

AN INTERPRETATION OF THE VIOLENCE IN SOME MEXICAN ILLEGAL TERRITORIES

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Abstract:

This article analyzes the disjointed presence of the Mexican state in illegal territories organized by the drug trade; made possible by the existence of a chain where various actors participate, including the authorities at different levels, in the struggle for high profits accompanied by violence. Therefore, it is not correct to argue that in the illegal territories of Tierra Caliente (Michoacán), a power vacuum exists attributed to the alleged absence of the Mexican state for ensuring the public safety of its inhabitants. This interpretation is wrong because it does not consider the presence of a rural social order involved in the trans-nationalization of the production and consumption of drugs.

Key words: Plural violence, illegal territories, accumulation by dispossession, economic warfare, armed self-defense groups.

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to analyze Mexican illegal territories; in terms of their social order, characterized by violence, which forms a chain reaction linking the activities of its inhabitants, the authorities and criminal organizations, within a context of an economic struggle for the income or profits arising from illicit business.

I will thus make use of theoretical sociological concepts¹ that help interpret social reality as a starting point where illegality has become confused with criminality and the latter has been seen as the cause of the expansion of social inequality caused by the neoliberal economic model.

¹ For example, considering social relations as plural conduct, mutually referring to a meaning or sense that builds, maintains and transforms a social order based on legal, moral or conventional rules (Luckmann, 2008: 107-110). This

The theoretical concepts used here make it possible to observe the following: the presence of the Mexican state in everyday life in the form of violence and the existence of an equally violent economic war, which is also linked to the theft and illegal appropriation of profits from criminal organizations in the territory. Shares of plunder and illegal appropriation of profits are part of the process of capitalist accumulation by dispossession; which has been activated by the neoliberal economic model at the international level, and according to David Harvey (2006: 25-29), its national manifestations result in expanding poverty and recurrent use of state violence to expropriate benefits and properties from those affected by the recurrent economic crisis for the benefit of large private corporations.

Accumulation by dispossession is guided by the economic logic of profit without limits related to the legal order; but is a struggle regulated through specific agreements on how to distribute the income between those who exercise dispossession or by imposing particular ways of exercising domination that combine consensus with violence to the population.

In Mexico, accumulation by dispossession has taken the form of economic warfare, where criminal groups and authorities are involved, who according to Andreas Schedler (2015: 14-16) have normalized violence, in other words, both society and the government are no longer surprised by the constant violations of the law caused by violence, viewed as a less important public problem.

However, a feature of the economic war unleashed by Mexican criminal organizations is that there is no ideology for political change, and even less so for social order, so that the only aim is to appropriate as much of the usufruct as possible. And this has been the way in which criminal groups have become involved in the global trade in narcotics. Likewise some of their illicit profits have been channeled into economic activities that form part of globalization from below, an economy that produces and sells reproductions of goods for poor consumers, whose brand names are owned by large international corporations (Mathews and Alba, 2015: 29).

Besides this, the Mexican State is involved in the chain of violence that permits transfers of income to criminal groups, which according to Auyero and Berti (2013: 24-25), is part of the general trend for neoliberal deregulation of the informal, meaning that in illegal territories, also identified as the margins of the state, there is a regulation, based on traditional structures such as family, corporatism and cronyism (Auyero, 2007).

However, the state's presence in illegal territories is selective, occasional and contradictory; especially when interpersonal violence shows that social ties configured in the informal context are the result of the presence of a variety of interests promoted through violence, resulting in a context of plural violence, which according to Desmond and Goldstein (2010: 19-21), has favored the presence of an electoral democracy that coexists with various armed groups, meaning that the Mexican state does not have a monopoly on physical violence.

