

**The Politics of Civil-Military Relations in Mexico:
a Historical and Institutional Approach**

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This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The London School of Economics and Political Science

Government Department

October 2008

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Declaration

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jesús Alberto López-González', written in a cursive style.

Jesús Alberto López-González

Date: October 18, 2008

Abstract

Since the late 19th Century, the military in Mexico has been an important instrument of the executive branch of government to maintain political stability. In the 1880s, President Porfirio Díaz created the basis of a system of civil-military relations based on Presidential control (as opposed to civilian control). Since then, the Mexican armed forces have developed a unique bond with the President, remaining accountable and exclusively subordinated to this branch of power and no one else.

Despite the Mexican Revolution in the first quarter of the 20th Century and the subsequent process of democratization after 1988, Díaz's basic principle has not been broken. In fact, the military's separation from the political arena after the Mexican Revolution inexorably strengthened its moral capital, gaining the population's approval to participate in areas that surpass its conventional duties. This has made the executive branch become increasingly reliant on the armed forces to make certain policy commitments seem trustworthy, especially in areas where civilian agencies have consistently underperformed, such as the combat of organised crime and ordinary policing. This is definitely a unique characteristic within Latin America, where democratization has rarely been accompanied by an increasing role of the armed forces on internal affairs.

By using deductive reasoning and historical narrative, the argument will propose that the rules governing the system of civil-military relations in Mexico are counterintuitive with the idea of democratic consolidation. It will also suggest that the current system of civilian control has become even more vulnerable due to the capacity of the military to resist and even reverse civilian initiatives to improve supervision over their expanding roles. To test these hypotheses, the argument follows closely the military's counterinsurgency policy and its increasing participation in law enforcement institutions.

I declare that this thesis consists of 95,888 words (excluding references).

Jesús A. López-González

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my grandmother Leonarda del Angel and my dearest father Jesús López Domínguez.

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Acknowledgments

To imagine and to write this thesis has been a journey of discovery to which I devoted the last six years of my life. Foremost, I want to thank my wife Catalina and our daughter Juliana, for their patience, love and support throughout my studies.

I am also indebted to Professor George Philip, who was always willing to provide generous guidance and advice. His vast knowledge on civil-military relations in Latin America and Mexico's history came always handy in times of doubt. I also thank Dr. Francisco Panizza, who read and commented on most of the chapters of the thesis. Likewise, I am thankful to the scholars and research students who attended the Latin American Research Seminar at LSE, their insights and discussions at different points of this research were highly valuable. I am also grateful to Mercedes Hinton, Janet Foster and Professor Stanley Cohen who were willing to discuss some chapters of the thesis as well as pointing me in the right direction concerning literature and research on the issue of organised crime. I want to express gratitude the London School of Economics, *La Secretaría de Educación Pública*, *El Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología* (CONACYT) and the British Council that funded my studies.

I have also been very lucky for coming across a multitude of brilliant people I met at the LSE to whom I had the opportunity to discuss my and their research projects. This open-handed exchange of experiences and knowledge expanded the boundaries of my understanding of culture, world affairs and politics and made of my stay in London an enriching experience. Many people enter in this category, but I would like to mention Bashir Bashir, Paolo Benedetti, Elena Bechberguer, Sara McLaughlin, Silke Lechner, Daniel Linsker, Juan Pardinás, Adriana Jiménez Cuen, Miguel Angel Jiménez, Susana Berruecos, Gabriel Farfán and Carlo Gallo.

I want to also thank my good friends Brian Rovner and Dr. Bob Rich who read and commented on different parts of this research. Their excellent command of the English language helped me many times to express my ideas and arguments more clearly. Not least important, I thank Ignacio González Rebolledo, General Director de *El Colegio de*

Veracruz, for providing me an office and the ideal environment to conclude the writing stage of this research.

Finally, I want to express my sincere gratitude and love to my mother, Genoveva, who has always been an inspiration to me, her encouraging words throughout this process were central to conclude my studies. Similarly, I thank my sister Teresa and my brothers Francisco and Alejandro who were always watchful of my needs while I stayed in London.

Jesús A. López-González

London School of Economics and Political Science, October 2008

Introduction

Contemporary concepts of democratic control of the military by civilian authorities focus on the capacity of the president and the representative powers of the State to define, supervise and evaluate policy performance on internal security, external defence, civic action or any other function that involves direct participation of the armed forces.

R. Kohn (1997) argues that in principle, democratic control over the military is absolute and all encompassing: no decision falls under military control unless it has been expressly or implicitly delegated to them by elected civilian leaders. 'Missions assigned to uniformed personnel are based on convenience, tradition, effectiveness or military experience and expertise. Civilians make all the rules and they can change them at any time' (Kohn 1997:142).

Along the same line of argument, D. Pion-Berlin (1991) argues that democratic civilian control requires unconditional support to [any democratically elected] civilian authority, in which the armed forces submit to the will of political authorities. It also needs a minimum constitutional consensus enabling civilian elites to build and maintain civilian supremacy (Pion-Berlin 1991). S. Fitch (1998) goes a step further by specifying the essential characteristics of democratic systems of civil-military relations. These include strict military subordination to democratically elected elites, policy control or civilian supervision of missions delegated to the armed forces and full accountability of the military to the rule of law. (Fitch 1998).

Fitch (1998), Pion-Berlin (1991) and Kohn's (1997) approaches are based on the understanding that one of the permanent duties of new democratically elected civilian elites consists of preventing the armed forces from gaining political territory. It is possible to consider that Latin American historical experience regarding civil-military relations emphasizes the normative and prescriptive content of their arguments. In any case, this is not a recent concern in the civil-military relations literature. In fact, it has been present for decades (Lasswell and Stanley 1997) if not centuries (Sun 2003). S. Huntington summarised it by arguing that while other social forces can only pressure the government, the military can literally replace government (Huntington 1968). P. Feaver (1999) described it as a simple paradox¹: "The very institution created to protect the polity is given sufficient power to become a threat to the polity" (Feaver 2003:4).

¹ For a more recent discussion of this paradox, see D. Acemoglu (2008)

Therefore, any deviation from Kohn's absolute and all encompassing parameters can hinder the quality of civilian control, and therefore, of democracy altogether.

By applying this definition to contemporary civil-military relations in Mexico, it is possible to build a case around the firm control presidents have exercised over the armed forces in the last 80 years. The absence of coups, military participation in external missions and the willingness of the officer corps to stay away from the political arena confirm the existence of a high level of institutionalisation of military roles in the political system and the firm subordination to the president's authority. If we expand the scope of the analysis to include other countries in Latin America, Mexico is clearly an oddity. The vertical and undisputed presidential control over the armed forces was far from being common on the continent, where military hierarchies turned, more than once, into key political actors². In that sense, the influence of Mexico's military on the political system was not defined by the threat of a coup or their capacity to impose tutelage over policy issues³. Mexican soldiers have even abstained³ from making public their discontent with a particular policy trend⁴. On the contrary, their policy interventions have been historically performed on behalf of the ruling elite and subjected to the Executive's leadership. Therefore, rather than politicisation of the armed forces, Mexico's pattern of civil-military relations is closer to militarization of politics (Camp 2003).

For comparative studies, this set of unique features defining civil-military relations has meant that mainstream theoretical discussions on the subject have generally ignored the case of Mexico⁵. M. Desch argues that studying the civil-military relationship is, by itself, a complex endeavour⁶. I would add that being an exception, the Mexican case is unappealing for theoreticians. Mexico's characteristics of civil-military relations did not

²“During the last 50 years, every country except Mexico and Costa Rica has had at least one significant period of military rule; most have had multiple military governments and military coups.” (Finch 1998:1)

³ For a complete discussion on military tutelage see A. Stepan (1988)

⁴ According to Piñeyro (May 24, 2005), the military typically conveys privately its position (positive or negative) on a given issue to the president and his cabinet.

⁵ Philip (1985:78) argues that a significant distinction between South American military officers and Mexican officers is that the former owe their loyalties to their own institutions, whereas Mexicans willingly have committed to civilian politicians and leaders.

⁶ M. Desch argues that analysts generally disagree about how to define and measure civil-military relations as the dependent variable. It is not easy to identify whether conflicts regarding civil-military relations respond to intra-civilian struggles for power, intra-military fights or civil-military coalitional wars. Furthermore, there are no clear criteria to define whether civil-military relations are good or bad across countries. (Desch 1999:3)

fit O'Donnell's bureaucratic-authoritarian approach (O'Donnell 1973) or Stepan's new military professionalism and military tutelage model (Stepan 1973; Stepan 1988). Moreover, it does not coincide either with the historical political armies explanation of Kees and Dirk (Kees and Dirk 2003) or other theoretical explanation that build on the military as a visible political actor.

Even when the so-called third wave of democratisation brought tighter forms of civilian control over the military in Latin America (Huntington 1995)⁷, contemporary literature on this topic still lacks discussion of the Mexican case. Most academic studies on this field have taken an inductive approach and rarely specify a suitable theoretical framework to start with. Additionally, research on the armed forces in Mexico has historically attracted the attention of a limited number of scholars. Lack of interest was often associated with the apparent dislike of the Mexican military towards the academic inquiry, and their tendency to isolate themselves (Ronfeldt 1984). On this issue, Roderic Ai Camp affirms that the Mexican Military "has [consistently] erected obstacles to outside examination" (Camp 1992:12). No doubt, before the approval of The Freedom of Government Information Law in 2003, getting first-hand material from the armed forces was a very difficult endeavour. Professor George Grayson⁸ of William and Mary College told this author that studying the armed forces often required intricate connections with the political elite, given the fact that gaining the trust of military officers was not an easy task (Washington DC, September 15, 2005).

However, this trend seems to be changing. Along with the creation of the Federal Institute of Information Access (IFAI) in January 2003, the military opened up their corporate information in an unprecedented way. Data on military statistics, budget allocations, education system, personnel, weapons, geographical distribution, recruitment, human rights, doctrine and military missions can be consulted on their website or requested directly through the System of Information Requests (SISI)⁹. By doing so, the armed forces unlocked a wide avenue for new research on civil-military

⁷ S. Huntington argues that, in general, new democracies have achieved important progress in bringing the armed forces under more stable or democratic forms of civilian subordination (Huntington 1995)

⁸ He was the first scholar who disentangled the internal structure of the Mexican armed forces in a document prepared for the Center of Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). (Grayson, 1999)

⁹ For a detailed explanation of the SISI, see the presentation of its founder and director, Mr. Alonso Lujambio, at the Woodrow Wilson Center on June 29, 2007. Lujambio, Alonso. "Mexico's Constitutional Reform on Transparency & Access to Information http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=events.event_summary&event_id=241802.

relations in Mexico that may well fill the gaps left by previous scholarship¹⁰. The issues I look at in this research are partly built on these new sources of information. It also takes a creative combination of competing approaches in the study of political institutions to address some of the loose ends of the system of civil-military relations in Mexico.

I particularly look at the increasing number of public security responsibilities that the last four presidents of Mexico have delegated to the armed forces since 1989 and the consequences that such policy trend has generated for both: the system of civil military relations and the process of democratic consolidation. On this issue, leading scholars on the study of the Mexican armed forces, have proposed that a growing military agenda does not mean a significant transformation in the long standing balance of power favouring civilians within the system of civil-military relations (Camp 2005; Benítez 2000 and Piñeyro 1999). I am challenging their viewpoint on the subject in this thesis. I would also like to provide evidence suggesting that the armed forces have not only effectively resisted, but also reversed civilian initiatives, the president's included, to improve supervision over their expanding roles in the polity; digging into their past record of violations of human rights or punishing those officers that have been found guilty for similar charges by specialized government agencies. The underlying question here is why the executive power in Mexico opted to delegate a wide variety of missions of public security to the armed forces, even at the expense of delaying or obstructing democratic consolidation?

I. The historical context

Military participation in areas that exceed the realm of national defence¹¹ was a constant occurrence in the history of Mexico during the largest part of the 20th Century. Except for a minor role played by the Mexican armed forces in the Second World War, military missions have been predominantly centred on internal security and social policy roles. This differs from what has occurred in the South American region, where often active members of the armed forces occupied the first row of politics. In contrast, Mexico's military officers have kept a low political profile, subordinated at all times to the president's authority.

¹⁰ See Medellín, Alejandro "Revelan los secretos del Ejército mexicano" *El Universal*. October 16, 2003

¹¹ National Defense is understood as the protection of the territorial integrity, the nation and its political institutions against potential or real external aggressions.

The origin of strict military subordination to civilian authority can be traced back as far as *El porfiriato*¹² (1876-1911). Formal control by the president over the armed forces was recognised by Article 24 of the Constitution enacted in 1857¹³ and the Internal Law of Military procedures —*Ordenanza Militar*— that, at least in principle, should have governed internal military procedures, including military promotions (López -Portillo y Rojas 1921). However, neither legal provisions nor incipient efforts to professionalize the military carried out during the 1880s was successful in completely governing the behaviour of the institution and its membership (Kelley 1975). President Díaz’s unorthodox approach to civilian control was mainly based on informal measures that often included the continuous availability of political and business opportunities to high-ranked military personnel. As a matter of fact, the military remained subordinated to Díaz’s authority not because it was respectful of the presidential institution, nor to an issue of obedience to the Constitution or the law. Instead, civilian control over the military greatly depended on Díaz’s personal abilities to keep the rifle and the sword away from the political arena. In the long run, Díaz’s massive political meddling weakened discipline and almost destroyed the promotion of unity and the creation of the so-called *esprit de corps*.

The shortcomings of this form of civilian supremacy became evident when the army failed to address a rural uprising commanded by Francisco I Madero in 1910 and 1911. Discipline and organization broke down altogether; tactics and strategy were not always the optimal choice to mount a proper counterrevolutionary campaign. Furthermore, the bad relationship and poor coordination between military officers and local political authorities hindered the capacity of the regime to put together a cohesive strategy to defeat the insurgents (Vanderwood 1976; Portilla 1995). The outcome of the struggle did not take long to become manifest. After six months of battle, the federal army was finally defeated by Madero’s *Ejército Libertador*.

¹² I acknowledge that the term “*el porfiriato*” has been used to define a period in Mexican history that includes political, social, economic and cultural aspects. However, the use of the term in this thesis refers mainly to the way President Díaz shaped the system of civil-military relations during his protracted term in office.

¹³ Online database of The Constitution Society, which is a private non-profit organization devoted to research and public education on the principles of constitutional republican government. www.constitution.org/cons/mex1857.txt

It seems Díaz's regime could not hide the irony of his own approach to civil-military relations. Politicised militaries may generate some protection against coups but eventually made them more vulnerable to revolution (Philip 1985). Under such conditions, the military may be loyal and subordinated to civilian authority but unable to perform its unique professional role¹⁴. In the end, President Díaz's approach to civil-military relations became counterproductive and amazingly costly for the military and the political regime as both disappeared altogether after the brief presidency of Victoriano Huerta in 1914.

