The background of the entire slide is a close-up, slightly blurred image of the Mexican flag, showing the green, white, and red vertical stripes.

**OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES EXPLAINING THE
INTENSIFICATION OF DRUG-RELATED
VIOLENCE IN MEXICO:
AN ANALYSIS OF LOS ZETAS, SINALOA FEDERATION, AND
LA FAMILIA MICHACOANA/ THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR
FROM 2006-2012**

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**Onderzoeksseminar III
Ariel Sánchez Meertens
3 February 2014**

Total amount of words: 10,222



Universiteit Utrecht

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Abbreviations

- DTO: Drug Trafficking Organization
- LFM: La Familia Michacoana
- TKT: The Knights Templar
- SF: Sinaloa Federation
- DEA: Drug Enforcement Administration
- OCG: Organized Crime Group
- USA: United States of America

Spanish and Drug Trafficking Organization Terms

- *Decapitado*: decapitation.
- *Descuartizado*: quartering of a body.
- *Encajuelado*: put body in car trunk.
- *Encobijado*: body wrapped in a blanket.
- *Entambado*: body put in drum.
- *Enteipado*: eyes and mouth of corpse taped shut.
- *Pozoleado* (also: *Guisado*): body in acid bath, looks like Mexican stew.
- *Narcomanta*: or *narco mensaje*: banner placed next to a corpse with a drug-trafficking organization-related message on it.
- *Plaza*: Smaller parts of the territory that DTO's control, in order to make different members of a drug-trafficking organization responsible for different areas.

Introduction

In recent years, the problem of crime and violence in Mexico has been a major preoccupation of policy makers, journalists and the local population. Headlines such as 'Mass grave found near Mexico City' (Aljazeera 2013) seem to have become a day-to-day business and fashionable among journalists and politicians. The ongoing violence has led to the release of warnings by governments, citizens, and international organizations. In particular the death-toll of drug-related violence has risen to extreme proportions, with drug trafficking organizations (DTO's) causing casualties among themselves, citizens, and government officials or journalists. According to the annual report of the Trans-Border-Institute, Mexico's homicide rate rose from 8,867 in 2007 to 27,199 in 2011, an annual increase of 24 per cent (Molzahn, Rodriquez and Shirk 2013:1).

The high death-toll in combination with the gruesomeness of the murders, has increased the attention given to the conflict. Many scholars have attempted to explain the huge amount of violence. Some scholars' analyses focused on the notion of state failure, while others searched for an answer by looking at the social and economic context. Barberis (2011:10) states that scholars still have not reached a consensus on the situation in Mexico and her possible solution.

Instead of focusing on one particular part of the conflict or context, this essay will try to provide an analysis that takes multiple angles of the conflict into account. By using the notion of opportunity structures, actions of DTO's are analyzed and placed into an ideological, social, and discursive environment. With this analysis, this essay hopes to provide a new insight to the ongoing debate, and contributes to a consensus.

Why is it important to focus on the opportunity structures in which the DTO's move and handle? First of all, in order to stop the intensification of violence, policy makers should look at the DTO's opportunities and how these are used by the organizations. Instead of stopping the transportation and smuggling of drugs, counter policies need to focus on how to take away the opportunities that strengthen and empower DTO's.

The above described intensification of violence is remarkable, since a strategy that is claimed to be important among insurgents involves 'winning

hearts and minds' (Kalyvas 2006:94). This strategy entails the delivering of public goods, like education, health care or justice in order to exist and expand "legitimately" as an insurgency. In other words, in order to exist, the local population needs to understand and approve your existence next to, or instead of, the legitimate government. By providing certain public goods, an insurgent can persuade the population for collaboration or support. Kalyvas does mention that violence plays a role, since collaboration often goes hand-in-hand with control through violence (2006:94). However, the *intensification* of such violence stays illogical, as increasing violence is unnecessary for the insurgency if it already employs the strategy of winning hearts and minds.

Giving the fact insurgents need the support of local populations, I wonder why DTO's in Mexico have stepped away from the 'winning hearts and minds strategy' and increased their use of violence. What opportunities have arisen that cause a strategy shift towards the use of more violence? In order to find this out, I pose the following central question: *how do opportunity structures explain the strategic reframing and intensification of violence by the Sinaloa federation, Los Zetas and La Familia Michacoana/The Knights Templar from 2006 till 2012 in Mexico?*

The 'opportunity structure' is an often-used concept in literature on collective action theory (Oberschall 2004:27). An important principle, upon which this research bases its structure, is that collective action either happens or is hindered within a larger frame of discursive, social and political opportunities. By identifying these opportunities, this research hopes to give an answer to the central question of this essay.

In order to answer the central research question, this essay is divided in five chapters. The first chapter will give a short overview of the methodology and some concerns and difficulties that arose during this research. Chapter two will give a small introduction of DTO's in general, and the three DTO's which will be compared throughout this research. The third chapter focuses on the context of violence in Mexico: what is the actual intensification of violence and how can the dynamic and logic of violence help identify possible opportunity structures? The fourth chapter will discuss the actual opportunity structures, while in the fifth and last chapter a conclusion and suggestions for further research will be given.

1 Methodology

This essay draws upon literature written in the field of opportunity structures and collective action. For this research I have used different sources I found using the Utrecht University Database and the Google Scholar Search Engine. The literature can be organized in six different categories: academic articles, books, reports, working papers, videos and news items. Resources served three different purposes: the first purpose is the reframing of theories into a tool to break up the research puzzle into its constituent parts. The second purpose of the resources is to extract (raw) empirical data and statistics, while the third and last purpose is the extraction of certain described events which could serve as an illustrative example. One resource could serve multiple purposes.

There are multiple reasons explaining the choice for the comparison between the three different DTO's *Los Zetas*, *La Familia Michacoana*/The Knights Templar and the Sinaloa federation. Firstly, all three DTO's have a significant amount of territory they 'possess' and are large enough to make a difference in, for instance, battles over certain drug trafficking routes, contested *plazas* or the increase of violence. In 2006, all three were direct or indirect as an armed wing of a DTO categorized of one of the 'big five', the five largest DTO's of Mexico (Hope 2013:4-5).

Secondly, the three chosen DTO's all have very different backgrounds and changing structures during the timespan. The differences in how they emerge, what their ideology is and how this influences their day-to-day business, was useful to me. The DTO's might differently react to certain opportunity structures, which could be beneficial for the analysis. The third reason is very practical - being one of the 'big five', the amount of written literature is considerably higher on these DTO's than on other smaller DTO's.

The timeframe is chosen from 2006-2012. This timeframe is chosen because it takes multiple changes into account. Firstly, the increase of violence occurred in approximately 2007/2008. In order to see what the trigger for this increase was, I have chosen to take a point in history earlier than this increase, so that I may include the trigger of the spark in violence. I chose the year 2006 because it included the complete lead-up for the 2006 election and it also marked the beginning of President Calderón's term.

2 Mexico's drug trafficking organizations

Mexico's history with DTO's could be described as disturbed and enduring: for more than a century, Mexico has dealt with DTO's and the violence and social disturbance that have come with it (Beittel 2013:6). In other words, one could say that Mexican DTO's have succeeded in their existence for a long time, while the Mexican government and other foreign organizations have had less success in managing the scope of the problem. For this essay, however, not a century, but the timespan of six years from 2006 until 2012 will be relevant. Therefore, this section will further concentrate on the Mexican DTO's history from 2006 until 2012.