For example, in Tierra Caliente (Michoacán)² state practices, and from a historical point of view their routine encounters with the villagers have taken place arbitrarily with armed inspections at various locations, creating

supposition makes it possible to study the existence of various social orders through the analysis of the activity of those involved, who guided by interests and beliefs have become part of the discourse on public insecurity, viewed as a belief according to Wacquant (2007). This belongs more to the realm of punishment, favoring the criminalization of certain illegal practices. We should distinguish when illegal for the state becomes a criminal situation, in terms of the militarization of security.

² This region is located in the south of Michoacan where some municipalities have become important for transnationalised drug trafficking activities, causing its inhabitants to suffer the consequences of militarization and a security crisis in agricultural activities: Apatzingan, Parácuaro, Nueva Italia, Buena Vista Tomatlan, Tepalcatepec, Aguililla, Zamora, Churumuco, with Lazaro Cardenas as a port and strategic location for entry and exit of drugs and smuggled goods (Maldonado, 2010a: 17; Gil, 2015: 28-29).

negative stigma for its inhabitants, expressed as a social gap between those who are included and those who are excluded (Maldonado, 2010a: 24-28).

Consequently, state presence in terms of social practices in Tierra Caliente has been through the repression of crime while also being involved, one way or another, in social assistance programs that have converted some of the poor into state patients, in other words, a form of control accepted through bureaucratic processes in order to receive promised support, according to a time-table dictated by state institutions (Auyero, 2013: 30-31).

Thus, State institutions are involved in Mexico's fragmented social life that has been reproduced according to Saraví (2015) by a system of integration/exclusion, which creates social inequality, because it benefits some while not including others. And from a territorial point of view, this system concentrates material advantages in some areas, whereas in others it only causes a precarious situation (Bayon, 2015: 89-90). Similarly, the Mexican economic war because of its illicit profits has revived the government need to establish modern technological monitoring mechanisms for the creation of information to help identify the different competitors, classified as criminal and therefore viewed as a risk. This according to Lyon (2007) has become a means for standardizing the risk that during this neoliberal phase has ceased to be regulated by the nation state.

Consequently, the general hypothesis is as follows: The violence that was exercised by the Mexican state social authorities formed part of the mechanisms for social control, and this has not ceased in the current situation. However, it now forms part of plural violence, but under a political system organized by electoral democracy (Knight, 2015: 15-33).

On the other hand, Mexican plural violence is generated by increased regional armed self-defense groups, strengthening the collective belief that interpreted violence only as a problem caused by an increase in illegality.

At the same time, plural violence is no longer a hidden or semi-hidden event related to the security institutions of the Mexican State but has become public, revealing social distances expressed as a lack of solidarity with the victims. Likewise it also fails to identify with civic protests against state and criminal violence, and according to Schedler (2015: 215-216), some citizens have even approved the exercise of collective violence and lynching by self-defense groups.

Therefore, the violence on the part of self-defense groups in Tierra Caliente has been integrated into the mechanisms of violence used by the Mexican state to further legitimize their punitive stance in terms of armed combat against certain criminal groups, and not in order to break the chain of violence.

From a methodological point of view, the information used to interpret how the violence of the Mexican state was reproduced by armed groups in Tierra Caliente comes from the national press and also some academic studies on the subject.

However limitations to this analysis were derived from the use of journalistic sources, which according to Rio (2008: 61), substitute for the insufficient alternative sources for the study of certain social conflicts, however, its importance also lies in the fact that the press captures the social event momentarily through that expressed by certain key actors (such as municipal authorities, leaders of the self-defense groups, citizens) who are in-

However, some have divided Tierra Caliente into two zones "(...) one with its capital in Apatzingan, and the other with Huetamo and Ciudad Altamirano, Guerrero, as the main poles. The hidden valleys, thousands of mountain folds and the absence of formal highways have favored illegal crops "(Padgett and Martinez, 2011: 29).

volved in the problem because they present certain consistencies of opinion, which can then be interpreted according to chosen theoretical concepts (Garcia, 2014: 36-37).