The task of rebuilding civilian supremacy took almost 30 years. During that period, informal procedures to separate the military from the political scenario, although intended at some point by President Carranza between 1917 and 1920, were discarded in order to maintain the military's allegiance to the political regime. From 1920 until 1946, each of the four elected presidents that succeed Alvaro Obregón in the presidency — being all army generals and veterans of the revolution — actively pursued a policy that aimed at transforming the armed forces into a cohesive body, subjected to a single political command as a primary requisite for political stability.

No doubt, many of the rules governing the system of civil-military relations changed after the revolution. However, it seems that the essence of the older days remained somehow untouched. The end of *el porfiriato* in 1911 did not imply a transition to democracy, but the institutionalization of a different variant of authoritarian power. This meant that the nature of missions Presidents delegated to the armed forces was not entirely different from those performed during Don Porfirio's rule. President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940) had the army involved in tasks such as building schools and basic infrastructure. It also granted the armed forces a key role during the nationalization of the oil industry in 1938. Both policy roles imprinted a nationalistic and progressist twist to the missions delegated to the armed forces in the political

¹⁴ Under not particularly different conditions, a similar story was repeated 40 years later in Cuba and Nicaragua in 1976. After 40 years of rule of the Somoza dynasty, the Nicaraguan National Guard felt too much under the control of the dictator and became unable to confront the challenge that posed the Sandinista Front of National Liberation in 1978. Díaz's and Somoza's military establishments were not strikingly different. Both were closer to a politicised organization that combined weak military leadership at the top with a number of professional officers at the middle of the structure who usually remained at the margins of real command.

system. The good name and moral capital¹⁵ the military enjoys today, was built during Cárdenas' *sexenio*. Still, not all missions delegated to the armed forces were of social assistance nature. President Miguel Alemán, the first civilian to reach the executive power in 1946, used the armed forces to disrupt by force a number of union movements that did not share his orientation on economic policies. Years later, President Adolfo López Mateos used a similar policy during the strikes of the railways union and other organizations that wanted to desert the control of corporatist branches of the ruling party. Gustavo Díaz Ordaz took the application of national security principles to the extreme by sending the military to crush the student movement in 1968 and incipient guerrillas in Chihuahua and Guerrero in the late 1960s. Such policies were maintained during the *sexenios* of Luis Echeverría and José López Portillo, whose policies of internal security annihilated the urban and rural guerrilla in Mexico, in what is known as the dirty war. In 2006, the Special Prosecutor of Social and Political Movements of the Past, Mr. Carrillo Prieto, concluded that the Mexican Army participated in at least 12 massacres, 120 extrajudicial executions, 800 forced disappearances and more than 2,000 acts of torture along with an unquantifiable number of violations of human rights between 1965 and 1982. The special prosecutor found the armed forces and the federal government responsible of crimes against humanity, terrorism and genocide.(FEMOSPP 2006: IX and X)

Therefore, it seems that the idea behind the process of institutionalization was not so much to make the military politically neutral as some experts on Mexican civil-military relations argued (Lieuwen 1968; Lozoya 1970; Boils 1975), but to make it a powerful state agent, highly respectful of its popular origin; proud of its revolutionary past and closely aligned to the objectives and commands of the executive power. In other words, the type of civilian control imposed by the post revolutionary regime over the military, kept several characteristics of its predecessor in a way that clearly favoured the interests, often of partisan nature, of the incumbent president. In time, this relationship became self-reinforcing as the executive power had the use of an efficient policy instrument that, given the hierarchical and organizational characteristics of the military,

¹⁵ On moral capital, I agree to the conceptualization made by J Kane (2001) as to define moral prestige – whether of an individual, an organization or a cause- in useful service. In terms of civil military relations, the moral capital of the armed forces represents a 'resource for political agents and institutions, one that in combination with other familiar political resources enables political processes, supports political contestants and create political opportunities'. (Kane 2001:1)

was always eager to follow orders without hesitation¹⁶. In response, presidents committed to respect and promote the corporate interest of the armed forces by approving generous military budgets, modernisation programmes and excluding the judiciary and legislative branches of power from substantial supervision over the army and navy. Therefore, the system of control that has prevailed in the country over the armed forces is closer to a form of presidential control, rather than civilian in strict terms.

In essence, as long as missions delegated to the armed forces were allowed to be autonomously performed and did not blatantly overlap with those performed by civilian agencies, civil-military relations were kept calm and steady for the ruling elite. Once more, as occurred during *el porfiriato*, problems with the system of civil-military relations only became obvious when the military was unable to address the *maderista* revolution. Likewise, problems with the current system only became visible when President Carlos Salinas asked the armed forces to participate in tasks of public security and anti-drug trafficking operations which, up to 1989, had been historically performed by civilian agencies. In practice, this meant bringing the military into the drug war to replace inefficient and corrupt police bodies as well as to respond to international pressures, particularly from the United States government, to increase the capacity of the Mexican state to disrupt the supply of illicit drugs to the American market¹⁷.

In the light of the current structure of public security in Mexico, it seems that President Salinas' new policy approach to counteract the power of the drug cartels opened a window of opportunity that the military quickly seized, not just to augment their intervention to counter drug trafficking, but eventually to intervene in every corner of federal and state police agencies. In fact, since 1989, the military has gradually acquired many of the functions that once belonged to the Attorney-General's Office. It

¹⁶ In a recent interview, former president Luis Echeverría explained this relationship in relation to the events of 1968 and the student movement. "Now and then the great determinations to the Army come from the President, who is the chief commander of the Army". On the question of did you, as Interior Minister, have communication with the Secretary of Defence during the clash between the students and the army on October 2, 1968?, Echeverría answered: "no, the secretary of defence never deals with the Interior Minister or the undersecretary, he deals directly with the president"(Cárdenas Estandia 2008:77).

¹⁷ For U.S. pressures on Mexico for the issue of drug trafficking see: (Craig 1980; Van Wert 1986; Arriaga 1988; Castañeda 1988; Cornelius 1988; Barajas de la Vega 1990; Toro 1990; Alizal 1991; Zagaris and MacDonald 1992; González 1996; Lemus 1996; Marquez Pererira 1996; Gaytán Guzmán 1997; Bewley-Taylor 1998; Vélez Quero 1999; Vélez Quero 1999b; Wiarda 2000; Mendoza Chan 2001; Ramos Garcia 2003)

also gained the faculty to lead the reform of federal police bodies; and in a matter of years the military became powerful enough to dominate the intelligence apparatus of the state (Freeman and Chillier 2005). The military has gained power and autonomy *vis-à-vis* civilian law enforcement bodies. This remains unchecked by the judiciary and legislative power. Furthermore, its capacity to act autonomously has also grown as “on leave” or retired military personnel have come to dominate federal, state and even local police bodies. Additionally, the armed forces have increased their capability to act independently as numerous retired or on-leave officers lead federal, state and local institutions of public security. In fact, and irrespective of political affiliation, presidents, governors and city mayors have increasingly opted to involve the armed forces in order to contain criminality and maintain public order. An approach that clearly became noticeable in 1989 (Turbiville 1997). Since then, the armed forces have become the second largest employer of Mexico’s centralized public administration with nearly 300,000 positions (130,000 more than in 1989 and 200,000 more than 1980). Finally, the presidential defeat of the PRI after 71 years in office did not lead to a shift in the ongoing policy of militarization. In fact, it was during the administration of Vicente Fox when the Attorney-General’s Office appeared, for the first time in history, as a mere extension of the Defence Ministry.

Puzzling as it sounds, the militarization of the system of public security shared the same time and space as an apparently opposite process. While the political system transited to more democratic conditions of electoral competition, meantime, policing duties, traditionally led by civilian agencies, went under the control of the military. Mexico’s recent developments on civil-military relations offer a challenging case to study. That is, how democratically elected politicians can use pre-democratic arrangements of civilian control over the military to address pressing policy issues, even at the expense of postponing, delaying, if not ignoring, the construction and true renovation of law enforcement institutions based on civilian leadership (Negroponte 1999), an instrumental element for the consolidation of Mexico’s young democracy.

II. Research question, methodology and aims of the study

This thesis analyses the process by which the military has come to intervene in the system of public security in Mexico. It also addresses the repercussions that such

participation is likely to engender in the process of democratic consolidation. The questions I attempt to answer are: 1) why did the armed forces begin to expand their sphere of influence as the country's political system abandoned the long-existing hegemony of a single political party?; 2) in which ways did the reform process of civilian-based police agencies change civil-military relations?; and 3) how does militarisation of public security affect the prospects of democratic consolidation in Mexico?

I hypothesise and later demonstrate that granting primacy to the armed forces in tasks of public security heightened the long-standing authoritarian characteristics of the system of civil-military relations, which have also triggered negative consequences in relation to the overall process of democratic consolidation. First, while politicians may be willing to make costly policy decisions inspired by short-term horizons, the military responds to a different logic. If something has been clearly observed in the current drive of militarization, it is that once functions have been delegated to the armed forces, it is very difficult to return them to civilian agencies. This is particularly clear when we observe the transformation the army has gone through in regard to its structure of promotions, organization, educational system, deployment and training of troops to address organised crime and public insecurity. Second, it seems clear that by delegating direct policing functions to the armed forces, which have been historically an autonomous and restricted state agent, the ruling elite opened a wide window of opportunity for their participation in the entire system of public security. In fact, since President Salinas' initial decision to involve the army in the war against drug trafficking in 1989, this institution has taken over a multitude of functions of the Attorney-General's Office, has led to the reform of federal police bodies, has become dominant in the intelligence apparatus of the Mexican State, and obtained, since then, the ability to displace civilian authorities from state and municipal police departments.

I will argue that the incentives created over time by tighter electoral competition have reshaped the preferences of pragmatic politicians. They expect to profit from the high moral capital of the armed forces, by sending soldiers to address pressing policy issues, such as the expansion of public insecurity, the increasing focal points of insurgency, and of course anti drug trafficking operations. As a result, military intervention in public security is not only a portrayal or representation of the government's true will in

relation to national security issues, but also happens to be what the population hopes for or expects. I will argue that the problem lays not so much on the intervention of the military in the system of public security, but on the unaccountable and non-supervised way in which such participation takes place¹⁸.

Methodology

I address these issues by looking at the historical and institutional roots of the system of civil-military relations in Mexico. For that reason, I began this research by examining the original agreement that gave birth to the strict (formal and informal) rules of civilian control over the military, established during the protracted rule of Porfirio Díaz (1876-1911). From that period, I examine the details of the way this original agreement kept its basic characteristics throughout the 20th Century, passing by the Mexican Revolution, the consolidation of the post-revolutionary regime, the cold war and the period known as the dirty war (1968-1982). After 1989, I address the onset of militarization of public security as framed during the administration of President Carlos Salinas. I look at the transformations that such policy shifts produced in the overall configuration of civil-military relations in the years that followed. The last two chapters describe in detail the government's approach to combating organised crime and counterinsurgency, which represent the mayor driving forces fuelling the increasing role of the military in the system of public security.

In simple terms, this thesis presents an analytic narrative¹⁹ to explain the reconstruction of state power in Mexico after the Revolution and the way the executive branch shaped its relationship with the armed forces to address specific internal policy objectives as opposed to conventional missions of deterrence and national defence. In view of the fact that civilian control over the armed forces in Mexico has consistently avoided the participation of government agencies other than the presidential office, this thesis deals mainly with two major institutions (actors): the executive power and the armed forces. It identifies their goals and preferences, as well as the formal and informal rules that influence their behaviour (Levi 2002:4).

¹⁸ See S. Arzt (2003)

¹⁹ M. Levi (2000) argues that an analytic narrative is an effort to clarify and make explicit the approach adopted by numerous scholars trying to combine historical and comparative research with rational choice models

Thus, through a historical narrative, I identify the strategies of the executive power towards the military to achieve specific policy objectives prior and after the process of democratisation. I assume that while the system remained dominated by authoritarian conditions of political participation, the president's first choice was to maintain the political status quo. Therefore, the military represented a valuable asset to deter or eliminate the emergence of organized political opposition, whether this resistance aimed towards the executive's chosen policies or to the nature of the political system. However, as the system started to democratize in the late 1980s, the executive's priorities changed in important ways. The need to keep political enemies under control was no longer seen as a priority. Instead, the main concern was to win the allegiance of the citizenry under the new rules and conditions of democratic electoral competition. Democratisation did represent a critical juncture in Mexico's recent history that shifted a longstanding equilibrium favouring the executive power over the armed forces. Furthermore, democratization did not diminish the role of the military in the political system as has arguably occurred in other countries of Latin America.

I explain the resilience of the authoritarian characteristics of the system of civil-military relationships in Mexico by looking at the long-cultivated moral capital of the military in Mexican politics. This characteristic makes the intensive use of the armed forces to address the shortcomings of civilian government agencies a widely accepted measure to the public. Contrary to conventional wisdom or logical expectations (Hunter 1997; Call 2002), democratization ended up increasing the importance of the military in national politics. Within this new panorama, the ruling elite continuously portray the extensive use of the military in police and national security agencies as the ultimate proof of their commitment to the rule of law and the combat of organised crime. On the military side of the equation, I address the way the armed forces adapted their organisation to changing political conditions and preferences of the incumbent president in order to protect its moral capital and promote its corporate interest.

Under this logic, a rational choice approach along to an historical institutionalist perspective appears relevant to address the different dimension of this phenomenon. Historical institutionalism (HI) views political development as a path-dependent process: following one path channels further development down the same direction (Ikenberry, Lake et al. 1988; Levi 1997; Pierson 2004), which often precludes other

choices from taking place (Hunter 1997). As N. Pedriana (2005) argues, this does not necessarily mean that once an initial path is chosen, future actions and outcomes become predetermined or automatically “locked in” (Pedriana 2005:360). It rather means that the probability of continuing movement along the same path increases with each subsequent step in the chosen direction. Reversing course is thus not impossible, but increasingly unlikely (Steinmo, Thelen et al. 1992; Thelen 1999). Likewise, a rational choice approach offers a compelling understanding of the incentives that fairer conditions for electoral competition had on elected politicians’ preferences concerning the use of the armed forces in sensitive tasks of public security, such as counteracting drug trafficking or containing insurgency.

The empirical evidence regarding the way this process evolved suggests the military’s vertical and undisputed subordination to the executive power is path dependent and crafted in time. In contrast, the horizontal expansion of military missions, meaning the invasion of military agents into areas traditionally dominated by civilians, is intrinsically linked to a changing political environment that affects objectives and preference formation of ruling elites. Therefore, a creative combination that attempts to harness the strengths of each approach seems adequate to disentangle the puzzle that inspires this research.