Mexican DTO's have caused a large amount of violence of all sorts and kinds. As mentioned in the introduction, the absolute number of murders and criminality has increased since 2006, as well as the intensity and extremity of the committed crimes. Examples of these extreme criminal activities are beheadings, public hanging of corpses, torture and even car bombs (Beittel 2013:1). Beittel states in his report for Congressional Research Service 'Mexico's Drug Trafficking Organizations: Source and Scope of the Violence' that since the inauguration of President Felipe Calderón estimates of organized-crime-related killings vary from 47,000 to 65,000. The Trans-Border Institute, which bases its statistics on numbers from the Mexican government and Mexican newspapers, stated that the total number of homicides during Calderón's term lies between 120,000 and 125,000 (Molzahn, Rodriquez and Shirk 2013:13).

These numbers led many scholars to ask the question if the conflict between the DTO's and the government can officially be recognized as an armed conflict. Even though no consensus has been reached yet, I believe it should be recognized and treated as an armed conflict as the death-toll is of an extreme proportion. While this discussion lasts, the conflict is still raging on.

When officially naming the conflict an armed conflict, one should ask how we see and define DTO's. It can be looked at from a social science perspective, a criminological perspective or even from an economic perspective. Scholar Rodrigo Canales in his Ted talk 'The Deadly Genius of Drug Cartels' has an interesting perspective on the definition of DTO's. Canales argues that DTO's may have nothing to do with us, referring to the West and especially the United

States (USA). However, he states that looking further into the DTOs distribution processes, makes it clear that 'we' are all complicit to the drug-related violence. According to Canales, the numbers of 120,000 deaths in the carnage of Mexico is not about faceless and ignorant Mexican people who probably all will be involved in drug trafficking. The carnage and gruesome murders is rather the result of serious and sophisticated *brand management*. DTO's should be seen as businesses that – just as any other business – want to guarantee the customer receives the product requested. Rodrigo Canales states: 'the only thing that cartels are doing is protecting their businesses' and thus their income. And they do so with the development of a brand of for instance: fear (TED 2013). Petrou agrees with this vision and states that their primary aspiration is power and money (2008:28). From a business perspective, that needs to be protected.

Recognizing a conflict as an armed conflict, while looking at the actors of the conflict as businesses, may seem controversy. However, here it might be useful to state that DTO's do not make any political claims. Furthermore, they have not expressed any other political aspirations. Therefore, the business model of Canales, with a focus on brand management, is very useful to this research.

Furthermore, in the next chapter, when looking into the dynamics of violence, the perspective of a business provided this research with an interesting new insight on how to choose targets that could function as a possible opportunity structure. Therefore, I have chosen to implement the DTO as a business model in order to explain the intensification of drug-related violence in Mexico.

2.1 Sinaloa Federation

The Sinaloa Federation evolved from the Guadalajara Cartel and is composed of a network of multiple smaller drug trafficking organizations. The core leader is Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán (STRATFOR 2013). In 2008, a few of these organizations broke apart and, then competed with the Sinaloa federation. These factions, the largest one Beltran Leyva Organization (BLO), caused only a minor threat to the Federation. The Sinaloa federation is still claimed to be the largest DTO in terms of territory in Mexico and as well as in terms of their reach. Supposedly, the DTO has substantial presence in around 50 countries (Beittel 2013:12).

2.2 Los Zetas

Los Zetas originated in the late 1990s when a group of Mexican special forces deserted the Mexican army and started on their own after their soon-to-be leader Arturo Guzmán Decena deserted and convinced others to join him. The organization began as an enforcement and protection arm of the Gulf Cartel, and also trained new members (Campbell 2010:56).

When the organizational structure of the Gulf Cartel started to change due to the extradition of their leader *Cárdenas Guillen*, the Zetas started to deploy their services for other DTO's as well. It caused *Los Zetas* to split with the Gulf Cartel and, as an independent DTO, *Los Zetas* turn against them and take over parts of their territory (Lohan 2011:722, Beittel 2013:10, Hope 2013:5).

Besides taking over large parts of territory in Mexico, *Los Zetas* became a transnational organization, aggressively expanding in Mexico and bringing military tactics into the DTO's criminal world. They expanded not only in Mexico, but in other parts of Central America and the USA as well. For this reason, analysts from both the Mexican and the USA government have targeted *Los Zetas* as one of the most dominant drug cartels of this moment (Beittel 2013:10).

2.3 La Familia Michacoana/The Knights Templar

La Familia Michacoana found its origin in the 1980s, ironically enough not as a DTO but as a vigilante group that wanted to eradicate drug use in Mexico, particularly in the state Michacoán (Beittel 2013:17). In 2006, they gained notoriety as a DTO, because of its use of extreme and symbolic violence. The DTO is said to combine strong Christian evangelical beliefs with social and criminal elements in the organization (Beittel 2013:17).

Due to some killings and arrests by the Mexican government, the DTO known as LFM evolved into The Knights Templar (TKT) in 2011 (Beittel 2013:18). Now, the two DTO's are often mentioned in one sentence, however, the two are still in competition, as TKT slowly takes over the older DTO. TKT has copied the LFM's supposed commitment to "social justice" and also diversified its actions to include, torture and extortions (Beittel 2013:18).

3 Context of violence

This chapter aims at identifying the environments from which possible opportunity structures could be derived. It will do so, by exploring the context of violence currently in Mexico. Firstly, the intensification of violence will be researched by answering what intensification of violence exactly took place. Secondly, the dynamics of violence will be looked at and will aim to answer what the DTO's gain from violence. Together, this information can provide us with a political, social, and discursive environment, in which to look for possible features of an opportunity structure.

3.1 Intensification of violence in Mexico

The total amount of drug-related violence and crimes in Mexico has risen since 2007. But how do we define drug-related violence? While terms like drug violence and drug-related homicides are widely spread and used by politicians, journalists and in the popular understanding, no actual consensus or understanding of these terms seems apparent (Justice in Mexico 200?). The absence of such consensus or definition causes methodological concerns that some reports openly express. For instance, in the report of the Trans-Border Institute, the authors emphasize on certain data gaps where all official datasets suffer from, leaving all experts, officials and the local public with an incomplete picture of drug-related violence (Molzahn, Rodriquez and Shirk 2013:11).

Most times, the amount of crime is measured by the total number of homicides, due to the seriousness of the crime. These features are then linked to several features of an organized crime homicide (Molzahn, Rodriquez and Shirk 2013:8). In the report of the Trans-Border Institute, the criteria of both the Mexican government, as well as *Reforma*, a Mexican national newspaper, for drug-related homicides is given (Molzahn, Rodriquez and Shirk 2013:11). These criteria, shown in table 1, focus on how the victim was pursued, murdered, exposed and abandoned. Not all the criteria have to be met in order to be classified as a drug-related homicide.

Mexican Government: "Organized crime Homicides"	Reforma: "Narco-Executions" (Narcoejecuciones)
1. Victim killed by high-caliber or automatic firearm typical of Organized Crime Groups (OCG) (e.g., .50 caliber, AK- & AR-type)	1. Victim killed by high-caliber or automatic firearm typical of OCGs (e.g., .50-caliber, AK- & AR-type)
2. Signs of torture, decapitation, or dismemberment	2. Signs of torture, decapitation, or dismemberment
3. Body was wrapped in blankets (<i>cobijas</i>), taped, or gagged	3. Execution-style and mass-casualty shootings
4. Killed at specific location, or in a vehicle	4. Indicative markings, written messages, or unusual configurations of the body
5. Killed by OCG within penitentiary	5. Presence of large quantities of illicit drugs, cash or weapons
6. Special circumstances (e.g., narco-message (" <i>narcomensaje</i> "); victim alleged OCG member; abducted [<i>levantón</i>], ambushed, or chased)	6. Official reports explicitly indicting involvement in organized crime

TABLE 1: Comparison Criteria for Drug-related Homicides Mexican government and *Reforma* newspaper (Molzahn, Rodriquez and Shirk 2013:11).

