of Gúzman there have been intense violence within the Sinaloa cartel. On February 14 of this year, journalist Alejandro Monjardín reported 150 killings within the month of January.⁴² Zambada’s blunt words also help contextualize

⁴⁰ Julio Scherer García, "Proceso en la guarida de "El Mayo" Zambada." (Proceso, 2010)

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Alejandro Monjardín, “En Sinaloa, narcoguerra infernal,” (Proceso, 2017)

the networks of collaborators that keep the *narcoestado* in place. It is state officials, high level and low level narco-traffickers that work together to maintain power and hegemony.

Often narco trafficking is traced back to the neoliberal policies of the Salinas de Gortari administration. However, Salinas de Gortari's administration also provides an example of the state corruption Zambada is referring to in his interview with Sherer García. Salinas de Gortari and his brother, Raúl, have been documented to have taken unconventional lengths, such as money laundering for their personal enrichment. In an untypical interview with *La Jornada*, ex-president Miguel de la Madrid links Salinas de Gortari to narco trafficking. De la Madrid expresses his disappointment in his successor and denounces his family corruption. He also attributes his newfound wealth to corruption and narco trafficking ties and mentions that narco trafficking permeated México when Salinas became president.⁴³ On the one hand the economic policies brought forth by his administration catalyzed narco-trafficking. On the other hand the explicit relationship Salinas and his brother maintained with narco-trafficking further weaved narco-traffickers into the state. These relationships further express the power given to narcos and the impunity given to corruption. Such relationships are exactly what created the conditions for the disappearance of the 43 students from Ayotzinapa. A report by Forbes magazine regarding the most corrupt people in Mexico, exposes Salinas de Gortari and his brother Raúl as "symbol[s] of corruption and impunity"⁴⁴ because even though Raúl spent some time in prison for the murder of his brother-in-law and secretary of the PRI José Francisco Ruiz Massieu he was released in a relatively short

⁴³ Rosa Elvira Vargas, "Acusa De la Madrid a Salinas de delincuente." (*La Jornada*, 2009)

⁴⁴ Dolia Estevez, "The 10 Most Corrupt Mexicans Of 2013." (*Forbes*, 2014)

amount of time. Furthermore, the abuse of power by Mexican elites became apparent when a judge ordered \$19 million dollars deposited in twelve bank accounts and 41 properties be returned to him.⁴⁵ Salinas and his brother are symbols of the impunity the *narcoestado* facilitates. Further evidence provided by the website Wikileaks attributes the Salinas corruption to abuse of power and impunity. The report discloses the liberty to which state officials in even the highest position can be associated with corruption and have little to no consequences. This section of report deserves to be quoted at length:

U.S. congressional investigators alleged that Raul Salinas' wife personally carried check after check to the bank, where Citibank executives asked no questions - despite rampant rumors that linked Salinas to drug lords, and even when Salinas was held on charges that he master minded the assassination of a top politician. The Salinas claimed that they were victims of a political persecution, the Justice Department and Switzerland investigated, and there were calls for reform of banking secrecy laws.

No criminal charges of money-laundering or illicit enrichment were filed against Salinas. He is a free and wealthy man today. In 2008, Switzerland, which had frozen his bank accounts, returned most of the money.⁴⁶

Additionally a report by the US General Accounting Office (GAO) also cites how easy it was for the Raul to transfer money no questions asked. The GAO report also exposes the relationships that exist between banks, narco-traffickers, and state officials stating:

Mr. Salinas was able to transfer \$90 million to \$100 million between 1992 and 1994 by using a private banking relationship formed by Citibank New York in 1992. The funds were transferred through Citibank Mexico and Citibank New York to private banking investment accounts in Citibank London and Citibank Switzerland.

⁴⁵ *ibid*

⁴⁶ Mexico Country Brief 111128, Weakleaks, dated November, 28 2011, https://wikileaks.org/gifiles/docs/28/2894789_-latam-mexico-country-brief-111128-.html

Beginning in mid-1992, Citibank actions assisted Mr. Salinas with these transfers and effectively disguised the funds' source and destination, thus breaking the funds' paper trail.⁴⁷

Over all, both these reports show the impunity that is enjoyed by those in power, whether it is to carry out money laundering, drug transports, or even the repression and disappearance of those who oppose or challenge them. The relationship the Salinas brothers have had with corruption differs very little from the allegation brought forth about the mayor of Iguala, who's wife has been tied to the cartels Guerreros Unidos. The Salinas corruption is important to note because it allowed for other fraud cases to be left unsanctioned and opened the door for further state corruption. Arguably, it is also what has kept murder and violence immune to repercussions.