The article is divided into three parts. In the first, the limitations that result from considering violence as a permanent feature in the historical construction of the Mexican state are analyzed; especially because violence has its peculiarities that depend on events such as the consolidation of electoral democracy and neoliberal national economy.

Meanwhile, the second part studies the social significance of armed collective behavior in relation to violence implemented by the Mexican government in the region of Tierra Caliente; as well as its involvement in the emergence of a rural police force, taken as an institutional mechanism for reproducing state violence against local criminal groups.

In part three, we present conclusions about the non-uniform state presence in illegal territories and its impact on the organization of an illegal social order.

Mexican violence in the configuration of the State

The interpretation arguing that violence has been a major aspect of the historical configuration of the Mexican State (Panters, 2012) has come to justify its continuation; but has not made it possible to understand its new forms in a regional context reconfigured by neoliberal economic policy and the so-called democratic transition, which consolidated a party system based on pluralism and competition, favoring partisan alternation in the Mexican presidency and at different levels of government (Woldenberg, 2012).

Therefore, from the point of view of party pluralism and electoral competition, violence has resulted from a lack of agreement among the political elite to implement institutional reforms adapted to a new electoral reality that emerged after the crisis in the political system in the 80s of the twentieth century, maintained by a hegemonic and authoritarian political party (Institutional Revolutionary Party, acronym in Spanish PRI).

The above caused violence to be viewed by some intellectuals as resulting from the absence of reforms in political institutions, which according to Huntington (2015: 13-19), should aim to establish a democratic political order, considered as the main condition for modernizing a country through economic and social development.

However, this interpretation had its weaknesses because the national neoliberal project ceased basing itself on the ideology of the Mexican Revolution of 1910, transferring its legitimacy to economic growth, social well-being and security of citizens, difficult goals to achieve in a globalized and unstable economic world, despite the existence of a democratic political order (Knight, 2015: 47).

But according to Astorga (2015a: 19-26), another factor explaining the widespread criminal violence caused by drug trafficking was related to it ceasing to be subordinated to politics, or in other words the post-revolutionary state, historically sustained by a hegemonic party (PRI).

This makes it possible to establish that the chain of violence was organized by the main institution for state security which served to control, extort, protect and combat traffickers, who were excluded from political power.³

³ In the 40s of the XXth century, the security apparatus of the Mexican State consisted of the Federal Security Directorate (FSD) whose functions were to act as political but efficient police to monitor, extort and fight drug traffickers and keep

Now it is assumed that drug traffickers have achieved their political autonomy, which has triggered the economic war for control of the business, favored by the social practices of corruption and impunity, which have been regarded as two main characteristics of Mexican political history (Davis, 2010: 38-40). They have become a part of the political elite organized by the different political parties into subordinates or beneficiaries of illegal income from drug trafficking organizations (Astorga, 2015b: 21).

Likewise, illegal territories may only be defined by violent social practices. The type of violence used aims to obtain particular earnings for those involved. This violence, according to Crettiez (2009: 55-56), is carried out by criminals in a civil war, i.e., it consists of a predatory violence, a way of accumulating from dispossession. This view concurs with Harvey when he analyzes neoliberalism as a system of private accumulation, based on violent dispossession (2006: 12-15).

However, what is not apparent in illegal territories is a socioeconomic order removed from globalization or which is controlled by large capitalist corporations; rather they aim to reach a common goal: to become rich.

But the difference is that some of those conducting their business in illegal territories seek wealth through informal, illegal means, whereas others just want to survive, which promotes the reproduction of neoliberal capitalism (Mathews and Alba, 2015: 38).

In the case of Tierra Caliente, an economic structure exists for exporting crops (limes, avocados and even industrial items such as steel) linked to globalization from above, to use the expression of Mathews and Alba (2015), also organized through activities related to criminal groups, who have managed to articulate the legal and illegal markets in the region.