As will be explained in detail in Chapter 1, I bind together rational choice and historical institutionalism in a model that explains the inner workings of Mexico’s system of civil-military relations. By a model, I understand a ‘schematic statement of a theoretical argument, a hypothesized parsimonious abstraction of “reality” that depicts deductively sound, systematic, regular relationships between specified aspects of reality and helps to explain that relationship’ (Büthe 2002:482). The model I propose is divided into three levels of a pyramid where a distinctive principal-agent relationship takes place. At the top of civilian control, the relationship between the executive power and the military remains strong and unequal, favouring the authority of the president. However, at lower levels of the government structure, where the armed forces interact with other state agencies, the relationship was reversed by the new set of responsibilities they have acquired since 1989. At this point, civilian law enforcement agencies happen to be subordinated to the armed forces, or at least supervised by them. In that sense, empowering the armed forces in public security not only reinforces their role as the

privileged and reliable agent of the president to combat criminality, but also converts the military to become the principal vis-à-vis federal and state law enforcement institutions. At the bottom of the pyramid, the relationship is virtually nonexistent or irrelevant for the system of civil-military relations, as the legislative or the judicial branches of power do not formally supervise the armed forces. It is at this level where a major obstacle to the construction of a more democratic civil-military relationship resides.

Aim of the Study

This thesis takes as starting point the historical and institutional foundations of Mexico's system of civil-military relations to explain the role of the armed forces in the political system and its relation with the executive power. It delves on a specific form of civilian control over the armed forces -in what I call exclusive subordination- to explain the undisputed authority of the president and the way this characteristic enables the horizontal expansion of military mission in the political system beyond their conventional expertise. My research aims at investigating how this form of control not only resisted the push that democratization made over several political institutions and practices after 1989, but also reinforced the dependency of elected officials to portray the participation of the military as a clear sign of commitment to address pressing policy issues such as the combat to organised crime and the containment of subversion.

III. Sources of information

The core of the historical narrative constructed in chapters 2 to 5 is built on a myriad of information sources. Apart from the encompassing and detailed studies of Roderic Ai Camp on Mexican civil-military relations, the literature dealing with this topic is somewhat limited. Therefore, I looked at a number of secondary sources containing historical accounts of this period: books and papers where I found bits and fragments of the relationship between the armed forces and the executive power. On this issue, I found useful bibliographic material generated by the armed forces themselves, such as *la Revista del Ejército* and some internal booklets provided by retired officers and the navy attaché in London. I also consulted the database of The New York Times, as their envoys in Mexico were prolific on registering the tight relationship between the Mexican president and the military, particularly during the 1940s, 50s and 60s. I visited

the *Hemeroteca Nacional*, where I searched specific numbers of *El Universal* and *El Sol* during the 1960s to elaborate on the *jaramillista* and the student movement of 1968.

Theses and specific collections

The second source of information were the theses of Mexican and American officers who had studied Master's degrees at universities and colleges linked to the US Secretary of Defence. Their views were instrumental in understanding the way American and Mexican officers conceptualise the military in terms of its doctrine and character of their missions. I also consulted M.Sc., B.Sc., and unpublished doctoral theses at the archives of the National Autonomous University of Mexico, the History Department of the Autonomous University of Puebla and *El Colegio de Michoacán* in Morelia, which have been quite prolific in the generation of research on armed movements in Mexico. I found very enlightening interviews of students who managed to talk with high-ranked army officers on issues directly connected to the core argument of this thesis. On contemporary bibliography, I ran searches periodically on Google Scholar on militarisation, Mexican Armed Forces, drug trafficking, counterinsurgency and other keywords that often provided interesting clues to updated studies, conference papers and unpublished material. I also made an intensive use of press articles on the issue of drug trafficking and militarisation of public security, which has become a widely covered issue by the Mexican public opinion in the last ten years. On this subject, I centred my attention on three newspapers that have efficient online search engines: *La Jornada*, *Reforma* and *El Universal*. Occasionally, I also consulted *Milenio* and *La Crónica*. Weekly magazines were also a source of valuable material, especially *Proceso*, which has closely covered the activities of the armed forces since 1976. Their articles and material were helpful to build the argument of Chapter 6 and 7 that deal with the dirty war and more contemporary guerrilla movements.

Archives and official data

The opening of the archives of the DFS in 2001 represents an invaluable source of original material on the politics of national security in Mexico. Even though its consultation is restricted, as the archive remains under the guardianship of the Centre of Research and National Security (CISEN), the material provided by its custodians on

Rubén Jaramillo, Lucio Cabañas, Genaro Vázquez, the Action Revolutionary Movement (MAR), the Communist League 23 of September; Arturo Gámiz and the Revolutionary Action Group; *Los Halcones* and the White Brigade were instrumental to document what I call the politics of national security during the presidencies of Adolfo López Mateos, Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, Luis Echeverría and José López Portillo. Likewise, during my visits to the Mexican Archives, I also requested the public versions²⁰ of intelligence dossiers of key political figures of the period under study. That was the case of Alfonso Martínez Domínguez, Mayor of Mexico City during the Corpus Thursday massacre dated June 11, 1971; General Hermenegildo Cuenca Díaz, Secretary of National Defence 1970-1976; General Marcelino García Barragán, Secretary of Defence 1964-1970; General Miguel Angel Godínez Bravo, Chief of Military Staff 1976-1982; Colonel Manuel Díaz Escobar, Chief of the group known as “*Los Halcones*”; Javier García Paniagua, Director of the Federal Directorate of Security 1976-1979. Half of those dossiers were prepared by personnel of the CISEN and the Unit of Transparency of the National Archives by direct request of this author. Each dossier contains between 500 and 1500 pages. I also explored the archives of the Secretary of Defence (SEDENA), located in Gallery 2 of the National Archives building. These documents are open to free consultation and contain intelligence dossiers made by the armed forces concerning guerrilla operations in Guerrero as well as the army’s counterinsurgency tactics. Contrary to my experience in the US National Archives, the Mexican National Archive lacks an efficient catalogue. Therefore, the researcher often receives boxes full of documents that may or may not be related to the issues that are being researched, making the task of consulting the archive very time consuming.

In a similar way, I checked online documents posted by the Mexico Project of the National Security Archives²¹. I conducted several visits to the National Archives of the United States, kept at the University of Maryland during 2005 and 2006, especially in what concerns classified communication, analysis and studies generated by US embassy

²⁰ A public version is a revised report of intelligence dossiers of individuals or movements as they were elaborated by the Federal Directorate of Security or other intelligence agencies of the Mexican Government. These reports do not contain personal information of those that were subjected to surveillance, such as addresses, telephone numbers, lover’s names, etc. These documents are elaborated by personnel of the National Archive on request of researchers through the IFAI

²¹ <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/mexico/>

personnel and military attaches in Mexico that were later sent to the State Department from 1905 to 1974.

The last two chapters are mainly based on information I requested from the armed forces through the IFAI. I made 49 requests of information to the Army, Navy and the Attorney-General's Office on a variety of issues. I must say that the military many times tagged the requested information as restricted. However, it seems army personnel in charge of responding to information requests were particularly open during the first weeks of the implementation of this policy late in 2003. I thank such extra cooperation, as the information provided on the distribution of army forces in the country, policy of promotions and the list on on-leave or retired officers working in federal, state and municipal agencies of public security were vital for the elaboration of tables and graphs presented in chapter 7 and 8. Similarly, I consulted the statistical appendix of several annual presidential addresses to the Nation, which contain information on budgets and performance of federal agencies, the armed forces included.

Interviews

In general, chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 contain several interviews with military personnel, active, on-leave and retired officers who were willing to share their views on the system of civil-military relations and their experiences in their direct participation in operations against drug trafficking, guerrilla movements and public security. In the last section of the thesis, the reader will find a complete list of the interviews I conducted during the course of this research. Still, it is important to say that given the nature of the topic, it was often difficult to find officers willing to discuss their experiences on such issues. Thanks to the intervention of the former leader of the senate, Mr. Enrique Jackson Ramírez, and the federal deputy José Alberto Aguilar Iñarritu, a number of retired and on-leave officers agreed to talk to me. The people I chose to interview were those who had had direct contact with the issues that I examine in depth in those chapters, specifically the foundation of the Federal Directorate of Security and its role in the political system; the relationship between the executive power and the armed forces; the so-called *guerra sucia* (dirty war); the counterinsurgency policy and strategy of the Mexican Government; military counter drug-trafficking operations and the active participation of the military in the tasks of public security. That was the case of General Ramón Mota Sánchez, chief of staff of the Secretary of Defence (1978-1980) and

Chairman of the Senate's Defence Commission during the LVI Legislature; General Miguel Angel Godínez Bravo, chief of military staff of president José López Portillo; General Armando Palmerin Cordero, undersecretary of defence under the Presidency of Vicente Fox; General Homero Gamboa, member of the security staff of President Luis Echeverría, Vice-Admiral Rafael Gálvez Ibarra, who was part of the team in charge of the foundation of the Federal Preventive Police during the presidency of Ernesto Zedillo. In all cases, I prepared a detailed script to guide the interviews, according to the background information I had for each case. However, I frequently found the interviewees unwilling to address my questions directly, so I opted to let them talk on the issue freely, while asking them to be more specific on certain issues.

The thesis was also enriched by a number of interviews I made with high profile politicians, such as José Luis Santiago Vasconcelos, deputy attorney general for the war against organised crime during the presidency of Vicente Fox and Felipe Calderón; Fidel Herrera Beltrán, Governor of Veracruz; Emeterio López Marquez, former Attorney General of Veracruz; and other public servants who commented on the nature of civilian control of the military in Mexico and their experiences dealing with the Secretary of Defence. I conducted several interviews with members of congress who had participated in the Commission of National Defence. I also interviewed activists and leaders of prestigious human rights organisations working in Mexico and Washington DC. However, the most fascinating testimonies I got were in the prison of Santa Martha Acatitla, where the deputy director of the Federal Directorate of Security (DFS), Commandant Sergio Espino Verdin, faces a 90-year sentence for his alleged participation in the assassination of Enrique Camarena Salazar in 1985. I also interviewed inmates Samuel Raza and Francisco Tejeda Juárez, both former agents of the DFS. Their insights into the role of the armed forces and the DFS in the dirty war and the campaign against drug trafficking were essential for the construction of the argument in Chapters 6 and 7.

IV. Outline of the thesis

The thesis is divided into eight chapters. Chapter 1 presents theoretical considerations in traditional and more contemporary studies of civil-military relations in Latin America. It addresses the shortcomings of the existing literature to deal with the Mexican experience. In the last section of the chapter, I propose a constructive dialogue between

historical institutionalism and rational choice to address this gap in the existing literature. I argue that historical institutionalism is able to disentangle the resilient nature of control the executive power enjoys military officers; while a rational choice can be useful to reveal how the process of democratisation in Mexico heightened the incentives of elected leaders to militarise the system of public security.

Chapter 2 is the first of five historical chapters. In this chapter, I analyze the way civilian control over the military was originally imposed during *el porfiriato* (1876-1911). I focus on the informal methods for maintaining the loyalty of the officer corps and Díaz's approach on military professionalism. This discussion is important as *el porfiriato* set a path-dependent trajectory on the nature of civil-military relations that could not even be changed by the tremendous rupture with the past that signified the Mexican Revolution.

In Chapter 3, I set out the basic picture of the Mexican Revolution, the destruction of Díaz's army and the resurgence of a system of civilian control over the armed forces that institutionalized their exclusive subordination to the president as it occurred during *el porfiriato*. It also looks at the characteristics of the regional security complex where Mexico is located and the way this geopolitical position defined the internal role of the military: imposing public order, addressing political and electoral conflicts and promoting economic development. This is in contrast to more traditional conceptions of national defence.

Chapter 4 discusses mainly the *sexenio* of Lázaro Cárdenas. The first section of this chapter deals with Calles' political downfall that, given the dominant role he had played since the assassination of Obregón in 1928, resulted in the ultimate test of loyalty of the armed forces to the executive power. The second part focuses on the political uses of the armed forces to support specific and sometimes controversial reforms and policy paths chosen by President Cárdenas between 1938 and 1939. I also look at the presidential term of Manuel Avila Camacho and the positive effect that the war scenario in Europe brought to the armed forces in terms of technological modernization and military professionalism. The last section explains how, after 1946, the military found itself trapped in a political system where their external defence role was secondary while its internal missions were closely identified with the preservation of the regime, which, to some extent, was the outcome of its own struggle.

Chapter 5 introduces a further dimension of the system of civil-military relations. It analyses the increasing partisan use of the military during the presidency of Miguel Alemán, particularly against the independent union movement. In this chapter, I also address the role of the Federal Directorate of Security as the first informal mechanism devised by civilians to assist the armed forces to combat those considered as enemies, as well as to supervise their missions. In the second section, I look at the extreme partisan use of the military during the incipient guerrilla movements in Morelos and Chihuahua, as well as the long-term impact that the repression of the student movement in 1968 generated in the political system. Finally, I analyse the nature of military missions after 1960 by evaluating the capacity of the armed forces to adjust to the changing preferences of the executive power, while safeguarding their corporate interests.

Chapter 6 analyzes the excessive use of force presidents Luis Echeverría and José López Portillo directed against the student, rural and guerrilla movements in the 1970s, in what was supposed to be a partial conferral of internal political affairs to the military, intelligence agencies and police bodies. I also address the way the military changed its structure and way of acting to avoid damaging their public image as a result of the president's intention to control political dissent. To illustrate this process, I will examine the role of the armed forces during three major internal security events that took place in the 1970s under the presidency of Luis Echeverría and José López Portillo: the massacre of June 10th, 1971, known as Corpus Thursday; the counterinsurgency policy employed by the armed forces in Guerrero to crush the armed groups of Genaro Vázquez and Lucio Cabañas; and the participation of the armed forces in the campaign against the urban guerrillas, specially their role in the persecution of the Communist League September 23.

In Chapter 7, I draw attention to the current counterinsurgency role of the armed forces and the ways the conflict in Chiapas changed the traditional approach of the military to counteract guerrillas in the country. I will concentrate on the way the army in Mexico modified its internal structure of promotions, deployment and training of troops as a way to improve the containment of insurgency, particularly in the southeast region. Second, I will look at the informal mechanisms the army has at its disposal to defuse any institutional attempt to review its past record of abuses and violations to human rights that could represent a direct damage to their corporate interest. On this issue, I

suggest that democratisation in Mexico strengthened the political leverage of the armed forces at different levels of the structure of political power. This situation is consistent with the type of exclusive subordination of the armed forces, and poses serious questions regarding the ability of Mexico's democracy to consolidate in the upcoming years. In the final section, I appraise the challenge that represents the recent terrorist attacks of the EPR to the abilities and real capacities of the Mexican state to contain this sort of guerrilla.