A *narcoestado* is not as simple as having organized crime replace the state. It is also about the networks and relations narcos-traffickers forge with state representatives to maintain dominance and impunity. Often the state and organized crime are not separate, they are interweaved into the same power structure in order to keep a monopoly of that power. At times narco-traffickers and the state are separate entities that compete with each other. At other times narco-traffickers and the state are indistinguishable. Examples of this are political collaborations between politicians and narco-traffickers such as the arrest of someone as high ranking as Ricardo Gutierrez Vargas, director of Interpol Mexico, who was arrested in 2008 for allegedly selling information to the Sinaloa Cartel for hefty amounts of money.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Rep. No. GAO/OSI-99-1 at 25 (1998). Raul Salinas, Citibank, and Alleged Money Laundering

⁴⁸"In Drug Inquiry, Mexico Arrests Another Top Police Official." (The New York Times, 2008. Accessed April 24, 2017)

Other examples of the state morphing with organized crime include the case of Genaro García Luna, chief of Secretaría de Seguridad Pública (SSP) under Calderon's sexino. García Luna was also included on Forbes' list of 10 Most Corrupt Mexicans⁴⁹ for his abuse of power and human-rights abuses. There have been allegations made against him for through the Progeria General de la República (PGR) for the abuse and torture of Florence Cassez.⁵⁰ To further prove his disregard for human rights is the case of, previously mentions, author Annabel Hernandez who received death threats⁵¹ after she reported on and published his corruption in her book *Los señores del narco*. Her work linked García Luna with the drug capos like Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzman. He allegedly asked for his collaborators to make it look as if her planned murder had been an accident. His corruption and abuse is further documented when in 2012, in an open letter from drug capo Edgar "La Barbie" Valdez Villareal who claimed that García Luna had been on the payroll of drug trafficking groups for ten years along with other various officials like Armando Espinosa de Benito who worked for the DEA.⁵² Villareal makes this state corruption very clear in his letter. He also explains that his arrest was due to a disagreement between him and his conspirators, which echoes the idea that these narco-state relationships are used to maintain power and threats to this that power are eliminated. García Luna acted with impunity to eliminated and intimidate his enemies and was often protected under his title and position as chief of the SSP, no one doubted his relationships with organized crime.

⁴⁹ Dolia Estevez, "The 10 Most Corrupt Mexicans Of 2013." (Forbes, 2014)

⁵⁰ "CNDH presentó denuncia contra García Luna por caso Cassez." Aristegui Noticias, 2017); "García Luna y el derrumbe institucional." (La Jornada, 2013)

⁵¹ "Anabel Hernández y Genaro García Luna." (Proceso, 2011)

⁵² "Textual: Carta de 'La Barbie' en la que acusa a Calderón y García Luna." (Aristegui Noticias, 2012)

Another, example of the state merging with narco-trafficking is the recent case of Tomás Yarrington, former governor of Tamaulipas. The FBI has been investigating his ties with narco-trafficking since 2003. Yarrington has been linked to money laundering, protecting cartel leaders like Osiel Cárdenas in exchange for bribes.⁵³ He had been on the run for 5 years until he was captured in Italy on April 9, 2017. He faces several charges in both the US and México, and both countries are seeking to extradite and prosecute him. Yarrington has also become a symbol of corruption and of the strategic collaborations state officials maintain with narco-traffickers.

Current President Enrique Peña Nieto also provides an example of the collaboration that exist between state officials and narco-traffickers. Recent publications from Aristegui News link the questionable funds for his campaign in 2012 to the Juárez Cartel.⁵⁴ Peña Nieto's campaign had been accused of using Soriana and cellphone gift cards as bribes for insuring votes, and even though this was mostly tied to the financing of the bank Monex it was later connected to Rodolfo David Dávila Córdoba, "El Cónsul" a leader among the Juárez cartel, who donated money to anti-hunger organizations like *Cruzada contra el Hambre* who then became a source funding in helping buy votes.⁵⁵ This form of corruption does several things, it keeps oligarchs like the PRI in power, it legitimates those associated with narco-trafficking and it manipulates the poverty created by neoliberal policies to further corrupt the political system. In doing so the state loses the ability to guarantee the right to a free vote. Under a *narcoestado* some of these basic rights are further compromised.

⁵³ José Gil Olmos, "Desde el 2003, el FBI investigaba las ligas de Yarrington con el narco." (Proceso, 2017).

⁵⁴ "Cártel de Juárez, proveedor del PRI y financiador en la campaña de Peña Nieto (Reportaje especial)." (Aristegui Noticias, 2017)

⁵⁵ Ibid.