According to Maldonado (2014: 157), the export capacity of Tierra Caliente to the United States and Europe has encouraged the cultivation and production of drugs by mafias who have used violence to extort exporters, and at the same time, to increase their social presence in communities.

In other words, the illegal order for the cultivation and production of synthetic drugs coexists with a regional export economy, which has favored the dynamic flow of investments where it is difficult to distinguish licit from illicit money.

Although transnational companies operate in the area with legal permits issued by the federal government for the exploitation of land, this has actually been used to expand their presence illegally on communally owned land and that pertaining to smallholders, upheld by a supposed legality that does not contradict the illegal context created by criminal groups. This has helped them gain political and economic power, quickly becoming part of the chain of violence, and has also involved local politicians and municipal police, so that in other words, it has formed a new, regional order where both the legal and illegal have become a condition for the dominion of drug cartels (Ramirez, 2011: 48-49).

Consequently, in Tierra Caliente there are strong links between the agricultural export economy and the drug economy, with participation on the part of regional political power, which has created a situation of dispossession and violence not so different to that produced by neoliberal capitalism (Maldonado, 2014 158).

However illegal territories, when characterized only as sites organized by criminal activities, according to Ramirez (2011: 166-167) have been stigmatized as representing the margins of the state, where modern eco-

them out of political power. This ended in the 80s when the DFS disappeared, weakening the mechanism for state control of criminal organizations, thus promoting their autonomy to subordinate or convert the fragmented political elite from different parties to become partners in their businesses (Astorga, 2015b : 21).

conomic development has not yet arrived, and therefore supporters of legality seek its demise through two channels: its formalization through taxation and also by the opening of bank accounts, or by criminalizing smuggling activities and the production of unauthorized copies of a variety of goods (Mathews and Alba, 2015: 42).

Finally, illegal territories are the result of the expansion of neoliberalism, where the absence of state regulations redefined participation by the authorities, through violent social control exercised by the drug cartels.

Thus, state participation has been through the institutions of public security and their police forces, whose presence in the illegal territories was designed to ensure that the drug trade smoothly distributes its profits to those participating, including the authorities, as Caporal affirms (2013: 19-41).

Violent Mexican pluralism

The concept of violent pluralism points to a social context where different armed groups exist, making us consider violence as part of social relations, present in the different transformations which Mexican society has undergone.

Likewise, parallel to the formal criminal justice, there is that characterized by the use of preemptive force in order to hurt, harm, or punish with death those who have supposedly failed to fulfill agreements and who have been classified by their actions as criminal.

The context of plural violence in Tierra Caliente⁴ was used by the federal government of Enrique Peña Nieto (in 2013) to develop a military strategy to fight against the criminal group known as The Knights Templar (Gil, 2015).

Military strategy, according to Gil (2015: 16) and Lemus (2015: 186-187) was to tackle criminal violence in the region by setting up armed self-defense groups formed by community members, who would also serve as informants to federal security institutions in order to make arrests of some leaders of The Knights Templar⁵, supposing that this would weaken the criminal organization.

However the criminal group was weakened not only by fighting against self-defense groups; but because several of its members, who were neighbors of the communities controlled by The Knights Templar were offered a pardon and allowed to join self-defense groups, bringing their weapons to the fight and information to the army and the leaders of the self-defense group for the purpose of locating and arresting hired assassins and some of their leaders (De Mauleón, 2014: 15-21).

However, beyond discussing whether this was a military strategy on the part of the Mexican government, self-defense groups indicated what has already been argued: interpersonal violence as part of a chain reproduced in the public sphere and which has left the imprint of the State (Gledhill, 1999: 199-251), has now become a

⁴ The name Tierra Caliente is not only used to describe this territory because of its tropical climate; but to refer to the existence of a group of municipalities with a parallel or informal government similar to that exercised by the Caballeros Templarios (Padgett and Martinez, 2011: 23).