In chapter 8, I look at the enhanced role of the military in the system of public security. The first part takes on the historical background of the participation of the military in counteracting drug trafficking. In this section, I deal with the longstanding pressure the United States have exerted on the Mexican government to improve its capacity to combat the power of the drug cartels. In the second section, I weigh up the possible motivations President Salinas considered prior to his decision to delegate the load of the strategy to counteract the illicit traffic of drugs to the armed forces. I particularly delve into the transformation this new role generated in the organisation of the armed forces, especially regarding its yearly budget allocations, geographical distribution of personnel and internal structure of promotions. In the final part, I explore the presidency of Vicente Fox and how the great expectations of change that prevailed during his campaign in terms of democratising the system of civilian control over the military ended up enhancing militarisation even more, and therefore, weakening the current process of democratic consolidation.

Chapter 1. Civil-Military Relations in Mexico: A Theoretical Framework

“The civil-military challenge is to reconcile a military strong enough to do anything the civilians ask them to with a military subordinate enough to do only what civilians authorize them to do.” Peter D. Feaver (1996:1).

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss traditional and more contemporary approaches to civil-military relations. I aim to identify which theoretical tools are relevant to explain the role of Mexico’s armed forces in the political system; their longstanding relationship of subordination to the executive power and the way democratic consolidation has been affected by its expanding role in the system of public security. For that reason, I find it best to divide this chapter into three sections. First, I explore traditional theoretical approaches of civil-military relations and civilian supremacy as well as their usefulness to address the Mexican case. In the second section, I address historical institutionalism and rational choice approaches on contemporary civil-military relations. In the third and final part of the chapter, I present a theoretical framework that combines the strengths of the historical institutional analysis with a model based on a simple principal-agent relationship. I will argue that this synthesis is useful to address the characteristics of civilian control over the military in Mexico.

Historical institutionalism and rational choice are the most relevant explanations for civil-military relations in Latin America after the last wave of democratisation, and they complement each other while offering a convincing explanation to the question that inspires this thesis. I argue that an analytic narrative can effectively address the theoretical inconsistencies of traditional approaches on civil-military control when applied to the Mexican case. It is useful to uncover not only the complex historical patterns of direct and indirect military influence in politics, but also the incentives presidents have considered at the time of delegating to the military missions that differed from those of national defence.

1.1. The traditional view on civil-military relations.

Either to support or to attack his arguments on civil-military control, Huntington's seminal study, *The Soldier and the State*, is perhaps one of the most cited books in contemporary literature on civil-military relations (Feaver 1999). In fact, through Huntington's approaches and those of scholars who oppose his perception on civil-military control, it is possible to address the normative, structural and cultural focuses that characterise the literature on this field in the second half of the 20th Century. Bearing this in mind, I will discuss three main characteristics of Huntington's prescriptive study on objective control and military professionalism to address the relevance of traditional civil-military relations literature for Mexico's case. When speaking of traditional, I make extensive allusion to studies and theoretical explanations that addressed civil-military relations in Latin America prior to the democratizing wave of the 1980s and early 1990s.

1.1.1 The importance of objective control

S. Huntington argued that the best way to achieve the subordination of the armed forces was by turning the military establishment politically neutral through encouraging "an independent military sphere." The objective is to make difficult for political groups to involve the armed forces in their own struggles for power (Huntington 1957). This could be achieved by recognising the autonomous field of military professionalisation. He named this strategy objective military control.

Huntington explained that modern warfare requires highly specialised military skills, which are practically impossible to acquire when the armed forces have a close involvement in political matters. In that sense, a wise decision would be to promote the conditions for military professionalisation in the art of national defence that reflect their special status as experts in the management of violence. It was expected that this policy could compel the armed forces to abandon other missions that are not compatible with the protection of the state against its enemies. Huntington hoped that by promoting professionalisation of the armed forces, political intervention could be erased from the military's routines and most important, from the "military mind."

The antithesis of professionalisation of the armed forces would be subjective control, by which the ruling elite turns them into an instrument for the achievement of political

objectives. However, subjective control is dangerous because it opens the door of politics to military participation and stops the armed forces from developing their own independent commitment to political non-interference. It also hinders the possibilities of achieving an efficient military apparatus capable of defending the nation against external or internal enemies in what Huntington calls “military security” (Huntington 1957).

In general, Huntington’s approach to civilian control did not escape criticism on a variety of issues. In fact, through Huntington’s observations, the literature on civil-military relations became remarkably prolific in the 1960s and 1970s. To begin with, S. Finer claimed that speaking favourably of military professionalism as a way to promote apolitical military establishments could not be empirically proven right. The German and Japanese cases after the 1930s are notorious. S. Finer (1967) argued that the whole weakness of Huntington’s thesis was that everything was made to rest upon a very special definition of professionalism, and by pure deduction from this, of a so-called ‘military mind.’ Finer insisted that Huntington’s arguments were essentialist: ‘If soldiers are observed to act in ways consistent with these concepts of professionalism and the military mind, so much the worse of the soldiers: they are not completely professional, not purely military’ (Finer 1962:22). In contrast, Finer concludes that if the armed forces are not to intervene in the political arena, they must believe in an explicit principle: the principle of civilian supremacy.

On similar grounds, S. Fitch (1998) argues that, historically, military professionalisation in Latin America has resulted in more institutionalised military intervention in politics and higher levels of military autonomy. Fitch’s conceptualisation of military professionalisation does not differ significantly from Huntington’s in terms of technical development, training system, corporate identity, responsibility and others. However, Fitch points out, I think correctly, that the negative correlation between professionalisation and political intervention is basically an empirical question open to investigation (Fitch 1998:3).

As indicated by Fitch, there are important similarities between the Mexican case and Huntington’s concept of subjective civilian control (Serrano 1995). Different to other experiences in Latin America, the armed forces’ role in the political system was established within the governmental apparatus as an unconditional ally of the executive

power. After 1934, the military in Mexico was neither a political competitor nor an autonomous political actor. This characteristic has clear historical and institutional reasons. The first antecedent of civilian supremacy was established by Porfirio Díaz during his protracted rule of 34 years in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. As it will be observed in Chapter 2 and 3, President Díaz's informal model of military control was later institutionalised by Presidents Venustiano Carranza, Alvaro Obregón and Plutarco Elías Calles, also known as the architects of the post-revolutionary regime. This generation of leaders made of the preservation of political stability one of the pillars of military duties.

In this line, D. Rueschemeyer et.al. (1992), argue that Mexico experienced a late consolidation of the state power (Rueschemeyer, Huber et al. 1992). This had occurred by the late 1920s, when the military elite that emerged victorious from the Revolutionary War agreed on the institutional framework of the new and modern Mexican State. R. Camp (1992) rightly points out that it was during this period that the leadership of the militias that triumphed in the Mexican Revolution understood that political stability could not be achieved if charismatic *caudillos* were allowed to participate in politics from their military positions. To address this problem, the post-revolutionary elite agreed to transform the armed forces into a loyal and professional agency, subjected to a single political command as a primary requisite for future political stability.

This political agreement had formal and informal institutional underpinnings: first by institutionalising the role of the armed forces in the Constitution and The Organic Law of the Armed Forces, and second, by having the new generations of officers internalise, and socialise in, the values of patriotism and loyalty to the political institutions created by the Revolution, including strict obedience to the commands of the executive power (Ackroyd 1991; Wager 1994). It seems clear, as M. Serrano (1995) argues, that the political climate prevailing in the years that followed the end of the armed struggle was suitable for bringing the armed forces into a strict form of civilian control (Serrano 1995). In time, the principle of civilian supremacy, as Finer (1962) defined it, became a constant in the political landscape.

On the face of it, military missions in the political system acquired two specific dimensions. On the one hand, the military devoted their human and material resources

to perform social policy¹ tasks in what may be called the developmentalist (Fitch 1998) and civilianist nature of military missions² (Moskos, Williams et al. 2000). On the other hand, the armed forces assumed the partisan role of keeping in check real or potential enemies of the political regime they had helped to create. This responsibility was shared by federal and local police bodies as well as specialised intelligence agencies with operative capacity under the supervision of the President and the Interior Ministry (Aguayo 2001). Under these two referents, Mexico's military developed its own approach to military professionalism, especially designed to improve their performance in social and internal security missions. Their social policy role was closer to "objective control", while the utilization of the armed forces to repress political opponents fits better the subjective kind of role as described by Huntington.

Public perceptions of military missions reflect this dual nature as well. The armed forces constructed a rock-solid reputation as the "patriotic nation-builders" (Wager 1994:3) and one of the most efficient instruments of the state to promote development. As shown in Table 1.2, in spite of their partisan role and increasing public security responsibilities, the military remains as the best-rated government institution of the country³. Although scarce records of public opinion polls exist, focusing on military reputation during the 1960s and 1970s, there are no elements to suggest this could have been radically different among the general public to what is now, not even in states where the army carried out harsh counterinsurgency campaigns as a result of the suspected presence of guerrilla movements (GCE 2008).

¹ Military accounts focusing on the armed forces' political culture of the 1940s and 1950s show that these tasks became the preferred mission of the army's leadership as they enhanced their reputation and the institution's social capital. (Wager, 1994)

² Mexico's military roles in the political system were closer to General Juan Perón's ideal concept of "integral professionalism," which stressed the participation of the armed forces in a wide range of missions in support of the government program of national development.

³ J. Kane (2001) argues that moral capital exists only through people's moral judgments and appraisals and is thus dependent on the perceptions available to them (Kane 2001:2). It is precisely this high reputation or moral capital of the armed forces what makes top policy makers (president, governors and city majors) more willing to delegate a variety of missions in the military as a way to portray their commitment to address pressing policy issues, such as crime and public insecurity.

Table 1.1

Legitimacy of the state in Mexico: confidence of citizens in institutions

| Percentage of Respondents Giving Positive Evaluation | | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Institution | 1988 | 1998 | 2000 | 2008 |
| Family | 84 | 92 | 92 | 92 |
| Church | 62 | 77 | 75 | 77 |
| Schools/university | | 60 | 64 | |
| Army/Navy | 32 | 45 | 49 | 53 |
| Business | 22 | 52 | 41 | 45 |
| Television | 37 | 36 | 38 | |
| Unions | 14 | 24 | 25 | |
| Newspaper/Media | 25 | 29 | 24 | 50 |
| Police | 12 | 33 | 23 | 25 |
| Law/Courts | 32 | 31 | 22 | 28 |
| Congress | 16 | 28 | 21 | 23 |
| Political Parties | | 29 | 20 | 20 |

Sources: The idea for this table was originally taken from Camp (2003:55) and later complemented with information from GCE (2008). Altogether, the sources are: *Este País*, August 1991, 4; Laurence Parisot, "attitudes About the Media": A Five Country Comparison," Marta Lagos, "*Actitudes económicas y democracia en Latinoamérica*," *Este País*, January 1997: Table 16; "Democracy Through Latin American Lenses," Grant, Hewlett Foundation, Principal Investigator, Roderic Ai Camp, June 1998 and GCE (2008).

Although Huntington's reference to subjective and objective control helps to identify the character of the system of civil-military relations, it does not provide enough elements to address specific characteristics that emerge from the empirical research. For instance, formal and informal rules governing the relationship between civilians and soldiers, as they were created after the Mexican Revolution, may comply with the prescriptive notion of objective civil-military control. Mexico's military has been long subordinated to the executive power. Moreover, the undisputed subordination of the military's hierarchy to Vicente Fox, the first elected president of a political party different to the PRI after 70 years in office, confirmed that military's loyalty was not chained to the post-revolutionary political elite, but to presidential authority. Still, as will be detailed throughout the course of this research, the missions that either authoritarian or democratically elected civilian elites have delegated to the armed forces, particularly after 1989, suggest that their aims and means remain inherently authoritarian. Furthermore, the dangerous consequences that Huntington identifies as potentially evolving from subjective control did not apply entirely to Mexico's experience. This is, in spite of the partisan character of military missions, often disguised as guarding the internal order; the armed forces did not turn into a visible political player.

To Huntington's credit, it seems true that the excessive participation of the military in internal affairs or areas that did not belong to their natural expertise hindered their capacity to achieve "military security," as he rightly predicted. In other words, the incapacity to face an external or internal enemy, as it most likely occurred during the Zapatista uprising in 1994. In this category also enter the attacks to core Pemex's infrastructure in June and September 2007 by the Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR), and certainly their inability to prevent the terrorist act presumably perpetrated by organised crime gangs during the Independence Day celebrations in the city of Morelia in 2008, uncovered the shortcomings of the Mexican armed forces to deal with a more organised and better funded form of insurgency and terrorist groups.

1.1.2 The structuralist critique

A second source of criticism of Huntington's approach came from structuralist authors. For the case of civil-military relations in Argentina during the mid 1960s, G. O'Donnell (1976) added that acute conditions of political conflict (mass praetorianism) triggered by high modernization pushed the armed forces to intervene in the political arena. They aimed at re-establishing public order and securing favourable socio-economic conditions to economic development. Under conditions of great political instability and economic stalemate, the armed forces assumed that the main threats to national security transpired from the "socio-economic battlefield." Therefore, it opened a new set of possibilities for professionalisation that were not related to a traditional vision of external defence but of training in faulty policy areas.

G. O'Donnell (1976) argued that this position created a credo that underscored economic development as a prerequisite for low levels of social conflict. "So, national security will not be attained and the armed forces will not have accomplished one of their fundamental goals. From this, it naturally follows that development is the very essence of national security" (O'Donnell 1976:209). In time, the newly acquired knowledge or the "new military professionalism" reinforced the belief among military officials that they had a superior capacity to confront social and economic problems. In that sense, civilian control grew weaker as the problems caused by high modernization reshaped the nature of military professionalisation, which in turn, generated the most intense and comprehensive type of military intervention on politics. From this, O'Donnell concludes: "because of their professionalism, not in spite of it,

professionalized armed forces manifest a high probability of taking upon themselves the responsibility of overcoming recurring civil-military crises by the way of the installation of a new political regime.” (O’Donnell 1976:227)

S. Huntington himself recognised years after releasing *The Soldier and the State*, as A. Stepan and others pointed out (Stepan 1973; Pion-Berlin 2001) that the origins of military coups could not be entirely explained within the military organisation, but in the structure of society (Huntington 1968), and above all, by seeing the causes of politicisation of the armed forces in the disputes for power among social groups, and the impossibility of the ruling elite to satisfy increasing social demands through formal institutions. Huntington’s reformulation made his analysis closer to the structuralist approach (Pion-Berlin 2001). On similar grounds, W. Hunter (1997a) argued that strong civilian control is difficult to sustain, especially in countries where the armed forces have sought to expand their internal role in times of domestic political and economic crisis.