The list of state officials arrested under allegations of money laundering and other type of involvements with organized crime seems endless. Even though, this narco-state corruption has become ubiquitous, these relationships deeply affect the way Mexicans understand their rights and the role of the state. This type of persistent corruption has an effect on human rights and become key in declaring the state as illegitimate, and perhaps a failed state. According to a study conducted by *Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía* the majority of Mexicans surveyed view police, political parties, state governments, senadores, and diputados as the most corrupt institutions in the country.⁵⁶ There is little faith in the foundations that are meant for guarantee the rights a state provides for its citizens. However, the disillusion is not the only alarming thing, the report explains how this also interferes with the states ability to essentially be a state, stating:

según el organismo de estadística, la corrupción amenaza el desarrollo sostenible de los países, de pie a la violación de los derechos humanos, distorsiona los mercados e inhibe la inversión afectado con ello el desarrollo económico. Además este fenómeno trastoca la cohesión social y la efectividad y credibilidad de las instituciones públicas representando una amenaza a la legitimación del Estado.⁵⁷

If the state can no longer guarantee rights, safety, no longer engages in social programs, education efforts, employment, loses its legitimacy, loses its grip over its demarcated domains, can it still be considered a state? México is a narcoestado. It not longer operates to guarantee anything for its citizens; it has shifted in favor of organized crime. However, what re the implications of a failed state among Mexican citizens?

⁵⁶ Juan Carlos Cruz Vargas, "Policías y políticos, los más corruptos para los mexicanos: Inegi." (*Proceso*, 2015)

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Crime and violence have been left unaddressed by the *narcoestado*. In a recent news article published by *Zeta* newspaper J. Jesús Blancornelas describes how daily murder has become a characteristic of Tijuana. Through phrases “ya nisiquiera nos sorprende” and “una ejecución más del narco” he constructs violence as a ubiquitous part of Mexican life. Although it is true that violence and murder are omnipresent forces in México, it seems unfair and dangerous to say all of Mexicans have become accustomed and accepted the violence produced by the *narcoestado*, or that people’s loyalties lie with narco-traffickers in order to avoid violence. Even when Mexicans are often referenced and portrayed by mainstream media such as Televisa, Narcocorridos, and Narcotelenovelas as glorifying narcos, there are misrepresentations of the complicated relationship Mexicans have with narcos-traffickers. It seems like Mexican responses to the narco-state are of hopelessness or glorification; however, this erases the social movements and resistance that have been evident in Mexico. It minimizes the work of journalist who despite deadly risk write fearlessly about the country’s corruption, or the teachers and students who have filled the streets in protest demanding justice for their classmates, and even by the grieving parents that have also taken the streets in search of their children.

Under a *narcoestado* the state loses its ability to protect its citizens and guarantee their security. Ayotzinapa brought to light the ways in which the state has been complicit in creating and maintaining violence, but more importantly it became an example of state’s inability to provide safety for the members, especially those associated with political activism or any political organization such as young people, journalist, and movement leaders.

México is among the most dangerous countries to be a journalist with what it seems to be an unlimited number of journalist that have been murder for their coverage of organized crime, political corruption and narco-state relationships.⁵⁸ Activist and social leaders who have an active voice against the injustice of the *narcoestado* are often silenced with death or disappearance, as was the case of Ayotzinapa. Journalist have the same experience. One recent example of the violence journalist face for their coverage of organized crime is the case of Miroslava Breach, a journalist who had 20 years reporting for *La Jornada* in the state of Chihuahua. On March 23 of this year, she was shot 8 times outside her home while getting ready to take her children to school.⁵⁹ Breach provides an account of how the *narcoestado* has failed to protect its citizens and their rights. Her colleagues quickly linked her murder to her career as a journalist in the days that followed her death. Evidence found at the scene of her death confirmed a linked between her work and her death as a folder was left behind with the words “*por lengua larga*”⁶⁰ written on it. *Lengua larga* translates to lose tonged or big mouth, perhaps in reference of her coverage of clandestine, underground activities such as those of narco-traffickers and narco-políticos like Duarte.⁶¹ What is interesting about Breach’s death is that appears that her position as a journalist has in a way been used to justifying her death. The governor of Chihuahua, Javier Corral has repeatedly mentioned that “*lineas de investigacion*” that lead to her work as a journalist. And although, there are aspects of the violence against journalist that should not be

⁵⁸ "Mexico: Fear in the Newsroom." (Article 19, 2016).