In the table, the features of the drug-related homicides differ with every dataset and their author. Therefore, there could be a difference in the interpretation of crimes, causing differences in the actual body count. Due to this, the reliability of the numbers remains questionable and brings about some difficulties for further researching the dataset. The unreliability of the sources has been constant during the 2006-2012 period, therefore, the intensification of violence the dataset shows could still be – with some caution – be used to display the intensification of the violence.

That being said, the actual numbers of the intensification of violence in Mexico are, according to the Trans-Border Institute, worrisome. According to their annual report, Mexico's homicide rate rose from 8,867 in 2007 to 27,199 in 2011, which is an annual increase of 24 per cent (Molzahn, Rodriquez and Shirk 2013:1). In figure 2, the increases of the total amount of drug-related homicides are given. The criteria of the *Reforma* newspaper were used, so these are the numbers according to the national Mexican newspaper.

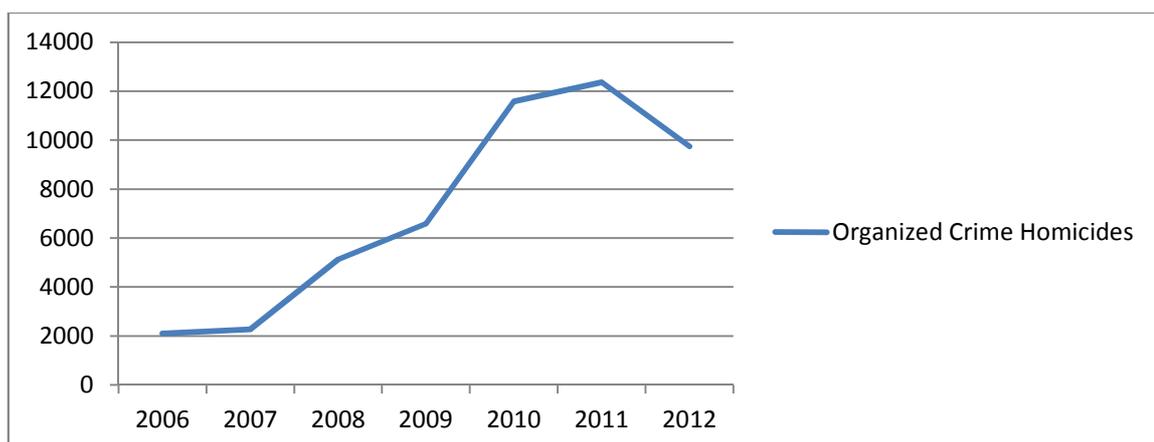


FIGURE 1: Organized Crime Homicides by *Reforma* newspaper 2006-2012. (Molzahn, Rodriquez and Shirk 2013:16).

In figure one, it is shown that since 2007, there is a steadily increase in organized crimes homicides. What is remarkable is that in 2012, for the first time, the total number of organized crime homicides decreased. It is a promising sight and multiple reasons could be given for this. Some name the possibility of DTO violence being at a plateau. Since this research aims at explaining the intensification, this small decrease won't be discussed at length yet. Here, the fact that the amount of organized crime homicides of 2012 is still well above the amount of 2006, is taken into account.

Besides numbers of homicides, *Centro Nacional de Información (SESNSP)* provides us with numbers on kidnappings and extortions. Although these numbers (again) do not fully correspond with only drug-related kidnappings and extortions, it may be useful to notice there is not only an increase in homicides, but also in kidnappings and extortions. Since DTO's are notorious for using kidnappings and extortions to generate some of their income, these numbers provide to some extent an increase of drug-related violence. The data is divided by state, and the states where DTO's are most prominently apparent, are also where a significant portion of the kidnappings and extortions occur. Examples of these states are Sinaloa, Chiapas and the Federal District. In figure two, the number of total kidnappings and extortions from 2006 till 2012 in Mexico is shown.

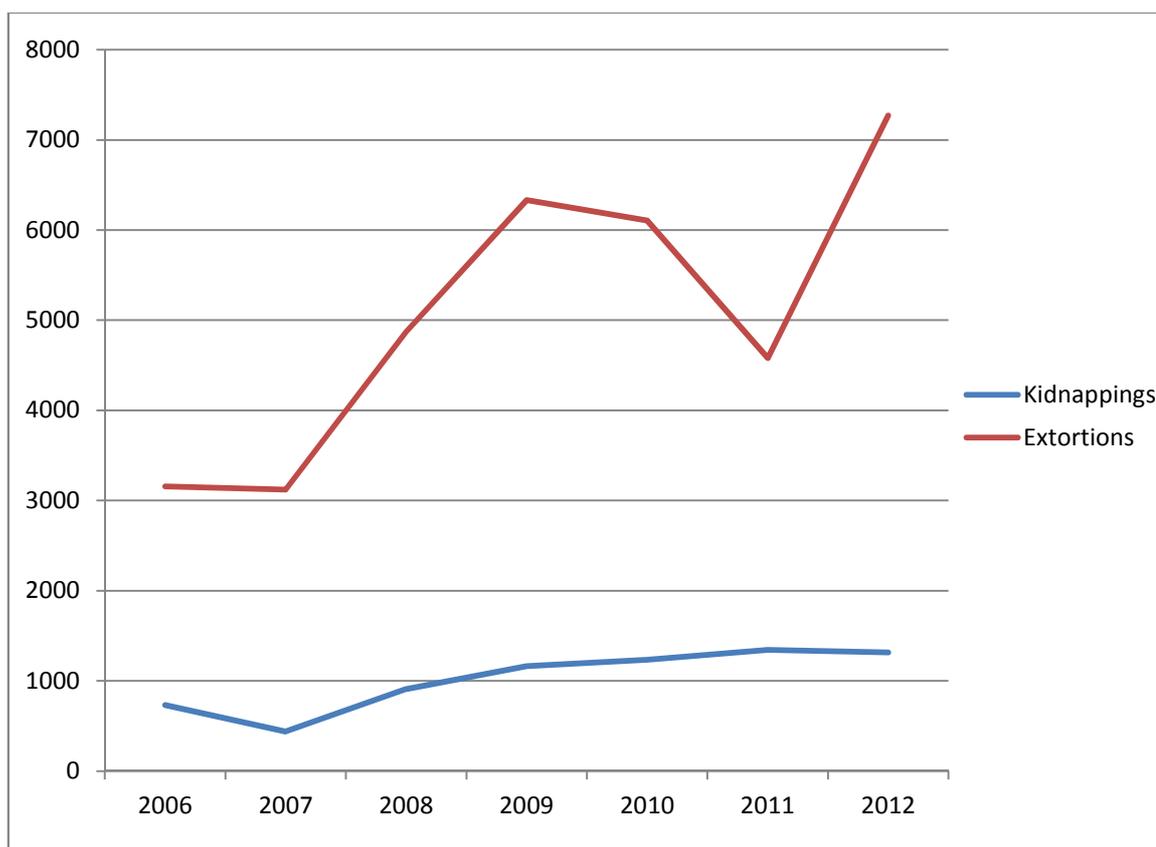


FIGURE 2: Total Amount of Kidnappings and extortions from 2006-2012. (*Centro Nacional de Información (SESNSP) 2013:3-4*).

In Figure two, one can see that both crimes increased. Whereas the amount of extortions has more than doubled, it does not have a line that steadily increases. The amount of kidnappings almost doubled, and have increased steadily since 2007. Both the numbers of these crimes have thus increased, and are a possible indicator of the intensification of violence used by Mexican DTO's.

In the next section, the dynamics of violence will be further explored, in order to provide a better insight in how these crimes are useful to the DTO's.