For the Mexican case, this discussion may lead us to consider that it could have been the absence of acute social tensions presumably generated by modernization policies in countries like Argentina that prevented Mexico’s military from politicisation. After all, the so-called golden years of the authoritarian domination of the PRI (1940-1968) were characterised by high levels of economic growth and relative improvement of living standards (Loaeza and Segovia 1987). Therefore, it can be argued the political institutionalisation of the authoritarian regime was flexible enough to meet the increasing political demands of a society that was certainly becoming more complex, but not necessarily involved in political issues.

For decades, the recipe of high political institutionalisation and selective partisan participation of the military in the resolution of political conflicts provided a sufficiently plausible explanation for Mexico’s political analysis. However, as the authoritarian regime started to experience a process of deinstitutionalisation of its structures of political control, apparently as a result of democratisation, the balance of power shifted towards more military participation to placate rising expressions of social discontent (Meyer 1996). Mexico’s experience on civil-military relations did not contradict theoretical expectations that military intervention rises when the institutionalisation of the military surpasses that of political parties and other civilian institutions. (Lowenthal

and Fitch 1986). However, it does not seem to support the thesis that this intervention necessarily generates the politicisation of the military.

The structuralist literature does not seem to explain why Mexico's armed forces avoided politicisation when economic stalemate and political tensions reached dangerous levels in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s. As for other countries on the continent, Mexico's democratic transition, coupled with the need to reform the conditions of electoral contestation, liberalised, privatised and marketised an economy highly dominated by the state (Huntington 1995). However, the president's control over the armed forces proved resilient even in the midst of acute economic restructuring and political crisis. In my view, the socially painful and probably "politically irrational" policies of Mexico's economic reform (Santín Quiroz 2001) along with the deinstitutionalisation of the authoritarian regime in the 1990s, made military participation more likely to occur within the scope of the president's policy choices. Nevertheless, such increasing participation did not change the strict nature of subordination to the Executive power. On the contrary, as it will be explained in detail in Chapter 7 and 8, this extreme form of civilian supremacy, in what I call the principle of exclusive subordination of the armed forces to the president, has been fiercely defended by the military itself.

1.1.3 External/Internal determinants of civil-military control

A third and last form of criticism to Huntington's approach, with implications for this thesis, is centred on the normative characteristics of objective control. These arguments are partly summarised in M. Desch's (1999) work. He argues that civilian control over the armed forces cannot be achieved solely by centring on the organisational characteristics or their normative bias⁴. Such a categorisation does not explain the

⁴ Normative institutionalists argue that norms and values within organizations are useful to explain the behaviour of members of a particular organisation. Political actors tend to reflect more closely the values of the institutions with which they are associated, as stated by (Peters, 1999:25-37). For normative institutionalism, preferences are formed within the institutional environment rather than determined from external sources. Institutions mould their own participants, and supply systems of meaning for their members in political, economic or social spheres. On decision-making, normative institutionalists argue that institutions have a repertoire of solutions that are ready to be applied to a set of potential problems. (March, 1989). In that sense, Huntington's objective civilian control would specify clear grounds of action for the armed forces and would define their values and missions through professionalisation and socialisation with the civilian elite and the citizenry. Therefore, the military would not participate in the political arena because their commitment to professionalisation would prevent it. Huntington's model of objective control subtracts political intervention from military's "garbage can" as a route of action to address a specific problem. The value of Huntington's study is that it set a starting point to discuss

impact that the broader political system generates in the armed forces' role. For M. Desch, it is important to ask what functions the armed forces are called to perform. Building on Stepan (1973, 1988), M. Desch argues that the military, as an organisation, responds to the nature of domestic and international threats. In other words, the nature of the missions defines the character of the relationship between civilians and soldiers and the military's role in the political system⁵. Therefore, countries that face a challenging agenda of security based on external threats tend to have better control over the armed forces, while those that cope with the internal enemy generally experience problems to keep the military away from politics. A military apparatus with an external role is better suited for objective civilian control, as constant professionalisation would be the basis of achieving "military security." In turn, a military centred on internal missions would be condemned to play an active political role against the internal enemies of the state, making civilian control problematic. When the external or internal environment is ambiguous, militaries will recur to their doctrines, which specify whether to with or diverge from civilian leaders (Desch 1999:17-19).

M. Desch's characterisation of military control combined structural and international determinants of civilian control within a "bounded rationality" vision of the military as a complex organisation. In my view, the importance Desch granted to doctrine for military decision-making did not escape the normative bias for which he had originally criticised Huntington's first characterization of objective control. Still, Desch's emphasis on doctrine is a reminder of the importance of political culture in the definition of civil-military relations (Mares 1998; Mares 2000). Political culture, understood as "people's predominant beliefs, attitudes, values, ideals, sentiments and evaluations of their country, and the role of the self in the system" (Diamond 1993:7), creates a series of incentives and routines that neither the armed forces nor civilian ruling elites can easily disregard. The cultural notion of civil-military relations helps to define the "all encompassing" space for each particular case of civilian control. In the

different approaches of civilian control in consolidated democracies, countries undergoing democratic transition, and dictatorships.

⁵ Alfred Stepan (1973) challenged the virtues of objective control or the professionalisation of the armed forces on normative grounds. He argued that the nature of the threat facing the nation would determine the scope of the military's professionalisation program. By studying Brazilian and Peruvian military regimes, A. Stepan found that professionalisation could also foster weak civilian control if the new skills acquired by the armed forces overlap with those of the civilian leadership. His idea was not entirely original. Finer (1962) had already argued that a motive for intervention could also transpire from professionalism. This is especially when military leaders feel that they alone are competent enough to establish security as they see it, both economically and socially. (Stepan, 1973)

end, as D. Mares argues, political culture may not be able to determine entirely the character of the relationship between soldiers and civilians. However, it says a lot when some attitudes represent a clear threat to civilian supremacy (Mares 1998).

Still, the impact of the external/internal dimension on the nature of civilian control in Mexico may not pass the test of empirical enquiry either, particularly after 1946. Apparently, the external security priorities of a country that shared 2,000 miles of border with one of the super military powers of the Cold War could be assumed to lead to the transformation of its external defence priorities and the nature of military professionalism. However, in the light of the size of military expenditures, personnel as well as missions delegated to the armed forces during those years, it is clear that such a transformation did not take place. Mexico did not assume an active role in the American anticommunist crusade on the continent. In fact, Mexico's foreign policy entered in conflict on more than one occasion with the US position in Latin America (Pastor and Castañeda 1988). The good relationship of the Mexican government with Castro's communist regime eliminated the possibility of significant sponsorship of a Cuban-Soviet guerrilla movement in Mexico. Again, unlike other countries on the continent, particularly in Central America, Mexican rules just conveniently channelled the continental paranoia of the communist threat to justify fierce combat against marginal and badly organised domestic insurgencies. According to J. Rochlin (1997), Mexico's ruling elite opted to selectively unleash the armed forces upon its own citizens, who grew increasingly restless due to electoral fraud, pronounced economic inequality, and social injustice in Mexico's post war period (Rochlin 1997).

The evidence from those years bears out his observations. Between 1946 and 1980, the military acted on at least 32 occasions (table 1.2) to contain political movements that, in the understanding of the executive and the intelligence services of the state, threatened the political stability of the country. These included suppressing industrial and labour disturbances, rural political conflicts, electoral fraud allegations, disagreements between the president and state governors, incipient guerrilla movements, student revolts, and any political event that could not be effectively channelled through the regime's political institutions.

Table 1.2

Mexico's military operations on internal security 1946-1980 (1)

| | Place | Year | Origin | Military action |
|--|-----------------|-------------|------------------------------|--|
| Sinarquista Movement | Monterrey | 1946 | Labour | Violent Disruption of strike |
| Michoacán University Demonstrations | Morelia | 1949 | Student | Violent Disruption |
| Mexico FPPM Opposition Party | México city | 1952 | Electoral disturbances | Violent Disruption of riots |
| Railway workers strike | Mexico City | 1956 | Labour | Violent disruption of strike |
| Polytechnic Student demonstrations | Mexico City | 1956 | Student | Violent Disruption |
| Telephone workers strike | Mexico City | 1956 | Labour | Temporary Replacement of workers. |
| Mexico UNAM Demonstrations | Mexico City | 1960 | Student | Street patrolling |
| Peasants revolts | Coahuila | 1960-1965 | Rural disturbances | Patrolling |
| Guerrero FPPM Opposition Party | Guerrero | 1960-62 | Electoral disturbances | Violent Disruption of riots |
| Peasants Revolts | Guerrero | 1960 | Rural disturbances | Violent Disruption |
| Peasants revolts | Oaxaca | 1961 | Rural disturbances | Patrolling |
| Peasants Revolts | Puebla | 1961 | Rural disturbances | Patrolling |
| Peasants Revolts | Guerrero | 1962 | Rural disturbances | Patrolling |
| Insurgency | Morelos | 1962 | Guerrilla | Counterinsurgency operations or Low Intensity Conflict |
| Peasants Revolts | Veracruz | 1963 | Rural disturbances | Patrolling |
| Demonstrations against corruption of local government officials | San Luis Potosí | 1964 | Civil Society demonstrations | Patrolling |
| | Puebla | 1964 | Labour | Violent disruption of strike |
| Insurgency | Guerrero | 1965 | Guerrilla | Counterinsurgency operations or Low Intensity Conflict |
| Insurgency | Chihuahua | 1965 | Guerrilla | Counterinsurgency operations or Low Intensity Conflict |
| Michoacán University Demonstrations | Morelia | 1966 | Student | Street patrolling |
| PRI Governor campaign | Sonora | 1967 | Electoral disturbances | Street Patrolling |
| PRI Governor campaign | Baja California | 1968 | Electoral disturbances | Street Patrolling |

Table 1.2

Mexico's military operations on internal security 1946-1980 (2)

| | Place | Year | Origin | Military action |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------|---------------|--|
| Tlatelolco Student Riots | Mexico City | 1968 | Student | Violent disruption of riots |
| Railway workers strike | Durango | 1972 | Labour | Violent disruption of strike |
| Railway workers strike | Oaxaca | 1972 | Labour | Violent disruption of strike |
| Railway workers strike | Coahuila | 1972 | Labour | Violent disruption of strike |
| Oil workers strike | Veracruz | 1972 | Labour | Violent disruption of strike |
| University of Tlaxcala Demonstrations | Tlaxcala | 1973 | Student | Street patrolling |
| Sugar cane workers revolt | Veracruz | 1973 | Labour | Violent disruption of strike |
| Insurgency (Genaro Vázquez) | Guerrero | 1966-1972 | Guerrilla | Counterinsurgency operations or Low Intensity Conflict |
| Insurgency (Lucio Cabanas) | Guerrero | 1966-1974 | Guerrilla | Counterinsurgency operations or Low Intensity Conflict |
| Communist League 23 of September | Mexico City, Guadalajara, Monterrey | 1972-1981 | Guerrilla | Counterinsurgency operations or Low Intensity Conflict |

Source: Rochlin (1997), Ronfeldt (1984), Camp (1992), Disturbances in Mexico in Recent Years. August 12, 1968. General Records of the Department of State, A-1292 NARA. AIRGRAM from the American Embassy to The State Department. October 16, 1966. General Records of the Department of State, A-381 NARA. DFS 100-24-18/6713/F251. DFS 100-24-18-67/16/F104. DFS 100-25-1-68/5/F1-2. DFS 100-25-1-68-L5/F25-27. DFS 100-25-1-68/L5/F35.

Of the 32 military interventions listed in Table 1.3, at least ten claimed several civilian lives (Ronfeldt 1984; Rochlin 1997; Aguayo 2001; Fernández Menéndez 2001; Scherer García and Monsivais 2004; Cárdenas Estandia 2008). They all exhibited the limited ability of the military apparatus to deal with social unrest by means other than the blatant use of force. It also illustrates common characteristics among authoritarian regimes, that is, their weak tolerance of political dissent (Bies 2000:2). Both elements explain why military intervention to subdue social unrest functioned as a safety valve at the service of the political elite, rather than as a well-planned and permanent government policy to contain political pressures from below.

Ironically, Rochlin's (1997) thesis did not differ from the military's own vision of the time. That also identified the sources of national security threats in the acute conditions

of poverty and underdevelopment⁶. In any case, I suggest that the political role of the armed forces not only kept civil movements and organisations under inspection, but also conveyed a powerful message to political actors, including governors and city mayors, that the president had the means to enforce his will lead over them, even at the expense of the reputation, social capital and corporate interests of the armed forces. Therefore, Mexico's experience with militarization challenges Desch's (1999) external/internal dimension for the definition of civilian control. It seems inadequate for explaining why the participation of the armed forces in tasks of internal security during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s did not compromise the authority of ruling civilian elites or involve the armed forces in the political arena.

In sum, it seems that the level of institutionalisation of the military in the political system, their partisan role and the socialisation of strict norms of civilian control made explanations based on structural factors, external or internal security threats and normative explanations of military professionalisation unsuitable to address the characteristics of civilian control in Mexico. These approaches are unable to address the impact that the historical alliance between the ruling elite and the military's hierarchy created over the roles of the armed forces in the political system.

Mexico's case regarding civil-military relations challenges modernisation theory expectations that capitalist development eventually transforms pre-democratic patterns of political behaviour (Almond and Coleman 1960; Almond and Powell 1966; Pye 1966; Huntington 1968; Verba, Nie et al. 1971). Within a landscape of social unrest, the Mexican case suggests that civilian control of the military within an authoritarian system can be deliberately sustained and even strengthened. This is especially so when military involvement is expected to yield some advantages for ruling elites, democratically elected or not, to address pressing policy issues (Acemoglu 2002). That is the case for the war against drug trafficking, counterinsurgency, and the mounting levels of violence associated with organised criminality that Mexico has experienced since the early 1990s (Elizondo 2003). Moreover, the study of Mexico's military did not support the thesis that social and political unrest, triggered by faulty economic

⁶ In 1985, Colonel Jorge Carillo Olea observed that "Mexico does not have external enemies... Mexico's problems are inside its borders, recognizing that the source of many of these originate from outside the country and have great deal to do with social justice... where is the government not capable of guaranteeing average standard measures and norms of justice and democracy? This is the problem of National Security." (Quoted in Rochlin 1997:157)

performance, necessarily results in independent intervention of the armed forces in the political scene.