⁵⁹ "El día del crimen, tres hombres acechaban a Miroslava Breach." Castillo Garcia, Gustavo. (La Jornada, 2017)

⁶⁰ "Miroslava Breach muere acribillada." Castillo Garcia, Gustavo, and Ruben Villalpando. (La Jornada, 2017)

⁶¹ "El día del crimen, tres hombres acechaban a Miroslava Breach." Castillo Garcia, Gustavo. (La Jornada, 2017)

dismissed, there is something disturbing and telling about how the state is simply unable to protect their journalist and their freedom of press. Corral himself has cited journalism and the right to press an integral and essential part to a democratic state, however, he himself is not able to guarantee these rights and has expressed an inability to control the narco-trafficking in the state.⁶² Corral's continuously has cited Breach's fearless commitment in exposing Chihuahua's *narcoestado* as the reason why she died.⁶³ México's policies seems more concerned on blaming victims than resolving crime. However, Corral himself has stated that his government does not have the capacity to combat the *narcoestado* and guarantee safety for the citizens of Chihuahua.⁶⁴

In a more contained scale, like Ayotzinapa, the death of Breach has also inspired Mexico, by those currently seeking to hold her murders accountable and end impunity against journalist. In the streets of Chihuahua currently here fellow journalist are mobilizing to end the impunity. And even in the states of Guerrero and Chiapas have condemned the government for her death.⁶⁵ Further, since Breach's death, journalist like José Gil Olmos through his own publications makes a clear connection between the *narcoestado* and the inability to guarantee Mexican citizens their basic rights. He explains that Mexican citizens, especially journalist, find themselves in perpetuating danger. They often find themselves at the will of organized crime and state authorities, which sometimes are one indistinguishable, corrupt and lethal entity.⁶⁶ He reiterates that journalist, like all most of Mexican society, have no guarantee to safety on behalf of the

⁶² "Javier Corral y Miroslava Breach." Mancilla, Diana. (Milenio, 2017)

⁶³"El de Miroslava, asesinato narcopolítico: Javier Corral." Delgado, Álvaro. (Proceso, 2017)

⁶⁴ Javier Corral y Miroslava Breach." Mancilla, Diana. (Milenio, 2017)

⁶⁵ "Protestan en Guerrero y Chiapas por asesinato de Miroslava Breach." Henríquez, Elio, and Sergio Ocampo. (La Jornada, 2017)

⁶⁶ "El desamparo." Olmos, José Gil. (Proceso, 2017)

state. This forces Olmos to denounce the Mexican state as a failed state for failing to complete its principal functions of granting safety to its citizens.⁶⁷ Giving yet another characteristic to a *narcoestado*. The countless accounts of murdered journalist and civilians have proven his words true. Under the *narcoestado* the state has in fact lost the ability to protect its citizens. Perhaps Olmos most impactful words are in regards to the *inseguridad* a failed state creates:

Mientras tanto la mayor parte de la ciudadanía sobrevive esta guerra no convencional tomando sus propias medidas de seguridad, organizando la autodefensa y la autoprotección de acuerdo con las circunstancias de cada grupo social o cada periodista.⁶⁸

When the state fails to secure the rights of its citizens it loses the social bonds that binds people under a national identity, and has led many to opt for self-governance, as Olmos has pointed out. The inability of the state to protect its citizens generated an attitude of *ya basta*.⁶⁹ It seems like cases like Ayotzinapa and the death of Breach, inspired those who have lost faith and trust in the state to organize and become their own government, rule of law and authority. México has some complex examples of this, like the creation of autonomous communities mostly located in southern states with a history of violence like Guerrero and Michoacán. These *autodefensas* provide further example of how the failed state has reshaped the way Mexican citizens negotiate their livelihoods with a failed state.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ translation: enough!

Chapter 2

Ellos quisieron enterrarnos,
no sabían que éramos semillas.
No supieron que floreceríamos,
en el lodo, en el dolor, en 30 días.

Nos quemaron con fuego ajeno.
No sabían que no se apagaría.
No supieron que lo que encendían
eran conciencias en un despertar pleno.

Ayotzinapa exposed the corruption and collusion between the Mexican state and narco-traffickers. The previous chapter addressed evidence that further exposed a *narcoestado*. Operating under this new state, the Mexican government subsequently also lost its ability to guarantee the rights of its citizens. The protest and resistance that has sprouted from this disenfranchisement has inspired this current chapter, which seeks to reveal the relationship between a failed state and emerging rebellions such as *autodefensas*.⁷⁰ It intends to connect social unrest to the repression and violence that the drug war has enabled. In a way Ayotzinapa also uncovered the dialectic relationship between a failed state and organizing, mobilizing, and self-defense. The movements that have emerged in response to the impunity of the *narcoestado* are important to record since they provide a narrative of how violence has reshaped Mexican democracy and citizenship. In addition they provide example of how citizens have begun to negotiate their rights under a *narcoestado*.