3.2 Dynamics of violence

According to Anthony Oberschall, episodes of violence should be seen and analyzed as strategic interactions (2004:28). Oberschall explains terrorism, while using collective action theory. Although this might seem irrelevant for the use of violence by DTO's, I still would like to suggest borrowing some of the strategic interactions, since some of the tactics employed by DTO's, like kidnapping, car bombs and threatening with violence, are partly consistent with terrorist tactics

used by terrorist organization. The framework of strategic interactions of Oberschall is therefore useful to this research.

The strategic interactions are formed by the strategies of the terrorist and the target of the terrorist: a state or politician for example (Oberschall 2004:29). Both strategies are just as important. In the case of DTO's, this means that the DTO itself, as well as the target of the DTO, influences the strategic interaction. Accordingly, the strategy of the target of the DTO could be forming a part of the opportunity structure that is causing the intensification of violence.

In order to find out who DTO's target, the dynamic of violence will be linked to the business perspective of a DTO Rodrigo Canales provided us with (TED 2013). From this business perspective, the first target would be business partners that are in the same branch: other DTO's. They are competitors, who compete for territory and clients. The territory and clients are the ones that bring revenues for the DTO's. Therefore, logically, violence would be used against the competing DTO's, to make sure the business has enough clients.

From a business perspective, it is also important to have safe and quick transport to the client. The lines towards the Mexican-USA border are therefore important, and need to be corrupted or 'made free' from governmental interference. A second target would therefore be the state, since they are the ones that could interfere, arrest or punish the DTO's for their illegal practices. Violence or a threat of violence against state officials would help secure the lines that are being used by the DTO's.

According to Rodrigo Canales, the business perspective provides reasons to look at a certain 'brand management' (TED 2013). How the DTO's are being represented in the media, is therefore another important element for DTO's to control. A third target, therefore, are journalists. Violence or the threat of violence against journalists will help DTO's to manage and control the news. The control of the media will influence reports by journalists and will stimulate a biased perspective in newspapers and broadcasts.

Above target strategy of the DTO's in general provided us with a direction in which we could look for possible opportunity structures. The first target strategy leads us to the dynamic of violence between DTO's. Were there some changes in alliances, which could possibly explain the intensification of violence? The second one focuses on the strategy of the state. Which counter

policy did the Mexican government implement, that could possibly explain the intensification of violence in Mexico? The third target strategy will look at the way journalists and media-support workers have been reporting about the DTO's. Have they been reporting differently and can the media influence the amount of violence because of their reporting?

In the next chapter, these three possible opportunity structures will be further explored.

4 Opportunity Structures

The purpose of this chapter is to further identify the opportunity structures that may explain the strategic reframing and intensification of violence in Mexico. The 'opportunity structure' is an often-used concept in literature on collective action theory. According to Anthony Oberschall, collective action consists of four dimensions: discontent, ideology-feeding grievances, capacity to organize, and the political opportunity (2004:27). This chapter will focus mostly on the latter.

Tilly and Tarrow in their book *Contentious Politics* give a political notion to the term and explain the 'political opportunity structure' as 'the major constraints and incentives for contentious politics' (Tilly and Tarrow 2007:22). Contentious politics aim at changing government policy or make a different political point. The political opportunity structures are processes, events or certain institutional settings that shape and make that policy change possible. Examples of certain opportunity settings are public opinion support, political allies, and a favorable international climate (Oberschall 2002:28).

Used as a tool, the opportunity structure is a way to examine the strategic shift that DTO's have made. The question as to why there is so much violence will not be answered, rather the question of which processes, events and institutional settings made the intensification of violence possible. How is such a strategic shift, which includes a higher level of violence, facilitated?

In the previous chapter, I identified the three different possible opportunity structures I will analyze. Firstly, the allies and alliances of the three mentioned DTO's will be researched. Which changes were apparent that could increase the amount of violence? This is followed by the anti-drug policies of the Mexican government that could possibly explain the strategic reframing and intensification of the violence in Mexico. Thirdly, there will be a focus on the role of journalists and their reporting role. In what way do they play a role in the intensification of violence?

4.1 Shifting Alliances between DTO's

The first feature of the opportunity structure of the intensification of violence used by DTO's, can be found in the alliances that are both internal and external. With internal alliances the relations within a DTO are meant. To external

alliances is referred, when talking about the relationships between Mexican DTO's.

According to the report of the Congressional Research Service, Mexican DTO's are in constant flux (Beittel 2013:9). Before I will continue with the analysis of the external alliances, it might be useful to mention that because of the evolving alliances between the DTO's, every research describing the external alliances can be considered a snapshot. This section therefore, does not aim at the precise description of the current alliances. Rather, it will discuss the larger shifting alliances, in order to find out if this could be considered a plausible explanation for the intensification of the drug-related violence in Mexico.

In this section I first shortly elaborate on the external alliances of *Los Zetas*, Sinaloa federation and LFM/TKT. This is followed by a division of the homicide numbers per district and the analysis of these numbers.

In the first place, *Los Zetas* had an alliance with the Gulf Cartel after the violent split. According to Logan, the DTO's arranged that 'both groups eventually agreed to respect that territorial rights of the other and to notify the leaders of each group if men representing the other planned on passing through controlled territory' (Logan 2011:722). In this way, the 'war tax' or pike would also be paid. Soon, however, became clear that neither of the DTO's kept their words: a violent conflict arose between the two battling DTO's from thereon (Logan 2011:722).

The Sinaloa Federation has had some major changes as well. Especially the alliance with the Gulf Cartel and LFM is worth mentioning. The three DTO's, after the split of *Los Zetas* and the Gulf Cartel, arranged an alliance named '*La Nueva Federación*', the new federation. Together they worked against *Los Zetas* and announced their corporation with *narcomantas* and banners (Logan 2011:723).

As mentioned above and according to the Trans-Border Institute, many of the alliances between DTO's have changed throughout the timespan 2006-2012 (Molzahn, Rodriguez and Shirk 2013:20). In order to make these changes visible, they divided the total amount of homicides per district from 2006-2011. In figure three, these homicides per district per year are shown. In the first place, these figures show the intensification of violence per district. After all, throughout the years, more and more districts have colored darker red. Secondly, one can see the shift of the most intense violent places. These shifts in geographic patterns of

violence focus on the one hand on the distribution of homicides, but on the other hand they might indicate possible contested territory, where certain areas can be marked as a “frontline” between DTO’s.