⁵ In March 2011, the Caballeros Templarios became known as a group that would continue with the social work previously undertaken by The Family Michoacana, as on January 24, 2011, using cloth signs and flyers, this criminal group announced its dissolution in response to the supposed death of its leader, Nazario Moreno (Guerrero, 2014: 47).

particular punitive power to combat crime and also to start the process of accumulation by dispossession against criminals or their victims⁶.

In February 2013, the armed self-defense group in Tierra Caliente manifested and established its legitimacy in the view of the then mayor of Coalcomán, Rafael Garcia Zamora: "And the situation was unbearable! They extorted all of us (...the Caballeros Templarios). Even the municipality had to give them 10% of the budget each month (...) We accepted ... but then if we did not do so (... because) they infiltrated our families, and raped and took away our wives and daughters ... "(Gil, 2013: 6).

This complaint could be interpreted as a rebellion against the methods of plunder launched by the criminal group of The Knights Templar, forcing you to conclude that without doubt violence was an everyday practice, however, Maldonado (2014: 170) has shown that this criminal organization was able to build an alternative local system of order to that of the state, in order to comply with the basic task of providing security to communities and public services⁷.

This was a parallel administration of justice generated by an informal order, which influenced the lives of ordinary people causing them to accept or reject it; but which was similar to state justice in the sense that neither ruled out using violent methods to ensure their protection (Auyero and Berti, 2013: 139).

What the Mexican state achieved when it had drug trafficking in its control, was to demand protection and sometimes punish drug traffickers with imprisonment and death because they did not accept subordination to its rules (Astorga, 2015).

Similarly from another point of view, what occurred in Tierra Caliente showed how the government of Peña Nieto was involved in the dispute through an informal mechanism which was the Commission for Security and Integral Development of Michoacán, headed by the representative (Alfredo Castillo Cervantes), renewing the regional chain of violence, by employing the army and federal police force⁸.

In the end, the representative institutionalized violence by transforming the local self-defense groups into a local rural police force, which implied a greater government presence, as this had been debilitated by a weakened local police that was displaced by The Knights Templar or was transformed into their collaborator.

⁶ The Knights Templar organized their domain by charging differential quotas. Raul Martinez Mendoza, for example, before becoming part of the self-defense group, was a fruit picker in the lime and papaya orchards, but joined the self-defense group, headed by Luis Antonio Torres Gonzalez alias "Simon the American" during the expulsion of the local criminal group Nueva Italia in January 2014. He confirmed: "My salary was 3,000 pesos a week until the Templarios appeared and began to screw us. These bastards began by extorting the buyer, who brought in the trailer; then they continued (...) with the owner of the orchard. For every ton sold, they charged him an amount, so that they began to pay me less: from 3000 to 2500, then 2000, finally reaching 500, as the extortionists became increasingly more demanding. That was not the worst of it. With less money in my pocket, they then came after me, so I also had to give them money". (Sánchez, 2014: 38).

⁷ The predecessor of the criminal group The Knights Templar was the La Familia Michoacana, which emerged in mid-2006, in order to remove the drug business in the Tierra Caliente region from the Zetas group, whose main center was in Tamaulipas. However, the Familia Michoacana managed to build a strong relationship with the communities by distributing goods and services through their presence in the areas of municipal government, social development and public works. This was combined with violent coercion that was applied to municipal officials who did not wish to cooperate and this influence reached the state government because of complicity on the part of the then Attorney General, Carlos de los Santos Camacho (Guerrero, 2014: 45-46).

⁸ The representative took control of both security institutions in the state of Michoacán: the Ministry of Public Security and the Attorney General, by appointing two public officials (Lemus, 2015: 231).

Furthermore, the use of information provided by the self-defense related to the federal government was to reinforce its message of the war against crime, and at the same time made it possible to imprison a senior official in Michoacán (the government minister of Michoacán, Jesus Reyna who also served as interim governor, during the absence of the governor, Fausto Vallejo) due to illness, corroborated by recorded video evidence⁹ and revealing the informal complicity between the Michoacán government administration and The Knights Templar.