However, the resistance that is currently sprouting in states such as Michoacán and Guerrero have been repeatedly dismissed and delegitimized by the government and

⁷⁰ Translation: self-defence groups

mainstream media. In a similar way to narco-trafficking, these social movements seek to fill the gaps the state has left behind. They provide an alternative to the civic society, which presents as a threat to the state's hegemony and sovereignty. And although, the argument being made is that México is a narco-state and subsequently a failed state, it is still the dominating institution. The state has resilience, the political wisdom to divide and integrate citizens, and it has the institutional power to dismantle this emerging resistance. Nevertheless, the social unrest that fuels these rebellions continues to be a beacon of hope in a country engulfed by extreme violence.

These movements are constantly slandered by the state, branding them as terrorist organizations and comparing them to *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), which are often referenced as terrorist as well. Although there are possibilities of these movements turning violent as well, journalist such as José Gil Olmos insist that México's historical context has shaped the purpose of these movements differently. In places such as Michoacán and Guerrero an indigenous past has familiarized residents with resistance against the state. In these areas there was organizing and mobilization long before there ever was a declared drug war. This relationship with resistance could, ultimately be a deterring factor. Olmos also adds that unlike Colombia these movements are born out of a need to protect from the *narcoestado*. The AUC has a different history, it was born out of the need of and funded by elites, politicians and military to counter the guerilla.⁷¹ *Autodefensa* movements in México, in contrast, are organic responses to a failed state. They are often dismissed as terrorist because they ultimately intimidate a weakened state.

⁷¹ "Policías comunitarios y grupos de autodefensa." Olmos, José Gil. (Proceso, 2013)

The *autodefensas* that flourished in the state of Michoacán, provide examples of how the state quells threatening uprisings. Further, these social movements provide a reference to the way the state has divided, coopted, and repressed these responses. Regardless state intervention, the combination of violence and poverty seems to create the ideal conditions for social uprisings. Michoacán is among the poorest states in México and is often cited as one of the most violent states as well.⁷² Furthermore, it has been forgotten and neglected under neoliberalism. It is no wonder that Michoacán has been distinguished for its *autodefensa* rebellions. In February of 2013 Michoacán saw the emergence of *autodefensas* in Tepelcatepec and later Apatzingán under the leadership of Surgeon José Manuel Mireles. The social unrest stirred up by narco violence and discontent with the government has been able to produce such resistance. Mireles' movements surfaced due to abuse, extortions, kidnappings, murders and countless atrocities that became ubiquitous under the rule of Los Caballeros Tempalarios, the dominating cartel in the region. In an interview with Olmos, Mireles explains the bravery motivating his comrades: "Fueron más de 12 años de sufrir en carne propia los secuestro, las ejecuciones y descuartizamientos en la familia de mi esposa; todo eso afecta hasta que llega un momento que dices '¡ya no!'"⁷³ The movement began by expelling known members of Los Caballeros Templarios from their town. The emerging *autodefensa* proceeded to expand to 6 of the neighboring municipalities in hopes of one day expanding enough to free all of Michoacán from the reign of narco-traffickers.

⁷² find source

⁷³ "Sólo el pueblo puede defender al pueblo." Olmos, José Gil. (*Proceso*, 2013), 6.

The *autodefensa* rebellion became motivated by self-resiliency and self-defense. When the state tried to intervene civilians that formed a part of the movement also ousted the military and police.⁷⁴ The members of the *autodefensa* recognized that narcos and authorities coexisted under the same oppressive apparatus. However, the threatened state persisted in dismantling and repressing this rebellion. President Enrique Peña Nieto and his administration condemned the uprising and insisted that it was the state's responsibility to guarantee safety.⁷⁵ The government of Michoacán demanded that the members of the rebellion register to the Cuerpo de Policía Rural. However when first formed the rebellion did not believe or trust in these institutions. Nonetheless as their movement became weakend by the state, some leaders of the movement such as Estanislao "Papá Pitufo" Beltrán integrate with the same institutions they fought against. The movement became corrupt and failed to keep united. Eventually Mireles' leadership was weakened. At the moment Mireles is in a maximum-security prison in Sonora.⁷⁶ In the end the state was successful in dividing and absorbing this particular rebellion. However, the civilian efforts that sprouted in Tepelcatepec and Apatzingán have been contagious for the rest of the state of Michoacán. In 2014 the Centro Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CNDH) reported that *autodefensas* now have presence in 33 of the 113 municipalities of Michoacán.⁷⁷ These uprisings have nurtured resistance and alternative models for combating the impunity and violence facilitated by the narco-