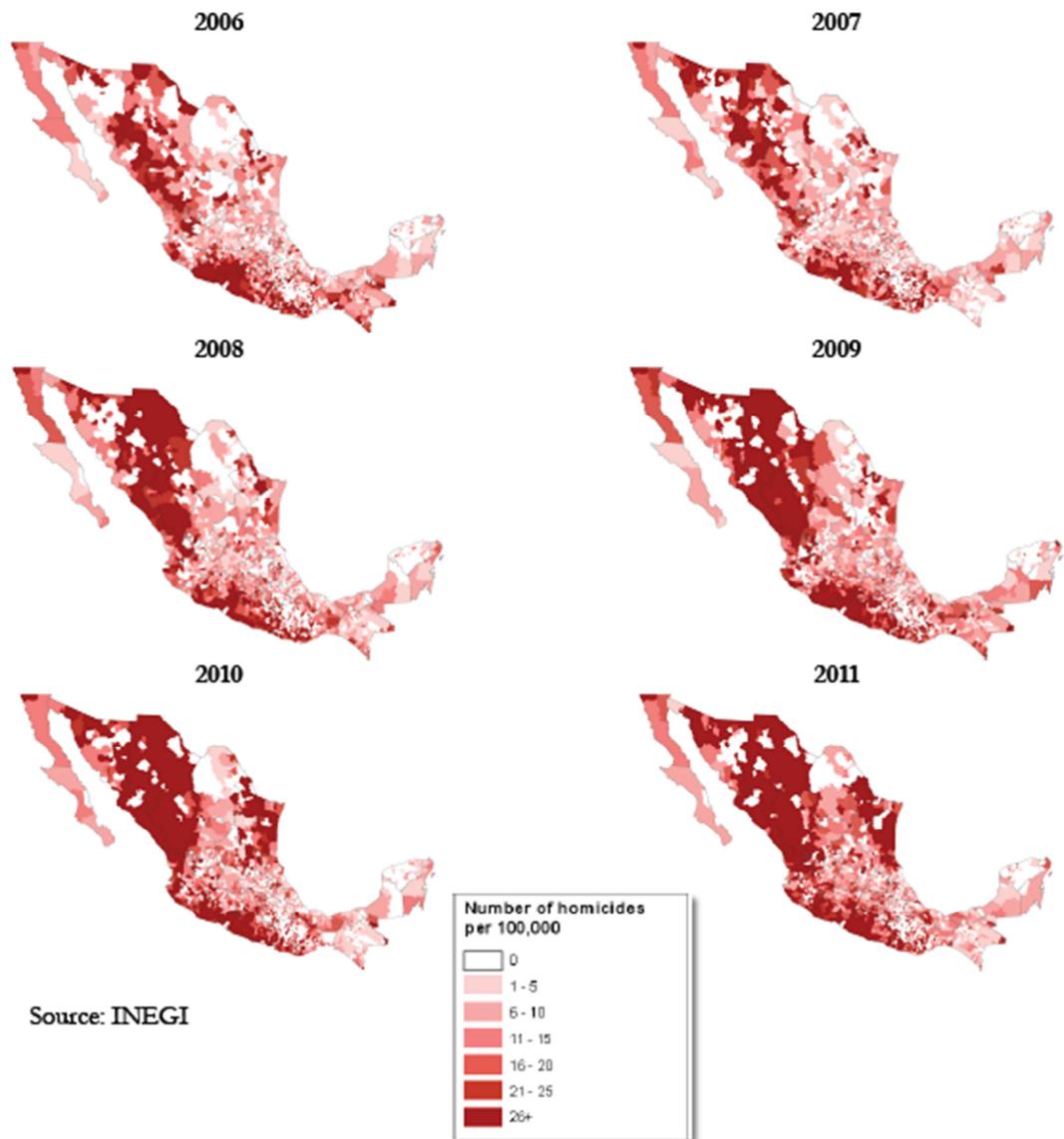


FIGURE 3: Number of homicides per 100,000 persons per Mexican district 2006-2011. (INEGI in Molzahn, Rodriquez and Shirk 2013:21).

In the figures, a shift is shown. Where the northwestern states *Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, and Sinaloa* were responsible for the highest amount of homicides in the first three years 2006, 2007, and 2008, a shift from northwestern towards more northeastern states like Michoacán and Guerrero is visible.

Furthermore, in some northeastern states since 2009 and 2010 a rise in the number of homicides is also noticed (Molzahn, Rodriquez and Shirk 2013:27-28).

Besides the increasing number of homicides in certain districts, there were also some states in which violence has diminished. The question remains however, to which extent the violence has actually diminished or just has moved from one state to another.

The Trans-Border Institute does attribute increases of violence to certain external alliances of DTO's. Few of them stand out: The Trans-Border Institute mentions the falling out between the Gulf Cartel and *Los Zetas* as main responsible for the increase in the northeastern states and the Gulf Coast region, since *Los Zetas* started expanding their territory (Molzahn, Rodriquez and Shirk 2013:27-28). The Sinaloa federation is held responsible for the violence in northwestern Mexico and as well as in north-central parts of Mexico. The competing with some smaller DTO's would have been the reason, according to the authors of the report (Molzahn, Rodriquez and Shirk 2013:27).

However, there are also other reasons that might explain why intensification of violence is located in certain areas. From the business perspective, one could think of the most important drug-trafficking routes that many DTO's would like to control. The violence in certain states that are part of these drug-trafficking routes seems therefore logic: the lines are necessary to get 'the product' to the client. Important routes will always go to the border, so it does not come as a surprise that all the Border States are colored red. These states might just be "unlucky" about their geographical position, and always subject to DTO-violence.

A second reason for the intensification of violence between the DTO's could be a certain escalation factor. According to Bunker, Campbell, and Bunker, the DTO's have an increasing amount of money involved. The authors argue: 'the larger stakes and amounts of involved, the greater the propensity for violence and torture' (Bunker, Campbell and Bunker 2010:145). This means that the relationships between DTO's are getting more important, since there is more money at stake. The amount of violence that is "invested" in competing with other DTO's could therefore also increase, which could lead to, for instance, an arms race and more violence.

4.2 Mexican Anti-Drug Policy

4.2.1 Militarization of the Mexican anti-drug policy

Since 2006, Mexico's government has implemented a number of changes in policies that makes strategic reframing and the intensification of violence possible. The militarization of the anti-drug policy of the Mexican government is the first feature of the opportunity structure that could possibly explain the strategic reframing by the DTO's.

At the end of December 2006, Calderón's term began. This was also the first time he addressed the nation. Calderón promulgated the priorities of his policies by stating: 'One of the three problems that will be a top priority for my government is, precisely, the struggle to recover the public security and the rule of law; the institutions responsible for the public security need profound transformations to make their efficiency increase substantially' (La Jornada 2006). He based this focus in his policy on public opinions and data polls: in 2005, 71 per cent of the people living in urban areas reported feeling insecure, while nine out of ten considered drug trafficking as a real and serious problem (Michaud, 2011). From this point, Calderón therefore decided to handle the DTO's differently.

Calderón's policy differed from the historical (one) party system and law enforcement system that existed for many years and until 2000 under the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* leadership. Instead of opportunities for settlements and arrangements in exchange for political support for the PRI (Michaud 2011), Calderón radically declared the War on Drugs as an anti-drug policy. Because the DTO's had the opportunity to settle arrangements in exchange for political support for the PRI, they could grow and strengthen substantially, while the presidency and state of Mexico lost credibility and got weaker. Declaring the War on Drugs would fight this, and make the Mexican state credible again.

By declaring the War on Drugs, Calderón decided to militarize the anti-drug policy of Mexico. During the PRI administration only police officers were operating on local levels, since the police was divided via the districts instead of a national police force. There was little budget, and police officers were underpaid (Hope 2013:1). Calderón made it a national policy to employ an average of 50,000 military per year. Its peak was in 2011, when there reportedly

were 96,000 troops engaged in Calderón's military-led crackdown on the DTO's (Beittel 2013:33).

The national budget was doubled for the military, while from 2006-2007 the budget for local police officers was quadrupled (Hope 2013:1). Calderón primarily used the military, as trust in the local police forces had vanished. Preceding Calderón's presidency, the percentage of Mexican citizens expressing no confidence in the police was 48 and 34 in 2005 and 2006 respectively (*Latinobarómetro* in Michaud 2011). The military was supposed to be a temporary solution, while the local police officers were trained and educated.

A large part of the militarization focused on the implemented kingpin strategy (Hale 2012). The kingpin strategy is a methodology that is more than twenty years old and was developed by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) for Colombia to fight its problems with the Calí cartel. The development of this strategy was based upon a study that looked at the necessary cycle of a DTO seen as a business: 'production, transportation, distribution and recapitalization of the enterprise' (Hale 2012). From here, the DEA derived the notion that in order to stop these processes, the one who gives the orders for these kinds of processes needs to be stopped (Hale 2012). This can be seen as the hunting down of the top leaders who give such orders. The kingpin strategy focuses thus on the destruction of the drug cartels, rather than the stopping of the drugs production, transportation and distribution.

Calderón deployed the same kingpin strategy as Colombia, with some minor adjustments (Hale 2012). The anti-drug policy during Calderón's term focused on the destruction of DTO's too, rather than stopping the drugs transportation and exports. This resulted in the capturing and killing of high-value targets: some of the top-leaders of the Mexican DTO's (Molzahn, Rodriquez and Shirk 2013:34).