This complicity was broken when the illegal order and its informal practices stopped providing safety and well-being to communities, making more evident the limitations of legal and formal order for guaranteeing these¹⁰.

However, according to Davis (2010: 57) what occurred in Tierra Caliente constituted illiberal practices, or activities that from a legal point of view are illegitimate; but which are linked to the global economy by illicit networks sustained by violence at local or regional level, thus negating the rule of law.

From the point of view of Lyon (2013: 13-14), economic power exists in a space which is global, extraterritorial and which generates uncertainty, where politics is unable to impose controls because its actions affect only local interests, where there are no boundaries between the legal and illegal for responding to the real problems of individuals.

Therefore, politicians are irrelevant to people, who facing a problem of insecurity and global welfare are seeking certainties in the emerging orders. In this case, the self-defense groups showed that by using violence they could destroy the order established by The Knights Templar, however they could not achieve this without the use of armed violence, thus accepting its transformation into a local armed force, following the rules of the Mexican State¹¹.

José Manuel Mireles Valverde, who was leader of the self-defense group in Tepalcatepec did not accept the plan for disarmament proposed by the representative Alfredo Castillo Cervantes, justifying his rejection with reference to what the Mexican constitutional order had not been able to ensure: protection and justice to citizens "... the federal government (... must restore) the rule of law in Michoacán and (... remove) any criminals ..." (Gil, 2014: 8).

Consequently, neither did he understand that the Mexican state now takes part in the process of extraction of rents, representing an economic mechanism for accumulation by neoliberal capitalism. This does not require a uniform state presence that would imply a large administrative apparatus in the territory; instead this is a context of governance that is discontinuous and indirect through various economic and armed agents at a local

⁹ Both José Manuel Mireles (also spokesman for the Self-defense Council of Michoacán, which brought together the different leaders of the Self-defense groups in Tierra Caliente, CAM) as well as the leader of the Knights Templar (Servando Gómez, the "Tuta") used social networks on YouTube to make public statements. For example, the "Tuta" in a video on May 8, 2013 offered to disarm "if the Federation and the State took charge of the role of security and peace that society was demanding" (Lemus, 2015: 218).

¹⁰ "The criminal model for extraction of rents seemed incorrigible. However, the very success of the Templar exploitation system caused its downfall. Predation exceeded the limits that the subject population were prepared to tolerate" (Rivera, 2014: 53).

¹¹ The members of the self-defense groups would have to lay down arms and then proceed to sign up to form part of the rural defense groups, the period would expire on May 10, 2014. Because after that date, according to the then representative Castillo Cervantes, any armed people would be assigned to the authorities. Mireles Valverde refused to accept, considering that public safety was a national problem that could cause a social insurgency in different parts of the country (Gil, 2014: 9).

and regional level. According to Hibou (2013: 18-19) this minimizes the boundaries between the legal and illegal and prevents a clear distinction between public and private.

Therefore, and as Astorga (2015: 181) states, in the Mexican territory there are criminal groups of different size and capacity able to commit crimes and use violence against their competitors, the government security forces and society in the lucrative drug business and with various participants in their value chains.

This shows that the permanent use of force and the militarization of Mexican State security has failed to stop the violence resulting from the drug trade, however, this has caused it to transfer to the central and southern region and the peripheries of some metropolitan areas, being maintained in rural areas of Tierra Caliente and the state of Guerrero (Guerrero, 2016: 41-42).

The fragmentation, atomization and diversification in criminal enterprises, which are no longer only limited to drug trafficking, means that there is great uncertainty in the market, possibly derived from its transnational criminalization and the emergence of new types of drugs.

However the fragmentation of criminal groups is also a consequence of the absence of a uniform and continuous state in the territory, which has been interpreted as indicating little government presence in urban neighborhoods or rural locations, which according to Guerrero (2016: 45) was the cause of the "epidemic of self-defense", which began in January 2013, subsequently converting into community police.