⁷⁴ *Cartel Land*. Matthew Heineman. Los Angeles: 2016

⁷⁵ "El Estado "no puede ser permisivo con las autodefensas", dice Peña Nieto." *Expansión*. Accessed April 20, 2017. <http://expansion.mx/nacional/2014/01/23/pena-nieto-pide-que-las-autodefensas-se-ajusten-a-la-ley-en-michoacan>.

⁷⁶ *ibid*.

⁷⁷ "Advierten que hay más de 350 autodefensas michoacanos que siguen detenidos." *Redacción* (Proceso, 2016)

state. It has also given disenfranchised civilians leverage to protect their right and own lives. They have gathered momentum to say, in Mireles words, enough is enough.

The rebellions in Michoacán have also inspired many others to resist the injustices of the *narcoestado*. Guerrero is a state with similar demographics and some of the same circumstances as Michoacán. It is also among the poorest states in Mexico with a highly indigenous and afro-Mexican population. Guerrero has been neglected under neoliberal reform. The poverty that struck the state in the 1990s has allowed its population to maintain a relationship with resistance and mobilization. As early as 1995 Guerrero has recorded the activity of *policías comunitarias*. However, *autodefensa* groups, were not introduced until in 2011 with the emergence of Union de Pueblos y Organizaciones del Estado de Guerrero (UPOEG).⁷⁸ Similarly to Michoacán, UPOEG was created as a response to the poverty and marginalization of indigenous peoples and afro-Mexicans. The *autodefensa* claims a lack of basic infrastructure, education, health care, access to justice, public security, food and employment.⁷⁹ As a reason fueling their resistance they also emphasized existing security institutions such as police as corrupt and untrustworthy.⁸⁰ It seems that in Guerrero, social movements have also tapped into the discontent brought by neoliberalism and a *narcoestado* in order to mobilize. In a document released from la Secretaría General de Gobierno from the state of Guerrero, Marco A. Carmona Ortiz, shares a little more on the reasons why *autodefensas* have emerged in the state of Guerrero. He, like many others, references “la inseguridad,”⁸¹

⁷⁸ "La UPOEG y Autodefensa Ciudadana." Garcia Gonzalez, Ramon, and Julio Leocadio Castro. (La Jornada del Campo, 2013)

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Romero Gallardo, Raúl. "La Policia Comunitaria de Guerrero." Romero Gallardo, Raúl. (*Revista Digital Universitaria*, 2014).

⁸¹ Translation: instability often is a reference to the omnipresent violence and fear of the drug war.

violence, and a decomposition of the state. He also sights the corruption of the state as part of this logic. He writes:

las elites gobernantes de México han perdido capacidad para ejercer la dirección política de la sociedad y garantizar gobernabilidad y seguridad, funciones básicas del Estado. Han terminado por ser, en muchos casos, parte orgánica de los grupos delincuenciales y de la economía criminal; ello los incapacita para reconocer y representar el interés general.

Although his words are useful in efforts to legitimize *autodefensa* groups in Guerrero, they also exposed the way the state has failed to provide basic rights for its citizens. With Carmona Ortiz's testimony it becomes more and more apparent the links between social unrest and the state's incapacities. However, the state's resiliency is persistent. The state government is constantly seeking to dismantle these rebellions.

However, Carmona Ortiz argues that the conditions for *autodefensas* are appearing more and more common in other areas of the country. His words deserve to be quoted at length:

Si bien el fenómeno aún no se generaliza, las manifestaciones de inseguridad muestran que la debilidad institucionalidad y la fragmentación del poder que hicieron de Guerrero paradigma de violencia y atraso en el contexto nacional, se extienden a otras partes del país en lugar de ser rezagos que muestren indicios de desaparición. Muy por el contrario, podemos decir que el país se está "michoacanizando."⁸²

This analysis seems to resonate immensely with the political action that is sprouting and flourishing across the country. It seems that the omnipresent violence and impunity in

⁸² Marco A. Carmona Ortiz México. Estado de Guerrero 2015-2021. Secretaría General de Gobierno. *La Policía Comunitaria de Guerrero y los Grupos de Autodefensas*. .

México has produced these rebellions. Furthermore, these rebellions are becoming signifiers of Mexican agency under a *narcoestado*.