Implications for Sinaloa DTO, *Los Zetas*, and LFM/TKT

How did the militarization of the anti-drug policy and, more specifically, the kingpin strategy affect the Sinaloa DTO, *Los Zetas*, and LFM/TKT? What is sure is that the kingpin strategy did not spare any of the DTO's. All three DTO's suffered from killings and arrests by the Mexican government.

The Sinaloa DTO suffered from an arrest on 22 October 2008. The BBC stated that a drug cartel boss was seized. Alleged top member Jesus Zambada, responsible for the transportation of cocaine through Mexico City's international airport, was detained by the Mexican authorities (BBC, 2008). Furthermore, the Sinaloa DTO was hit when one of the three top leaders of the cartel was killed during a military raid. Ignacio "Nacho" Coronel Villareal was responsible for the transportation of cocaine via the Pacific Route towards the United States (CNN Wire Staff 2010, Aljazeera 2010).

Compared to *Los Zetas*, there are few differences. For instance, *Los Zetas* lost Jaime "El Hummer" González Durán, the person responsible in eight different districts for different criminal activities such as the killing of immigrants (Sánchez 2008). Furthermore, González Durán was the right hand of the leader of the *Los Zetas* DTO Heriberto "Lazca" Lazcano, who was killed by Mexican marines four years later in October 2012. Lazcano was founder of *Los Zetas* and therefore top priority for the Mexican authorities (VanGuardia 2012, Hale 2012).

These are just a few examples of how the kingpin strategy focused on top leaders and persons who were high in rank responsible for transportation or similar "business processes".

It is important to look at the chain of reactions after a death or arrest as part of the kingpin strategy, in order to find the eventual link between the kingpin strategy and the intensification of violence. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to distinguish the violence that is caused by one DTO or another. Some scholars do express themselves over certain chains of reactions that are the result of the kingpin strategy, but caution needs to be taken.

The best illustrative example for a chain of reactions of the kingpin strategy is the story of the LFM/TKT DTO. The death of leader Nazario "El Chayo" Moreno González on December 9th, 2012, actually led to the split of LFM in the rival factions TKT and a small rump of old LFM (Hope 2013:5). Because these rival factions are fighting over the old territory of the LFM, a spark of violence is created (Hope 2013:5).

This is in line with the predictions that Jorge Chabat made. According to Chabat, militarizing the anti-drug policy would bring about more violence, which he based on a comparison with the same anti-drug policy of Colombia (in Michaud 2011). Lohan, in his article on *Los Zetas* and a new form of barbarism,

agrees with that prediction. He states that when DTO's are put under pressure by decapitation and kingpin strategies, this leads to 'atomization' (2011:719). In turn, atomization will lead to more cycles of violence since any new criminal organization needs to establish itself, which brings about instability and competition over territory.

According to Hope, this is exactly what happened in Mexico. In 2006 there were five large DTO's that dominated the security landscape in Mexico, while after six years of Calderón's kingpin anti-drug policy, most of these DTO's splintered in rival factions, smaller and weakened (2013:5), as example the split of LFM that is being discussed.

Sinaloa federation is an exception on this story, however. Even though it has suffered some large losses like Ignacio "Nacho" Coronel Villareal, it is one of the DTO's that got least hit by the kingpin strategy in terms of them being weakened or splintered (Hope 2013:4). This could be explained by the fact that Sinaloa federation was best able to absorb the blow and use the spaces and opportunities that arose when other DTO's were hit by the kingpin strategy. The two largest clans of Sinaloa federation, Beltrán Leyva and the Nacho Coronel factions that split in 2008 from the federation, were hit harder by decapitation and fights between each other (Hope 2013:4).

4.2.2 Impunity

The second feature of the opportunity structure is the high degree of criminal impunity that exists in Mexico. According to an estimation of the Trans-Border Institute, only 25 per cent of all crimes are reported, of which only 2 per cent are actually punished (Molzahn, Rodriguez and Shirk 2013:8). This high degree of impunity has two implications for a possible intensification of violence. First of all, the cost-benefit analysis for criminals is disadvantageous for the Mexican government. Secondly, the combination of the kingpin strategy and weak law enforcement and criminal justice systems causes state fragmentation and state segmentation. These implications, further discussed below, could possibly explain the intensification of violence and the strategic reframing of the Mexican DTO's.

Criminals need to make a cost-benefit analysis before they join or carry out certain criminal activities. This analysis is made on the individual level, but

also on the DTO-business-level. According to Mason, who focuses on cost-benefit analysis for individual participation in a revolution, there are a number of costs when a rebel takes part in a revolution (Mason 2004:91). Not all of these costs are relevant for a business like a DTO, but two of them do stand out. First, participation and certain actions are costly: time, energy and resources have to be sacrificed. Second, participation is extremely risky. A criminal risks getting caught or worse: getting killed (Mason 2004:91). According to Mason, benefits are often unclear or unsure and there needs to be a high level of trust between participants, since it will increase the chance on success (2004:90-91).

For the DTO there is nothing really different. Its actions depend on a cost-benefit analysis that will weigh the costs, time, energy, resources, and risks, against the benefits, what the crime will bring: money, power, or less concurrence. Therefore, every step a DTO takes will be preceded by a moment of weighing the odds against each other.

A high level of impunity will substantially make the cost-benefit analysis easier for every DTO. After all, the risk of getting caught by the Mexican forces is lower than when there is little to no degree of impunity. As a result, DTO's will probably commit the same or worse crime for less benefit: an increase in crime and violence is a logic consequence.

Of course, this would only be part of the opportunity structure if there was a clear worsening of the law enforcement institutions and criminal justice systems or an obvious increase in the degree of impunity. According to the report of *México Evalúa, Centro de Análisis Políticas Públicas*, this is the case. In figure four, the total amount of drug-related homicides (*Occuridos*) is shown, together with the total amount of solved murders (*Resueltos*).

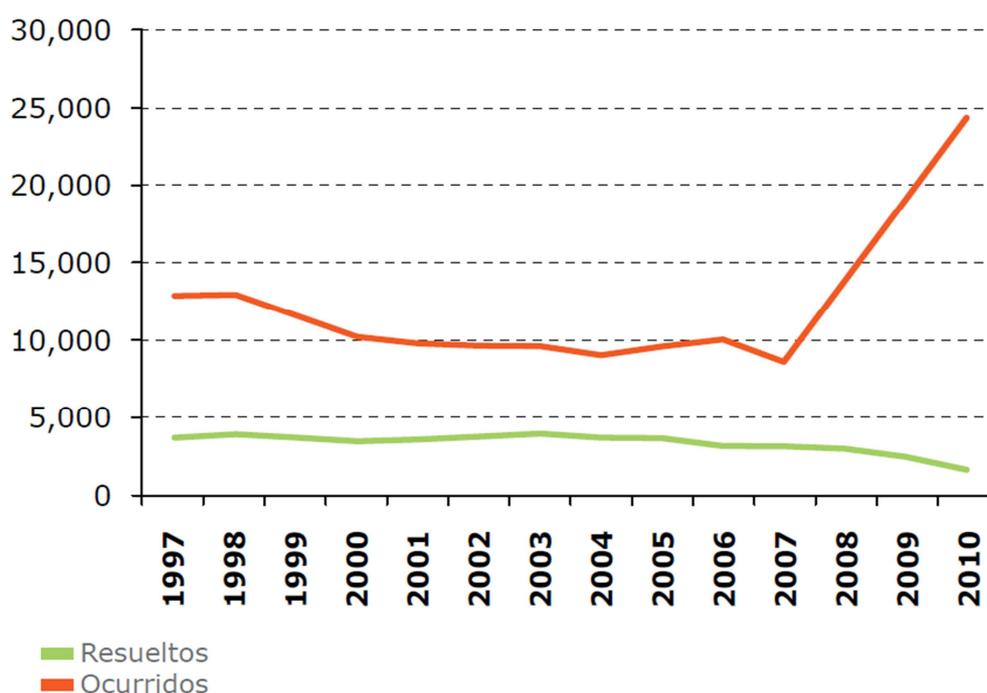


FIGURE 4: Total amount of murders versus total amount of solved murders in Mexico from 1997-2010. (*México Evalúa, Centro de Análisis Políticas Públicas 2013:31*).