Theories focusing on the prescriptive notion of objective control or Huntington's Occidentalised perception of military professionalisation also experienced problems in adjusting the Mexican case to its predictions (Huntington 1957). In fact, the kind of professionalisation adopted by the armed forces since the Revolution has been consistently used by the president to justify greater military participation in areas not strictly related to national defence. Furthermore, the extensive use of the Mexican armed forces to control political conflicts is inconsistent with explanations that assume that a military apparatus with partisan missions will be inclined to articulate alliances with social sectors as a way of winning political leverage. If something has been clear in Mexico's historical accounts is that the military's hierarchy only pays attention to the commands of the executive power. Along this line, differences between civilian control over the military and other countries in Latin America during the 1970s and 1980s were more than just a matter of degree, but structured in the constitution, role beliefs, doctrine and political culture that made the struggles for political power an inhospitable ground for military officers.

1.1.4 Domestic understandings of civil-military relations

In my view, not even the specialised literature on this topic has escaped the complexities of this relationship. Understandings of the military's role in politics have ranged from those that see minimal military intervention outside national defence to those that perceive a military apparatus deeply involved in the political arena. For instance, early studies focusing on Mexico's civil-military relations developed in the 1960s and 1970s affirmed that the "political role of the army has all but disappeared" (Lieuwen 1968; Lozoya 1970; Boils 1975). In contrast, R. Benítez-Manaut (2003) argues that the military in Mexico is not an autonomous actor; its political influence is marginal as it depends entirely on the commands of the executive power. The extreme view is that of A. Gupta (2003), who claims that the military in Mexico has been "the great champion of democracy and harbinger of peace. It keeps close and healthy relationships with the political regime. It is well integrated with the Executive without risking its autonomy or independence."(Gupta 2003:xvi).

A second branch of the literature did observe some specific political roles of the armed forces. Authors such as Pyñeiro (1985), Camp (1992 and 2005) and Ronfeldt (1984) constructed empirically sound accounts that show how the armed forces never completely abandoned the political arena⁷. Their considerations identified the significance of the army's political roles, even though these were often performed under the supervision of civilian ruling elites and strong political institutions (Ronfeldt 1984:294). For this part of the literature, the loyalty of the armed forces to the executive power and their missions on internal order or social policy did amount to "subtle" or "indirect" political interference. Their approaches made clear that a military apparatus could be politically influential, even when it does not threaten civilian stability in power. The bottom line is that coincidence of interests between the armed forces and the Executive blurred clear-cut manifestations of an autonomous military influence in politics. In other words, although the military followed the commands of civilian ruling elites, they thereby also defended their own corporate interests.

Although, it is easier to agree with studies that address the military's firm subordination to civilian elites with caution, important lessons can be learned from the strong historical background of the extreme visions. Both analyses coincide in asserting the importance of the historical roots of Mexico's civilian control over the military to explain the long-term stability and security Mexican presidents have enjoyed ever since the end of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920). (Lozoya 1970; Ronfeldt 1984; Lowenthal and Fitch 1986; Varas and Joint Committee on Latin American Studies 1989; Camp 1992). My research builds on the same historical and institutional referents to explain the particularities of stable civil-military relations in Mexico. I shall return to this connection in the final part of the chapter.

1.2 Contemporary approaches to civil-military relations

1.2.1 Historical Institutionalism: "modes of transition"

The downfall of military regimes changed civil-military relations studies in Latin America in the 1980s. Based on a historical institutionalist framework, modes of transition literature started to gain ground in the field. For these approaches, the past or

⁷ Either by appointing "on-leave" military personnel to key positions within civilian ministries or providing intelligence information to the ruling elite on potential political conflicts that could have required military intervention.

“from where one is coming from” is important in explaining the degree of military subordination to successor civilian authorities after the democratic transition process (Aguero 2000:69).

Modes of transition literature argues that civil-military relations in Latin America are path dependent, crafted through years of evolution and deeply influenced by the way political power was handed to civilians after the authoritarian period (Trinkunas 2001). Democratic transition processes are important because they are turning points or critical junctures that open opportunities for change that civilians may use to their own advantage. In the light of these views, modes of transition scholars have built sharp analytic and empirically tested studies. They explain why Brazilian or Chilean armed forces were able to leave power in better condition than those who suffered acute economic shocks or were defeated in war by an internal or external enemy, for instance: Argentina in 1982, El Salvador in 1992, Panama in 1989 or Haiti in 1994. In that sense, the nature of the transition explains the degree of autonomy and prerogatives the armed forces may be able to keep under the new democratic arrangement.

Therefore, military juntas or dictators that faced transition in the midst of scandal, organisational disarray or deep social grievances generally found far more complicated to maintain their privileges in the upcoming political regime. Under such circumstances, prospects for future democratisation are more likely to occur. Conversely, military hierarchies that controlled the timing of the transition process found it easier to retain some prerogatives and secure autonomy (Hagopian 1990; Karl 1991). It seems that favourable conditions for the armed forces in post-authoritarian agreements generally allow them to retain political decision-making leverage despite civilian supervision (Call 2002). On the same issue, A. Stepan (1988) explains that persistence of military prerogatives such as their participation in intelligence agencies or high military presence in the cabinet creates conditions of military tutelage rather than civilian control. Tutelary powers insure military leverage over key policy issues in the new political agreement that imply limited room of manoeuvre for incoming ruling elites.

Charles T. Call (2002) takes the argument of modes of transition to the extreme, in what he describes as “war transition.” His argument departs from the logic that a military in shambles as a result of defeat in war has minimum capabilities in imposing an agenda of

transition on incoming civilian rulers. Defeat in war or transition-by-collapse portrays the worst scenario a military dictator or “*junta militar*” can face. It opens wide windows of opportunity for civilians to institutionalise control over the armed forces and demilitarise the internal security system. His approach is consistent with traditional historical institutionalists’ views that tend to see change as a sporadic event that often requires strong disruption to take full shape. For this scholarship, change occurs in times of crisis, rather than being continuous and incremental (Ikenberry, Lake et al. 1988; Cortell and Peterson 2002). Therefore, cases like Argentina 1983 and Chile 1990 are paradigmatic for this approach as they reflect opposite sets of opportunities that each military elite enjoyed during the transition period. It explains why the military in Argentina virtually disappeared from the political arena while Pinochet’s army kept some clout in Chilean politics (Galleguillos 1998).

Call’s study is relevant to this discussion because it focuses on the functions the military is able to retain on internal security after the transition to democracy. It also represents a good benchmark for comparing the Mexican case to other countries on the continent and to assess the usefulness of this literature.

The Charles Call Model

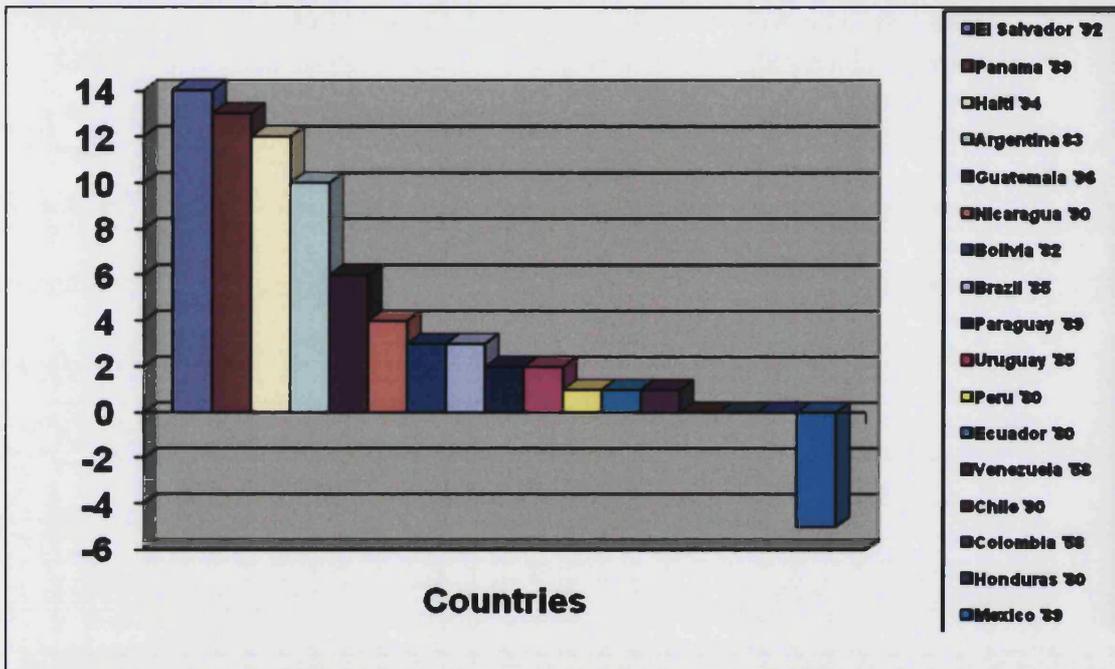
By including variables such as: 1) the role that the constitution grants the military regarding tasks of internal security; 2) the number of senior police officers with formal military education; 3) military participation in intelligence agencies 4) main preventive police forces; 5) legislative oversight over main police forces, 6) legal jurisdiction over police personnel and 7) formal police doctrine, Charles Call constructed an index of security that measures the level of militarisation of the internal security system before and after the democratic transition in 18 Latin American countries (Call 2002:8). Wisely enough, Call did not include the Mexican case in the matrix.

The results of his analysis give reasonable support to his initial expectations and generally, with those predicted by the “modes of transition” literature. That is, countries that experienced “war transitions” such as Argentina 1982, El Salvador 1992, Haiti 1994 and Panama 1989, scored the highest in terms of overall changes regarding civil-military relations: 10, 14, 12 and 13 points respectively. The other side of the coin is illustrated in Brazil 1985, Chile 1990 and Colombia 1958, as no relevant changes were

achieved (3, 0 and 0), allegedly, due to the protagonist role the armed forces were able to assume during the transition period. Different characteristics of democratisation or “modes of transition” perhaps explain the differences.

Figure 1.1

Internal security changes upon democratisation, 1985-2000: pre-transition and post transition



Source: Charles T. Call (2002). Mexico’s result was reached by using the methodology specified by the author; for such purposes I consulted the Mexican Constitution to address variables 1, 4, 5 and 6. For variables 2 and 3, I requested a set of data to Mexico’s armed forces through the IFAI. The information requests numbers are 0000700043003 and 0000700039703. These requests can be consulted by the reader directly at www.ifai.org.mx. For the last variable, I consulted the number of retired generals heading federal and state police academies: IFAI petition 0000700034603.

Running this model and including Mexico in the matrix yields interesting results. Mexico would score (-5), and it would be, by far, the lowest score ever achieved by any country that experienced democratic transition on the continent in the last 50 years. In practice, this score means that Mexico remilitarised its system of public security during and after the process of democratic transition. As observed in the figure 1.2, this is again an odd characteristic in the Latin America landscape.

Call’s model quite visibly captures the uneven nature of democratic development in Mexico. That is, free and open electoral competition does not match the capacity of the

state to enforce the law or what Linz and Stepan (1996) call *Rechtsstaat*⁸ where there is stalemate or even regression. What is more interesting in this exercise is the high degree of change that Mexico experienced in terms of the militarisation of public security. Contrary to Call's study cases, democratisation in Mexico did not transpire from a sudden change in the political landscape. Still, the relationship between civilians and soldiers changed importantly, even to a higher degree than those countries that experienced a "war transition." How is this manifest shift explained? It appears that by overemphasising path dependence and critical junctures to explain post democratic civil-military relations, the modes of transition literature rate too low the capacity of autonomous state elites to gradually and incrementally shape civil-military relations in a way that fits their short-term political interests.

On this issue, W. Hunter (1997; 2001) convincingly constructed a rational choice based explanation that shows how competition for votes in post-authoritarian Brazil created powerful incentives for ruling elites to bring military hierarchies under more democratic forms of control. Hunter argues that the wave of democratisation in Latin America created incentives for ruling elites to contest the military's control over key policy issues of the country. High military budget allocations hinder the capacity of goal seeking politicians to allocate resources in policy areas that portray strong electoral appeal. In other words, by reducing military expenditures, goal-seeking politicians may obtain extra resources to allocate in patronage and pork barrel politics. W. Hunter continues with the argument that the armed forces rarely enhance a politician's electoral fortunes. "This is especially true in contemporary Latin America, where the military have little currency to trade in the electoral area" (Hunter 2001:44).

As far as the Mexican experience is concerned, I agree with Hunter's argument in relation to the incentives for change that democratisation generates in the system of civil-military relations. However, it appears that Hunter's argument fails to consider that voters could also welcome participation of the military in areas that exceed national defence. Again, the political culture element cannot be taken out of the equation. Hunter's "Latin American" generalization does not appear to give justice to the Mexican case on civil-military relations and civilian control. The bottom line is that

⁸This word implies that the government and the state apparatus are subject to the law, that areas of discretionary power are defined and increasingly limited, and that citizens can turn to courts to defend themselves against the state and its officials.

democratisation by itself does not determine the preferences of politicians or voters towards minimising military participation on issues that may surpass the realm of national defence. It seems that the institutionalisation of a fixed balance of power favouring civilians and a positive image of the military in the eyes of the population may also determine the likelihood of military intervention in other policy areas. In any case, Hunter's analysis challenged in some ways the historical institutionalist accounts that expected little or no change in civil-military relations in Brazil after the democratic transition (Stepan 1988; O'Donnell 1994).

The Mexican case is different, because democratisation did not evolve from a military based regime. This characteristic excluded the military from the overall process of democratisation. In that sense, democratic forces in Mexico were not combating the armed forces but the authoritarian conditions of electoral competition. Under these conditions, the military in Mexico passed unnoticed from mainstream pressures for democratisation. In fact, during the mid 1990s, military action to counteract public insecurity gained ground not only at federal level but also between state and local governments, irrespective of their party allegiance⁹(Turbiville 1997; Arzt 2001). Turbiville (1997) asserts that by 1996, almost every state in the country had at least some type of military intervention in public security. My own research indicates that by 2003, half of the 32 chiefs of state police in the country were on-leave or retired military officers. This condition alone shows how opposition parties were eager to combat the long electoral hegemony of the ruling party and, at the same time, support the participation of the military in public security. It appears that in the minds of elected officials and civil society in general, military participation in public security and democratisation are not mutually exclusive.

Given that the military was not considered an enemy to democratisation, politicians, and particularly the president, had incentives to involve the armed forces in areas where policy performance was particularly defective, as is the case of law enforcement. In that sense, the protracted period of transition facilitated the military to participate in these

⁹ In spite of party allegiance, elected officials appointed retired or on-leave army generals to lead state and local police agencies, as occurred when the first elected mayor of Mexico City and one of the most critical voices of the PRI rule in Mexico, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, appointed General Salgado Cordero as his Secretary of Public Security in 1997.

functions by serving the interests of goal-driven politicians. Empirical evidence points out that both characteristics occurred during the 1990s.