However, Guerrero (2016: 46) points out that community policing is recognized formally or informally by government authorities. This factor reinforces the argument that the state is not absent; but that this presence has been invoked to perform tasks or functions of security which the state is unable to carry out consistently and continuously by increased bureaucratic presence.

Likewise, an intermediary who was authorized by The Knights Templar to buy marijuana in the region indicated the way that money is linked to illicit political activities, "We work with all parties (political). We support political campaigns. How expensive they are (... while remaining seated at the desk of the mayor) ... (and later he added) ... the cultivation of drugs has become a self-employment option for almost all farming families in the region." (Padgett and Martinez, 2011: 23-24).

However, this is evidence of some of the ways in which the authorities and the different types of police are involved in the drug trade, which has also been implemented by charging for the right of passage for shipments of marijuana, destined to the territory of the United States.

However the violence accompanying the process of production and distribution of drugs when "... people sell something which is not what they say it is (deceive the buyer) or what does not belong to them (i.e. make a personal business with a load that is property of the criminal organization) (or because) the (criminal) organization has decided ... that you can go fuck your mother. You disappear. And when the decision has been taken, there is no turning back (Padgett and Martinez, 2011: 32). In other words, the leaders of The Knights Templar will decide on the future of that or those persons, no longer of use to the business.

Maintaining the principle of the preceding criminal group, The Family, "Only he who should die will die (...) this is divine justice," a proclamation disclosed on their cloth signs hung in some public places in the region.

Finally, social fragmentation in the region is a consequence of a system of inclusion/exclusion, reproduced in a social context of globalization from below, which is based on the illegal universe, which cannot be reduced only to activities of plunder carried out by criminal groups.

However state deregulation of the production and marketing of agricultural products has negatively impacted and differentiated between farmers in the region, and been impossible to detain with social assistance pro-

grams, meaning that planting marijuana is the main survival option for impoverished farmers (Maldonado, 2010b).

Conclusions

Reproduction of state violence through its punitive force has been justified in the uncertain social context caused by the expansion of illegal economic activities and the deregulation of political and economic power, which at the same time, has promoted a situation where surveillance, based on technology has become a mechanism for social control by the authority attempting to monitor certain illegal activities classified as criminal.

However, the neoliberal Mexican state has no uniform institutional presence in the territory; but instead relies on different political and economic agents in order to carry out its functions of governance at a regional level.

The non-uniform state presence in the territory arises in a context where there are various armed groups who use violence in two ways: as a means to divest or collect taxes or protection money from the inhabitants of a particular territory and to combat the uncertainty created by public insecurity, identified by the supposed expansion of criminal activities that affect life and property.

Furthermore, the use of armed and organized violence by vigilante groups is justified by societies' belief that the state is absent, and for this reason, is failing to fulfill its task of ensuring public safety. However, in fact their presence is part of the chain of violence, which has been configured because of the contribution it makes, together with that of other agents, who use it to access high economic benefits, related to globalization both from above as well as from below, which have ceased to be regulated by state policies.

The discontinued presence of the state in Mexican territory has been most evident in the so-called illegal territories or at the margins of the State, where drug trafficking activities have been developed over decades, criminalized by the government of the United States, acquiring the status of a transnational business with complex participation involving various intermediaries, in both countries.

The social order in the illegal territories has been criminalized by the Mexican State which has defined its presence in the form of the army at various historical moments in the Tierra Caliente region; but currently shows the failure of its policies for rural modernization by economic openness and its subordination to the logic of economic power that cannot be controlled or shaped by regional or national policy.

Finally, lawlessness has also been used by the Mexican state as a justification for intervening in social conflicts and for reproducing with reference to the ideology of public insecurity, punitive social control mechanisms against those who have been classified as criminal and who are living globalization from below.

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