Mobilization efforts have also been recorded in other states deeply affected by the violence of the drug war. In northern state of Tamaulipas *autodefensa* groups began to sprout on March 28 2010 identifying as Columna Armada Pedro J Méndez (CAPJM) in the municipalities of Hidalgo, Mainero y Villagrán. Members of this community were said to be motivated by the hurt and pain the kidnappings, extortion, quotas, killings and disappearances persisted for years.⁸³ Six years after their uprising, members of these communities assure the news source Milenio, that narco-induced violence has been reduced.⁸⁴ Additionally in n Matamoros civilians have used the *autodefensas* as threats to the Gulf Cartel. However, the governor of Tamaulipas has repeatedly denied the existence of any *autodefensas*. Further, in an attempt to equate them to groups such as the AUC, *autodefensa* in Tamaulipas are often portrayed as being manipulated by narco-traffickers or of collaborating with either the Gulf Cartel or Zetas Cartel. These mainstream representations of *autodefensas* are another way the state dismantles and delegitimize resistance. However the mobilization undergoing in Tamaulipas is a clear response to lack of institutional security.

Jalisco has also seen the emergence of *autodefensa* groups. Journalist Alberto Osorio traces the emergence of *autodefensas* in Jalisco to the municipality of Jilotlan de los Dolores in 2013. He also argues that the appearance of these groups has been motivated by violence and lack of institutional security.⁸⁵ His colleague Gloria Reza also argues the emergence of *autodefensas* to be due to a need for citizens to protect

⁸³"Autodefensas tamaulipecos afirman haberse librado del acoso de cárteles." (La Jornada, 2016)

⁸⁴ "Autodefensas impiden secuestros en Tamaulipas." González, Víctor. (Milenio, 2016)

⁸⁵ "En Jalisco se gestan autodefensas." Osorio, Alberto (Proceso, 2014)

themselves against the rain of terror of cartels such as Los Caballeros Templarios, La Familia Michoacana, and Cartel de Jalisco Nueva Generación.⁸⁶ However, in Jalisco, similarly to Tamaulipas, the government has refused to recognize the presence of these community organizers and in cases where they do they criminalize them. Jalisco's governor Jorge Aristóteles Sandoval is adamant in denouncing their existence stating:

Se tuvo hace un tiempo una plática con uno de los líderes –no dijo cuál–, en la cual el fiscal del estado (Luis Carlos Nájera) les dejó claro que aunque fuera ruta de paso no se iban a permitir estos grupos e iba a haber detenciones, por eso Jalisco no ha tenido ese problema⁸⁷

Although Sandoval claims there is no need to worry about vigilantly justice, he also provides an example of how the state is willing to repress and dismantle any sort of threat. However, it is a bit comical for the state to rely on the failed institutions—such as security apparatuses—that have facilitated for the emergence of *autodefensas*. In addition, it is a bit surprising to see the state act with such follow-through and commitment to maintain safety when their inability to do so in the first place forced civilians to become militant. Despite efforts to contain their existence, *autodefensas* continue to be a signifier of an absent and violent state.

While disenfranchised citizens in mainly southern states have used *autodefensas* to regain their rights, Sinaloa residents provide an example of how citizens have used the idea of an *autodefensa* to negotiate with the state. In 2014, the municipality of Santa Rosa demanded for the government to reduce violence or else they would turn to Michoacán *autodefensa* leaders for support and guide them in

⁸⁶ "Tierra Caliente, tierra de nadie." M., Gloria Reza. (Proceso, 2016)

⁸⁷ "En Jalisco se gestan autodefensas." Osorio, Alberto (Proceso, 2014)

adopting their own model of self-governance.⁸⁸ The government's response to this threat has been unclear. However, it is important to note that there is emerging counter-culture to drug trafficking in a state that is often portrayed as the birthplace of drug trafficking and the sanctuary of drug lords. This type of mobilization is key in understanding the resistance sprouting across the *narcoestado*. Further, this evidence provides significant commentary on how *autodefensas* are being used as a way to negotiate with the state. *Autodefensas* are a way of for normal citizens to supplement the voids of the *narcoestado*, while also becoming a tool to intimidate the state into completing its duties.