Furthermore, “modes of transition” approaches generally neglect the impact that broad socio-economic and international conditions exert over political actors. The U.S president, the congress and different U.S. agencies have consistently placed continuous pressure on their Mexican counterparts to improve their ability to disrupt drug trafficking and combat organised crime. Such pressure has diminished every time the armed forces have come to perform public security tasks, particularly in the border region (Bertram 1996; Dunn 1996; Andreas 2000; Andreas 2000a; Shelley 2001).

From this discussion, it seems clear that a comprehensive theoretical analysis of the Mexican case should rely on the strengths of either rational choice or historical institutionalism. In the following section, I present a theoretical framework that incorporates traditional and more contemporary literature on civil-military relations to disentangle the unique characteristics of civil-military control in Mexico.

1.3. The theoretical framework

1.3.1 “Exclusive subordination” and the politics of military missions

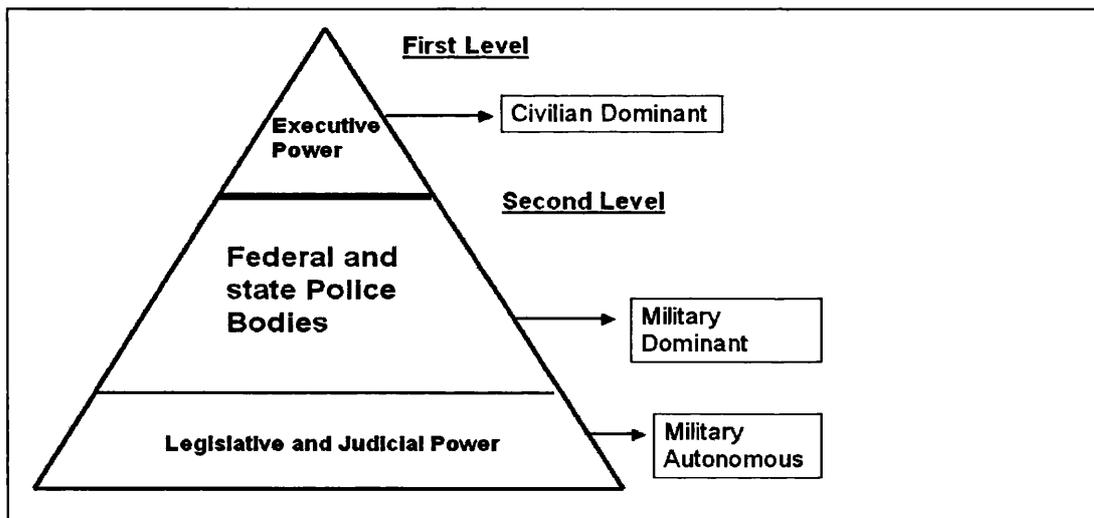
The framework I propose to address the Mexican case of civil-military relations is based on a notion of the distribution of power between the president and the armed forces. The main characteristic of the model is what I call **the dual nature of civilian control over the military** in Mexico. At the first level, this is civilian control; the relationship between the president and the armed forces remains strong and unequal, favouring the authority of the executive power. However, at lower levels of the public administration, where the armed forces interact with other state agencies, the relationship changes importantly, basically as a result of the new set of responsibilities the executive delegate to them. At this point, civilian law enforcement agencies happen to be subordinated to the armed forces, or at least supervised by them. This feature takes place by appointing military personnel to head civilian police corporations or creating new police bodies based on military human resources, as it is the case of the Federal Police or President Felipe Calderón’s Security Task Force. In that sense, empowering the armed forces in public security not only reinforced their role as the privileged and reliable agent of the

president to combat criminality, but also converted the military into the principal *vis-à-vis* federal and state law enforcement institutions¹⁰.

As it occurs at the top of the power relation, The Legislative and Judicial levels of government continue to have little effect on the military. The military remains accountable to Congress only in terms of the exercise of yearly budget allocations through the Federal Supreme Audit Bureau. Furthermore, the Legislative power has the ability to approve or modify yearly military budget allocations proposed by the executive and approve the promotions of military personnel to ranks above Colonel. However, escalating military endowments and total approval of military promotions in the last 10 years suggests that legislative power has not intended to limit the action of the armed forces in any sensitive way.

Figure 1.2

Dual Civilian Control Model



Source: Own elaboration

First level (The Exclusive Subordination)

A historical institutionalist approach can explain how the early institutional arrangement governing civil-military relations created firm dependent tendencies that ensured military subordination to the executive’s authority. It seems that modes of transition

¹⁰ The main justification for this policy shift is found in the National Development Plan (1988-1994) where President Salinas agreed to the participation of the armed forces to assist federal police bodies on counter-narcotics operations. Allegedly, this was because personnel in the Attorney-General’s Office had consistently abused their public function by protecting organised criminals (Arzt 2001).

literature and historical institutionalism in general are right, as civil-military relations in Mexico have remained stable for the last 80 years.

Attitudes, beliefs, doctrine and formal institutional rigidity of civilian control over the military in Mexico may well support historical institutionalist expectations. Still, this kind of path-dependent subordination does not guarantee democratic civil-military relationships, because it excludes the supervision and accountability of legislative and judicial bodies of military missions. In other words, democratic civil-military relations require a dynamic relationship between the second and third levels of the model.

I call this unique form of civil-military control “**exclusive subordination.**” In the light of the Mexican experience, it seems this form of military control can only prevail when rules governing civil-military relations define the full authority of the president over the armed forces. This authority is not just a *de jure* condition but also a *de facto* recognition of the military hierarchy in regard to the leadership of the president (Huber, Rueschemeyer et al. 1997). Presidents who enjoy **exclusive subordination** over the military may be willing to grant extra autonomy to the armed forces, if needed, to act against drug trafficking, terrorism or guerrilla movements, in part, because the civilian ruling elite, particularly the president, does not feel threatened by an expanding military agenda. The characteristics of the Mexican case appear to belong to this category. Peru during the Presidency of Alberto Fujimori may also come close to it. Other than these two cases, “exclusive subordination” is not a common feature in Latin America, because mutual trust between the armed forces and the civilian elite is difficult to find in countries that have experienced a military rule.

In that sense, I identify three basic features of the principle of “exclusive subordination” that characterise the first level of the Dual Civilian Control Model and can be useful to place Mexico into a comparative analysis:

1. Mutual trust based on a long-standing and tacit pact of no aggression between the military and the executive power.
2. Clear constitutional rules that define the president as the supreme chief of the armed forces and make the armed forces accountable only to the executive power.

3. The presence of an executive power with a high level of autonomy to deal with issues of national security *vis-à-vis* civil society organisations and the legislative power.

A historical institutionalists perspective is relevant to explain why the first characteristic of the proposed model is difficult to attain where the armed forces have confronted the process of democratic transition from a disadvantageous position or experienced a “war transition” (Call 2002). Argentina in 1982, El Salvador in 1992, Panama in 1989 or Haiti in 1994 belong to this category. Empirical evidence indicates that civilian rulers in these countries were more interested in limiting the scope of action of the military in public security rather than empowering them. In Argentina and Uruguay, the military apparatus even had problems to preserve its corporate integrity in the years that followed the transition period.

The principle of “Exclusive subordination” cannot exist if the military keeps a high level of autonomy from the executive power. The case of Ecuador is in this category. In this country, even when the Constitution grants the president full authority over the armed forces, informal rules of the game matter too, making the military an important referent of power as it often holds dominance on issues of internal and national security (Fitch 1998). It is clear that under such conditions, the Executive has no incentives to empower an institution that already enjoys a high degree of autonomy. Finally, the role that Congress plays in Colombia in terms of military supervision cancels the basis of the “exclusive” subordination type. Meanwhile, the failed coup against President Hugo Chavez in 2002 raised serious doubts about the Military’s core loyalty to the executive power in Venezuela.

In sum, the presence of these three characteristics together is not easily found in Latin American countries. This makes the Mexican case very atypical in the region. This odd combination explains in part why civil-military relationships in Mexico challenge common sense on the role the armed forces should play in a process of democratic transition.

Second Level (The Politics of Military Missions)

In contrast, the horizontal expansion of military responsibilities at the second level of the dual civilian control model depends on characteristics of the political environment. For this part of the analysis, a rational choice approach is relevant to address how goal-seeking politicians shape civil-military relations according to their rational calculations and the limits the institutional structure sets on each actor's behaviour.

Rational choice theory centres on actors, single or collective, as the unit of analysis. It assumes that individuals have a well-defined set of preferences that represent the relative desirability of outcomes generated by actions (Chai 2001). Preferences of individuals are basic, consistent and capable of being roughly ordered. In that sense, given actors' preferences and alternative strategies from which to choose¹¹, they will select whatever gives them the best chance to reach their goals (Geddes 1995).

The cornerstone of the rational choice approach is to identify which goals drive actors' actions. These are also known as first order preferences or actor's "maximand." The task of identifying the "maximand" is an exercise of observing the actor's choices, because it is assumed that rational actors reveal their preferences through actions. If the analyst misperceives actors' goals, then their behaviour will differ from that predicted and the analysis may end up losing focus completely (Geddes 1995). However, preferences and interests do not always match. Rational actors do not always do what they want, but what is possible (Dowding and King 1995). Under these circumstances, institutions, formal or informal, define the collection of possibilities or routes of action that actors can take. By doing so, institutions or more formally, "the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction" (North 1990) represent both the rules of the game and shape actors' preferences by defining allowed routes for action.

Applied to civil-military relations in post democratic transition environments, this implies that political officeholders may have some clear set of preferences on military

¹¹ Rational players are expected to prefer more material goods than less. Politicians would like to see their careers progress rather than end and ruling parties would prefer to remain in office rather than losing it. However, not all the options are available, because institutions or the rules of the game define which paths can be taken to achieve specific objectives. For that reason, institutions are important, because by determining what is possible and what is not, they also shape individual preferences. Thus, institutions do not determine an actor's preferences, but they do affect individual and collective choices. Hence, political behaviour is structured by institutional rules and does not flow directly from preferences. (Immergut 1997)

roles. These preferences are not predetermined, but dependent on the characteristics of the environment and experience. The main interest or “maximand” for new civilian democratic elites may be centred on preventing the armed forces from regaining political power or exerting political influence beyond reasonable levels. Hunter (1997) explains this in terms of fear. That is, when elected politicians fear that the armed forces can endanger political stability, they may be less inclined to delegate functions to them that could strengthen their political leverage.

However, this priority may be radically different for polities where ruling elites do not fear a military takeover. In such cases, the maximand may consist of maintaining acceptable levels of popularity that enable them to maintain a high *party differential*¹² (Downs 1957). It seems the institutional environment that includes “exclusive subordination” inhibits W. Hunter’s “fear factor.” In that sense, exclusive subordination may create the conditions in which the Executive choices favour the enlargement of military intervention in areas that transcend national defence. On this issue, D. Mares argues that military participation in antidrug trafficking operations in Mexico does not threaten civilian control, but is rather one of the benefits of civilian control (Mares 2003:67).

As changes occur at the second level of the Dual Civil-Military control model, they affect the relationship between police agencies and the armed forces and not necessarily the relation between the Executive and the Military. A principal-agent framework is useful to picture how this relationship works. All principal-agent relationships are based on a formal and informal contract obligating the agent to act on behalf of, and in response to, the principal (Kramer 1999). They are also characterised by informational asymmetries that the principal is often dimly able to understand. In the Mexican case, the military appears as the expert in the management of violence while the contract binding the executive and the armed forces is defined by the nature of the exclusive subordination¹³. Furthermore, “most principal-agent approaches assume that civilian principals are goal oriented, and then measure cost in terms of whether the activity diverts from re-election efforts” (Feaver 1996; Kramer 1999; Feaver 2003). Under these conditions, the Executive power may be interested on taking advantage of the

¹² The benefits that the voter expects to receive from voting in one direction rather than the other.

¹³ For a detailed explanation of this game and its application to Mexico’s civil-military relations, see Appendix 1.

vertical, professional and hierarchical characteristics of the military as an organisation (March and Weissinger-Baylon 1986). Therefore, it can delegate to them the implementation of policies that have historically carried high transaction costs¹⁴ in Mexico, as is the case when combating organised forms of criminal activities. By doing so, they may also expect to gain electoral allegiances, just as general rational choice theory may predict¹⁵. The proposition behind this process is simple: “the greater the cost of not delegating, the more civilians will delegate” (See Appendix 1).

1.4. Conclusion

For the Mexican case, the original institutional agreement governing civil-military relations explains the characteristics of Mexico’s firm civil control over the military. However, changing political preferences of the executive power have mattered too, as it was the incumbent president who decided the scope and range of military missions. Therefore, while the firm subordination of the armed forces to the president is based on formal and informal institutions, the definition of military missions responds to a different logic. It is attached to the nature of a political agenda and the Executive’s preferences.

It seems that the principle of “exclusive subordination” and “the politics of civil-military relations” represent the two interacting realms that define contemporary civil-military relations in Mexico. For analytical purposes, this initial differentiation is useful to understand the impact of formal institutions over the formation of preferences and choices of ruling elites concerning the scope of military missions. All things considered, Mexico’s record on civil-military relations shows that exclusive subordination remained constant, while the horizontal expansion of military responsibilities came and went.

It appears evident that the politics of civil-military relations made little impact on the preferences of incumbent politicians while the regime was dominated by authoritarian politics. However, they became paramount as the regime began the transit to democracy. In other words, under authoritarian conditions of electoral competition,

¹⁴ Transactions cost are understood as “anything that impedes the specification, monitoring, or enforcement of an economic transaction.”

¹⁵ David Mares argues that the national hysteria over the drug “threat” is a strong incentive for politicians and law enforcement agencies to use the military as a signal to voters that they are “tough” on drugs. See (Mares, 2003)

civilian elites were not particularly concerned on the impact that military missions could generate on voting behaviour, because there were no real competitors to the incumbent's hegemony. However, under democratic conditions of electoral competition, missions delegated to the armed forces became an important referent shaping the public image of office holders. This is particularly clear when incumbents are able to present military participation as an indication of commitment to combat pressing policy issues, as seems the case of public insecurity and police reform.

In sum, the dual model of civil-military control incorporates the "modes of transition" explanation that formal and informal institutions determined the strong path dependent subordination of the armed forces to the executive power. By using rational choice, it allows the model to explain the expansion of military missions into the system of public security.

Chapter 2. Articulating Civilian Supremacy: Civil-Military Relations during El Porfiriato and Madero's Revolution (1876-1911)

“All excuses for revolt should be avoided: bread or the club, this should be the rule; for the greatest act of justice which a prince should perform is to sustain himself.”