The degree of impunity has increased since 2007. When in 2007 the amount of committed homicides rose, the line of solved murders stayed almost constant. One could even speak of a worsening and decreasing line of solved murders since 2008. In 2010, therefore, with the increased numbers of committed homicides (24,572) and the decreased number of solved murders (4,350), the degree of impunity was 84 per cent, leaving more than 21,000 murders unsolved in the year 2010 only. This degree of impunity has, however, increased drastically, since the amount of murders has accumulated so much. Impunity alone is thus not able to explain the whole intensification of violence in Mexico.

The combination of the kingpin strategy and the high degree of impunity is therefore a better explanatory factor. According to Hale, the targeting criminals strategy or kingpin strategy has proved to be successful *'when coupled with rule-of-law reforms and other law enforcement and intelligence institution building efforts'* (2012, emphasis added). In other words, when fighting DTO's, the anti-

drug strategy should not only focus on removing key players within the security field of Mexico, but also aim at a well-established law enforcement and implement reforms. Only then governments have a better chance at successfully confronting the DTO's and the national and regional security issues (Hale 2012).

The policy of Calderón fell short in reforming the law enforcement institutions, or at least, too late. This has led to the above described atomization and, also power vacuums when a kingpin is removed (Hope 2013:5). Furthermore, Mexico's criminal justice system is so lacking in resources and is inefficient in both investigating and prosecuting crimes that, by 2002, Zepeda Lecuona argued it could only try and apprehend approximately 150,000 people per year, no matter how many crimes were actually committed (Zepeda Lecuona in Schatz 2011:16-17).

In order to understand why the combination of a kingpin strategy and a failing criminal justice system could possibly explain the intensification of violence, the notion of 'irregular warfare' might become useful. Kalyvas explains irregular warfare, analytically, as a war without front lines (2006:87). This kind of warfare alters the sovereignty of a government into two general types: segmentation and fragmentation (2006:88-89). The first one, segmentation, refers to the division of territory into zones that are in its totality controlled by rival actors from the state. In this case the rival actors are the DTO's, which entails that the monopoly on violence is no longer in hands of the state, but in the hands of the rival actor(s). This also entails that the territory is in state of impunity: the government does not have the influence or sovereignty to prosecute in that zone. Secondly, fragmentation refers to the division of territory into zones where the rivals' sovereignty overlaps. Here, not one actor has the monopoly on the sovereignty, but government and rival actor(s) are still in combat.

The irregular warfare in Mexico caused certain zones that were not under fully control of the Mexican government. During Calderón's term, the Mexican presidency acknowledged certain zones of impunity existed and that certain zones might be segmented or fragmented. To be more precise, Grayson stated that in 2009 at least 233 regional zones of impunity were recognized by the Mexican government (in Schatz 2011:18). Here, crime was rampant. Additionally, Grayson claimed in 2009 there were 'regions of the country where all vestiges of a functioning government have simply vanished' (in Schatz 2011:19). This would

be a segmented zone, according to Kalyvas. Arias (2006:6), an author who focuses on drugs and democracy, calls these parts of the state 'brown areas' and he emphasizes on the only partially existent rule of law in these areas.

The policy of Calderón consisted thus too little of strengthening the law enforcements and the criminal justice systems. With an increasing number of committed homicides and a decreasing number of solved homicides, the fight against DTO's might be more efficient when fighting impunity simultaneously. The absence of this combination could therefore be a plausible explanation for the intensification of the violence used by the DTO's.

4.3 Media as a new battlefield

Another feature of the opportunity structure that possibly could explain the intensification of violence is the role of the media. In order to explain this aspect of the opportunity structure, the question 'what do DTO's gain from media attention' needs to be answered. According to Rivera, DTO's use media attention to build a reputation and to increase the perception of insecurity (2013:13). In many ways this could be central to their business. Most importantly, the media reinforce a high form of intimidation towards society, government, other DTO's, and their own DTO (treason), all having an own function. Secondly, media attention helps forming the morale of DTOs, assisting the DTO's aims in spreading their 'ideas of supremacy' with an associated feeling of pride and belonging (Rivera 2013:14). These gains have caused a development of a symbiotic relationship between media and DTO's, where especially the DTO's benefit from (Rivera 2013:14).

The messages DTO's need to disseminate in order to gain from media attention, can be seen as a frame. The individual frame being: 'mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individuals' processing of information' (Entman in Scheufele 1999:107). Frames used in media, or the selecting of a certain frame by the media, is called media framing (Entman in Scheufele 1999:107). Many scholars have focused on this process of framing. According to Scheufele, the process of framing is as following: '[w]ithin the realm of political communication, framing has to be defined and operationalized on the basis of this social constructivism. Mass media actively set the frames of reference that readers or viewers use to interpret and discuss public events' (1999:105). In other

words, framing can influence public opinion. For actors taking part in a conflict, it is thus from importance to make sure their frame becomes dominant, instead of a rival frame. Therefore, the role media play is no longer as a bystander who reports about a certain event, but an active player that contributes to the conflict.

Another author who discusses processes of framing in the context of warfare and conflict is Bhatia. He states that '[t]he actual ability to name, and to have that name accepted by an audience, holds great power. The authority of the "name-giver" (...) will determine how natural these names, words and narratives are viewed by an audience or reader' (2005:9). In other words, when a certain frame (in this example a name) dominates the media discourse, it is a very powerful tool and can influence the thinking and the doing of the audience.

In the next two sections, two concepts used by DTO's are discussed, both are closely related or make use of the process of framing. The first 'frame' will be the *narcomanta* of which the total amount has increased. *Narcomantas* are messages that accompany a corpse. This, in combination with the covering of these messages in new and traditional media, has an increasing effect on the use of violence. The second frame is a certain 'tactic of fear' where a symbolic way of violence is used. This could be part of a new or different form of brand management. The media play a large role in broadcasting the DTO's messages. In the next two sections, I therefore will elaborate more on these two features.

4.3.1 Increasing use of *narcomantas*

The first time the term *narcomensaje* or *narcomanta* appeared in the Mexican media, was in December 2006 in a small printed newspaper (Rivera 2013:14). A *narcomanta* or narco message is often referred to as a banner or a piece of paper with a text that is meant to warn and intimidate the government or rival DTO's and explain why the person was killed and what happened to them (Delgado 201?:309).

The use of a narco message has a strong positive correlation with the high numbers of drug-related homicides (Rivera 2013: 15). Besides the threat towards the government, rival DTO's, and sometimes even populations, the narco messages are also used to spread misinformation. The message blames other drug cartels for the committed crime, which could weaken the support base of the rival DTO (Rivera 2013: 16).