Although it may seem that the state repress any threat autonomous community is of Cherán, Michoacán provides some hope. After years of frustration, terror and violence under the narcoestado on April 15 2011, the women of this community said “ni un partido mas” and proceeded to kick out all political parties out of their community. For years the state had failed in protecting the rights of indigenous peoples and the rights of the their land. When 20,000 of the 27,000 hectarias were deforested the Cherán community mobilized to protect the land and themselves from illegal-loggers under the protection of narco-traffickers like La Familia Michoacan and Los Caballeros Templarios. Since their uprising in 2011 Cherán has become the reference of what an autonomous community can look like. Further it is an example of how civilians have successfully filled the gaps the failed state has left behind through their use of *ronda* leadership and *fogata* safety enforcement. Their indigenous identity and purépecha language have allow them to resist the state's efforts to divide repress and absorb. Their

⁸⁸ "Hartos de la violencia, civiles amagan con crear autodefensas en Sinaloa." (Proceso, 2014)

collective identity has also helped Cherán maintained them united and from becoming corrupt itself. Under this guise they have also been able to keep the federal government from reentering their community. Leverage that other autodefensa groups don't have. In fact, another arguably successful *autodefensa* uprising has been the Ejercito Zapatista por Liberación Nacional (EZLN) in 1994 in Chiapas who also used indignity as a platform for organizing. In both cases these indigenous communities abandoned by the state suffering from narco and police brutality mobilized to provide themselves and alternative: self governance. These communities also provide evidence of how identity and rebellions are used to negotiate citizenship. Furthermore, they provide an example of how indigenous sovereignty can be used against the narcoestado.

Although there have been ebbs and flow for all these emerging groups, they leave a lot of room for possibilities and prospects. Despite constantly being criminalized and often portrayed as dangerous by mainstream media, these rebellions provide a responses to the failed state. The creation of *autodefensas* delegitimizes the state and confirms a *narcoestado*. Further, because they in a way replace the state their existence also challenges the state's hold on power and hegemony. They are also symbol of resistance, and perhaps a foreshadow of revolution. Under the terror of the *narcoestado* Doctor Mireles provides some familiar words: "lo que hicimos fue ponernos de acuerdo de elegir la forma en que queremos morir. Todos coincidemos en una sola: morir luchando, no como animalitos en una rastro, no como borregos atados de mies y manos"⁸⁹ Perhaps it's time for some change.

⁸⁹ "Sólo el pueblo puede defender al pueblo." Olmos, José Gil. (*Proceso*, 2013), 7.

Conclusion

Neoliberal reform is largely responsible for the creation of a *narcoestado*. It required that the Mexican state abandon its previous cultural projects such as education, employment, and social services, augmenting an economic void. Narco-traffickers have increasingly filled this vacuum. Arguably, the weakened pillars of Mexican society allowed narco-trafficking to penetrate the areas once fulfilled by the state. It has led to the recruitment of economically dislocated farmers and citizens to turn to narco-trafficking for financial stability. However, why is it that poor farmers, who use to grow corn, consider narco-trafficking to be their next option? Furthermore, why is it that this vacuum leads to violence? Although, the state and narco-traffickers at times compete with each other to fulfill some of these functions, they also at times co-exist and merge into what has been referred to as *narcoestado*. This metamorphosis between the state and narco-traffickers has been responsible for the increasing impunity of violence and crime in México. It is also a factor in the continuous disenfranchisement of the rights Mexican citizens. The *narcoestado* has allowed for the violence to penetrate daily life it has even silenced citizens those who oppose or challenge it.

The ubiquitous violence and fear have altered the ways Mexicans negotiate their rights. It has led to many resistance efforts and organizing across the country with the most notable example of *autodefesas*. Additionally, the *narcoestado* has created the conditions in which a possible revolution can occur. Arguably, another emerging response to the *narcoestado* has been a shift to the left. The growing discontent and distrust of the traditional parties, PRI, PAN and PRD have created a political opening

for the left. In an article for the news magazine NACLA, author, John Ackerman suggest that anti-establishment politics and political discontent could possibly mean a victory for Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) and his emerging party Movimiento Regeneración Nacional (MORENA).⁹⁰ Although AMLO once belong to the PRD, divisions between the party caused AMLO and other party member to separate and create MORENA. AMLO's anti-establishment politics and reputation can potentially tap into the growing discontent generated under the *narcoestado*. AMLO's provide some hope in reforming the narco-state. However, Pomona College professor Miguel Tinker Salas suggest that in order dismantled Mexico's corruption and impunity a citizen's revolution has to occur.⁹¹ I argue that the existing violence and impunity will create the conditions for that citizen's revolution. After all México has nothing to lose but it's chains.

⁹⁰ John Ackerman, "Mexico: Ending the Neoliberal Nightmare?" (NACLA, 2016)

⁹¹ Miguel Tinker-Salas, "Looking for a Left Turn in Mexico." (NACLA, 2017)

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