Since the messages are placed alongside a corpse that often is tortured or killed in a gruesome way, Mexican media are keen on publishing the message or even pictures of the message and the corpse. The Mexican media have been attributed with using shocking images and a stark headline for sensationalist means (Rivera 2013:12). Following this, a new and tragically unique lexicon developed which could function as another indicator for the intensification of violence. In the article 'Torture, beheadings, and narcocultos', Pamela L. Bunker, Lisa J. Campbell, and Robert J. Bunker provide an insight in the use of violence by DTO's. According to the authors, the following words developed in order to describe the gruesome tortures and homicides that are committed by DTO's (2010:146):

- *Decapitado*: decapitation.
- *Descuartizado*: quartering of a body.
- *Encajuelado*: put body in car trunk.
- *Encobijado*: body wrapped in a blanket.
- *Entambado*: body put in drum.
- *Enteipado*: eyes and mouth of corpse taped shut.
- *Pozoleado* (also: *Guisado*): body in acid bath, looks like Mexican stew

These words provide a more in-depth insight on how DTO's commit their crimes, which is thus commonly shared with the public. As one can read, the committed atrocities are not just the killing of a certain amount of people, but a very gruesome and sometimes symbolic way of committing murders.

The use of *narcomantas* could possibly explain the intensification of the (brutality of) violence in Mexico. According to Rivera, who analyzed the correlation of the narco messages and the amount of drug-related homicides, the coverage in violent states of a narco message create an increase in narco messages, and thus homicides, of 1.6 narco message more in the week after the covering. In extremely violent states, this is 2.0 (Rivera 2013:25-26). The over-reporting of such messages thus drives the narco message phenomenon. Since there is a positive correlation between narco messages and drug-related homicides, the excessive covering of narco messages actually drives drug-related homicides.

The feature of the opportunity structure is therefore how the media react to certain drug-related crimes, homicides or narco messages, and how DTO's react on this with their frames. Besides a battle on the ground, DTO's try to win another battle as well: the media battlefield.

4.3.2 Tactics of fear

A concept that is also related with the covering of media and the dominance and resonance of a certain frame is the so-called 'tactic of fear'. Tactics of fear have multiple functions. According to Olsen, an author who explains the tactic of fear on the basis of the Lord Resistance Army in Uganda, there are several reasons to attack populations and use violence against government officials or media representatives (2007:3). Olsen, for instance, mentions the enrichment of militias by need or greed or the media who presents it as a 'pure killing rage'. His focus lies however in violence as a tool to 'multiply force' and as a tool to control the population (Olsen 2007:4-6). The use of violence helps controlling the population and communicates the will of militias to the population.

These tactics of fear are not only implemented by insurgents or militias, but also by DTO's. An example is the use of indiscriminate violence that is used by DTO's and allows them to be seen as a threat. Lohan states: 'all subsequent criminal organizations across the board quickly understood a basic premise for PSYOPS (psychological operations): 'is you frighten your enemy enough, you may defeat him without having to fight'' (2011:720). In this way, the DTO's provide a very powerful frame over themselves, since they are able to conduct violent businesses without being stopped by the government. Sometimes it is even effective to just stage a few attacks, which retains the violence image of the group (Olsen 2007:5).

The tactics of fear and the violence used in order to spread fear amongst the population provide a certain 'frame' that is deployed by DTO's in order to intimidate and control the population. Anthony Oberschall states on terrorism, a form of tactics of fear too, that '[t]he bloody drama is played before an audience, and its reactions are important for the outcome' (2004:29). In other words, the frame, or violent actions are supposed to be seen by an audience, and their reaction is from importance too.

DTO's are sometimes compared with terrorists, using certain tactics of fear. According to Delgado, many of the committed crimes by DTO's have the specific purpose to cause terror among the population. He states DTO's deploy a certain '*maquinaria del miedo*' or machinery of fear (201?:308). Regardless age, gender, occupation, or social condition: the entire population should fear the often symbolic executions or torture rituals. The murders and crimes are committed in order to instill fear.

How can the tactics of fear be part of the opportunity structure, if it entails even 'staging a few symbolic attacks'? In order to find this out, *Los Zetas* will be set as an example, since it the DTO that started the tactic of fear mostly. As described in chapter two, *Los Zetas* started as an armed wing of the Gulf Cartel. They brought the military tactics to the environment of the DTO's. When in 2010 they broke apart, however, they needed to distinguish themselves from the other DTO's, and therefore started a new brand management which included a tactic of fear (TED 2013).

The need to distinguish through violence can be seen as part of an 'outbidding tactic'. This tactic is used to convince the audience of the DTO's will to fight, and uses extreme violence (Kydd and Walter 2006:51). The image of being a DTO that does not shudder to kill one or more persons that work against the DTO is a very powerful and scary frame. And that is exactly what DTO's want to proclaim. In the case of *Los Zetas*, this frame is part of their brand management. It was up to *Los Zetas* to get their brand 'on the market', thus in order to accomplish this, they needed extreme violence in the form of torture, killings and kidnappings (TED 2013). The brand management of *Los Zetas* needed to start however: the split with the Gulf Cartel marked the beginning of their own brand. A spark of extreme violence in order to establish themselves as a powerful and strong DTO was thus needed. Only time can answer the question if this really is a plausible explanation for the intensification of the DTO-violence in Mexico. If the establishing of the *Los Zetas*-brand is finished, only a few violent actions are needed in order to maintain their frame and status. The control of the population is then maintained with staging only a few symbolic attacks. If the violence in Mexico decreases after the brand-establishment, the answer to above question will be given.

5 Conclusion

This thesis has examined opportunity structures that plausibly explain why an intensification of violence by DTO's was made. This thesis has shown that several opportunity structures explain why and how an increase in violence and an increase in the brutality of violence were possible. The shifting alliances between DTO's have led to external struggles and form an environment in which the use of violence could escalate and increase.

An external struggle exists on the one hand after a split: then the competing DTO's have to divide the territory again, which is accompanied with violence. On the other hand the existence of certain successful drug-trafficking routes might make them a constant contested area. Since more and more money is at stake, the intensification of violence is possible, since DTO's will invest more in competing with other DTO's in order to defend secure their drug-trafficking routes.

The second feature of the opportunity structure has been the interactive process of violence, where a reaction of for instance the government has been important. The reaction of the government in the form of an anti-drug policy could explain a large part of the intensification of violence and the strategic reframing of the DTO's. A kingpin strategy, and the militarization of the anti-drug policy causing atomization in the first place, are not the only things responsible for the increasing carnage. Especially the combination with a lack of law enforcement and criminal justice reforms, the changing Mexican anti-drug policy did not accomplish to fight the DTO's in a decreasing violent way.

The role of the media over time has had plausibly an increasing effect on the use of violence by Mexican DTO's as well. The use of *narcomantas* and especially the publication of those banners in media, has an increasing effect on the use of narco messages. Since these narco messages are positively correlated with the amount of drug-related homicides, the publishing of *narcomantas* eventually leads to more homicides.

Furthermore, the new kind of brand management could be to some extent an explanatory factor of the intensification as well, if the degree in violence in the upcoming years will decrease.

5.1 Discussion and Further Research

Throughout the process of researching and analyzing data sources, I soon figured out that one element of data was always missing in reports that I studied: violence committed per DTO. There are analyses of violence per district, analyses of violence per crime and there are even analyses of the victims. Crucial, however, is the link between a certain crime and a certain DTO. This link is absent, and multiple reasons can be given for this. The first reason could be the false accusations that are being made on *narcomantas*. This makes it difficult to relate a certain homicide to a certain DTO. The absence of *narcomantas* is then a second explanation: then the criminal stays anonymous. The high degree of impunity is related to this. If more crimes are being solved, more perpetrators or criminals could be identified and being linked to a DTO.

A suggestion for further research would therefore focus on above problem I came across during this research. More research into geographical presence and the committed crimes in these specific areas might be a solution.

Another suggestion for further research would be the decrease of violence that was apparent in 2012. Since this research especially focused on the intensification of violence, the decline of homicides in 2012, has stayed a bit out of sight in this research. Opportunity structures that might explain this diminishing effect however, could be very important to the implementation or continuation of anti-drug policies.

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