Paolo Sarpi

Introduction

From a civil-military relations perspective, President Porfirio Díaz's military defeat in 1911 presents a puzzle. How did a set of scattered and disorganised guerrillas defeat a formidable army with at least three decades of continuous institutional development? Madero's *Ejército Libertador* surrendered Mexico's internationally respected military forces after less than six months of battle. In the end, as F. Katz (1986) has noted, the porfirian army was one of the few in Latin America ever to be overwhelmed in conventional and guerrilla warfare by revolutionary troops, alongside those of Bolivia in 1952, Cuba 1959 and Nicaragua in 1978.

Many studies have detailed the downfall of Porfirio Díaz's rule from economic, political, social and even international perspectives. (Calvert 1969, Brading 1980; Katz 1981; Knight 1986; Hart 1987; Meyer 1991; Aguilar Camín and Meyer 1993; Garner 2001) However, descriptions of the military side of the story are scarce and at some points contradictory. For instance, F. Katz (1981) argues that Díaz's army was weak, even backward. According to Katz, President Díaz opted to keep a relatively weak, non-professional and under-funded army as a way to ward off the political hopes of ambitious generals. Following Katz' reasoning, Díaz was far more concerned with potential disloyalty among the officer corps than with a civilian-led armed uprising. His fears were evidently well founded. According to E. Lieuwen (1968), Mexico suffered the curse of predatory militarism¹, given that “more than one thousand armed uprisings plagued this unfortunate republic in its first century of nationhood” (Echenique 1894; Lieuwen 1968; Ballard-Perry 1978:341).

¹ Lieuwen's findings agree with Colonel R. Echenique's research that tracked all military events that occurred in Mexico since its independence in 1821 until 1876 (Echenique, 1894).

In contrast, J. Kelley (1975) argues that Díaz invested notable effort in building a modern professional army, especially in the areas of education and training for new officers (Kelley 1975). Kelley's claims coincide with one of the first comprehensive studies on Mexico's military. E. Lieuwen (1968) argued that President Díaz professionalized the armed forces by improving their capabilities, providing better training and weaponry and building its *esprit de corps* (Lieuwen, 1968:3). In other words, Díaz employed the familiar strategy of distracting the army from politics by keeping it busy with military duties². Alan Knight agrees with F. Katz about the relatively small size of the army under *el porfiriato* and with the low military budgets after 1888. However, it is not clear whether this policy resulted from creating a more efficient armed force that did not need a large membership to fulfil its missions, or if it was part of a pragmatic policy aimed at relieving pressure upon public finances by reducing military budgets. A more recent study made by Santiago Portilla on Díaz's downfall reveals the patent incapacity of the Federal Army to contain Madero's insurrection (Portilla 1995). However, his conclusions are not particularly different from those of Vanderwood (1976)³.

This chapter aims at clarifying the character, functions and missions performed by the armed forces during this important period of Mexico's history. It also attempts to identify path dependent characteristics that emerged in *el porfiriato* and still define civilian supremacy in contemporary civil-military relations in Mexico. Under this logic, the narrative that unfolds in the four sections of this chapter departs from characterising Díaz as a pragmatic politician who enjoyed full control of state structures. Thus, the first section chronicles the origins of Porfirio Díaz and the path he followed to consolidate his power. The second part concentrates on the political role of the military and the participation of the generalship in the configuration of political power, including Díaz's informal methods for maintaining loyalty of the officer corps. In the third section, I present Díaz's approach to military professionalism, its progress and structural weaknesses. Finally, I evaluate the ways in which politics and Díaz's military professionalism influenced the performance of his loyal but inefficient military force during the six months of Madero's Revolution.

² According to R. Rodríguez, a historian of the period, Díaz declared that he intended to make a professional organization of the armed forces, whose level of expertise and administrative capabilities could be comparable to the best armies of the world. (Rodríguez, 1904)

³ Even though Paul Vanderwood wrote extensively on this period of Mexico's history, S. Portilla (1995) did not cite any of his works.

2.1 Civil-military relations in *el porfiriato*: the historical context

The end of the short-lived empire of Maximiliano and the triumph of President Juárez's militias over the French army in 1867 set in motion a long process of the restructuring of the country's armed forces. During the two years that followed the evacuation of the French Army, also known as *La República Restaurada*, President Benito Juárez disbanded the large military apparatus, because its payroll imposed serious financial burdens upon a country on the verge of bankruptcy⁴. According to J. Creelman (1911), Juárez dismissed more than two thirds of the army, without making the slightest effort to provide employment or pensions for the multitude of officers and men suddenly thrown upon their own resources (Creelman 1911). If lack of public resources was in itself enough reason to restructure the armed forces, Juárez also intended to weaken the political ambitions of regional military commanders with enough standing among their troops to destabilise the young regime. In the light of history, it seems that Juárez's policy had mixed results. Between 1867 and 1872, various military units were disbanded and most high-ranking military officials looked for other professional horizons (Cosío Villegas 1971; Ballard-Perry 1978:34). Some returned to civilian life and became businesspersons or big landowners, *hacendados*. Others, not being career soldiers, sought political positions and later joined Juárez's administration. Finally, as Juárez had feared, a coterie of generals did conspire against his rule and eventually managed to seize political power. Porfirio Díaz, their leader, became the president of the country in 1876 and remained at the top of the political organisation of Mexico for the next 34 years.

Porfirio Díaz was a regional caudillo who commanded Juárez's liberation forces in the east and gained early recognition for his military skills⁵. Captured twice by the French Army, Díaz escaped to lead the resistance in the east and south. His victories against the French in Miahuatlán and *La Carbonera* were considered by some commentators of the time as outstanding military feats (García Naranjo 1930). Nevertheless, history shows that Díaz's main passion was not soldiering, but politics. Charisma, high

⁴ In his book, *La Sucesión Presidencial*, Madero (1907) described Juárez's problem. He argued that Juárez's most important problem consisted of disbanding a military force beyond the necessities of a country in peacetime and experiencing a serious lack of economic resources. (Madero 1907:88)

⁵ P. Garner argues that Díaz was not only praised for being the only Mexican commander to rout the French army, but he was also lauded for his administrative and personal qualities: financial probity, military discipline, moral rectitude and the absence of either public or private scandal. (Garner 2001:49)

political ambitions and a clear understanding of Mexico's political reality were rare in Mexican politicians of the late 1800s, but Díaz definitely had these qualities. His record in office indicates that he was never bothered to assume a public political stance on issues that could fix his place along the political spectrum. The words "liberal" or "conservative" did not neatly defined his ideology, even when he fought for Juárez's liberal cause in the 1860s (Knight 1986). According to Garner (2001), Díaz was simultaneously able to be conservative and liberal, pro-foreign and nationalist, Masonic and Catholic (Garner 2001).

Uncompromised by political principles or ideology, Díaz was a pragmatic politician who centralised power at the expense of institutional development and respect for law (Thomas and Ocasio-Meléndez 1984). His rule was 'committed to a maximum programme of economic growth and self-employment according to the scientific laws of Auguste Comte' (Calvert 1969a:52). Nevertheless, the path he took to reach the presidential office was not free of obstacles. By 1872, General Díaz had tried and failed to defeat President Juárez in the Presidential election of 1867 and 1971. In the face of failure, Díaz rebelled, claiming electoral fraud and constitutional violations. In 1871, Díaz launched the *Plan de la Noria* and received substantive military support from loyal generals who had already tried to destabilise Juárez's administration. Nevertheless, La Noria uprising showed serious problems with coordination and it soon lost its initial vigour (López -Portillo y Rojas 1921). A few months later, loyal forces of the President defeated it. Juárez died soon after, and his successor, Sebastian Lerdo, offered Díaz and his loyal generals amnesty, which he accepted in 1872.

Still, military or electoral setbacks did not change the intensity of Díaz's political activism. By knitting alliances with high ranking military officers, local political chiefs and emerging social movements, Díaz kept building political support. By the time President Lerdo was about to finish his term in office in 1876, Díaz launched the Tuxtepec Rebellion, allegedly, to thwart Lerdo's aspiration to seek re-election (Rowe 1912). Unlike previous uprisings, the Tuxtepec Rebellion succeeded and the history of successful military uprising would not be repeated until 1911, when Madero's insurgence ended 34 years of uninterrupted peace.

Given the record of a country that had faced foreign invasions and civil war since independence, Díaz's creation of political stability was no small achievement. The *Pax*

Porfiriana, as this period is known, set the environment for the creation of the basic rules, formal and informal, of the system of civil-military relations. Right from the start, the military became the guarantor of Díaz's rule and through it, he managed to establish the monopoly of organised force, and centralised the power of the state (Rueschemeyer, Huber et al. 1992).

2.1.1 Military missions

In the absence of civil or international conflicts, the military evolved into an internal security force, the equivalent of a federal police. Their responsibilities included suppression of small rebellions, pacification and eradication of bandit gangs operating along roads joining the large haciendas with villages and cities. As in most dictatorships, army officers throughout *el porfiriato* also had direct responsibilities for combating the political enemies of the regime; missions that often required intelligence gathering. According to W. Dirk Raat (1976), the task of eliminating radicalism and restraining revolutionary nationalism involved an elaborate national and international espionage network and police structure⁶. Illegal means to achieve these objectives included kidnappings, summary executions and continuous violations of civil liberties. An example of how this system worked is an unfortunate incident that is chronicled in most of the literature of this period. According to Rafael de Zayas Enríquez—a judge, journalist and close observer of *el porfiriato*—local police forces apprehended a group of conspirators on the verge of an alleged military uprising in Veracruz scheduled to explode in late 1879 (Zayas Enríquez 1908). When the Governor of Veracruz, Luis Mier y Terán, informed Díaz about the events and requested directions on what to do with the prisoners, Díaz, so it is said, responded: “*Mátalos en Caliente*” (kill them in the act) and Governor Terán followed the order at once (Taracena, 1983:165). The incident caused a great scandal in the country and reverberated abroad. However, the way President Díaz managed this event in the press conveyed the idea that insurgent leaders were to be treated harshly and no trial or investigation would save them from execution.

Other than this, Mier y Terán was typical of collaborators that Díaz treasured during his time in office. Deep devotion and servilism shown by governors and political chiefs to

⁶ “U.S. and Mexican consular officers coordinated much of the field work, hiring private detectives and working in close cooperation with state governors, military commanders and federal authorities on both sides of the border. (Dirk Raat, 1976)

Díaz is commonly remarked in most historical literature of the time⁷. Still, not all of Díaz's collaborators were as docile and obedient as the Governor of Veracruz. According to official records compiled by Daniel Cosío-Villegas, relations between Díaz and his loyal generals were not as smooth during his first term (1876-1880) as they would become in subsequent years. Generals often demanded prompt payment of soldiers' salaries and extra resources to control the regime's enemies. For instance, in one of his regular communications with Díaz, General Pedro Hinojosa, military chief in Chihuahua, informed him that stubborn *guerrilleros* were always ready to start a new civil war. Therefore, a constant influx of resources was essential for keeping soldiers' morale high and rebels under control. General Treviño and General Canales in Coahuila and Nuevo León often complained bitterly because of delayed and insufficient payments to their troops. Others, like General Antonio Rodríguez, would even complain to Díaz because they were unhappy to see how soldiers had no alcohol or cigarettes. Even when public funds were far from abundant, financial rewards to Díaz's senior army officers was never neglected. In return, the president demanded, "to be always ready to crush any rebellious movement in the act" (Cosío Villegas, Calderón et al. 1955).

2.1.2 Military budgets and personnel

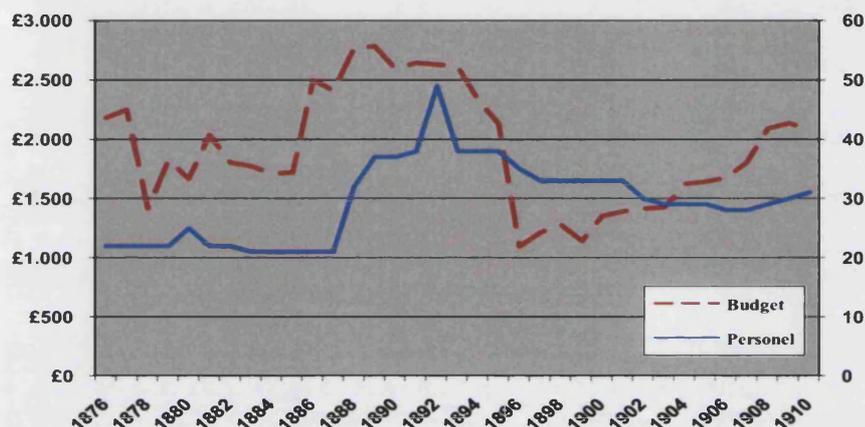
Military budgets were a major constraint upon public finances during Díaz's first term in office (Roeder 1973:57). However, these pressures soon faded. According to information retrieved from the National Material Capabilities Data 1816-1985 (March and Weissinger-Baylon 1986), during the administration of Manuel González (1880-1884), the army's budget was no longer the highest in the public administration, since it was less than that of the Ministry of Economic Development (*Fomento*). After 1884, the robust economic growth that Mexico experienced virtually eliminated any constraint on public expenditure. Foreign investment alone grew thirty-fold during *el porfiriato*. E. Lieuwen (1968) argues that Díaz's system was self-reinforcing. The military provided the order necessary for economic development and economic development provided the revenues that kept the military loyal (Lieuwen 1968:3). Considering the

⁷ Zayas Enríquez also wrote that Terán's devotion to Díaz was such that "if Don Porfirio had asked him to throw himself into fire, he would have done so happily."

economic development that *el porfiriato* achieved, Lieuwen's observation seems accurate⁸.

Figure 2.1

Military expenditure and size of military personnel during *el porfiriato* (1876-1910)



Source: Graph elaborated with data from: CAPABILITIES DATA, 1816-1985. Ann Arbor, MI: J. David Singer, University of Michigan, and Detroit, MI: Melvin Small, Wayne State University, 1990. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 1993. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR09903>

As observed in Graph 2.1, military expenditure during Díaz's first term in office declined until 1878 but increased consistently after 1880 and reached its peak in 1892. After this point, both military expenditure and military personnel began to decrease. During this period, the army suppressed uprisings in Nayarit, Sinaloa, Veracruz and Chihuahua; however, as Díaz consolidated political control, social unrest virtually vanished from the national scenario. Thus, pure military actions were limited to pacification missions against the Yaqui and Mayo tribes in the north of Mexico⁹ (Hu-de Hart 1984; Velazco Toro 1986:243). Occasionally, it fought bandit gangs in the countryside; stifled unrest in towns or villages or crushed labour strikes at Díaz's demand (Gutiérrez Santos 1955). According to data on military expenditures and military personnel, Díaz had by 1890 the largest military force in Latin America with

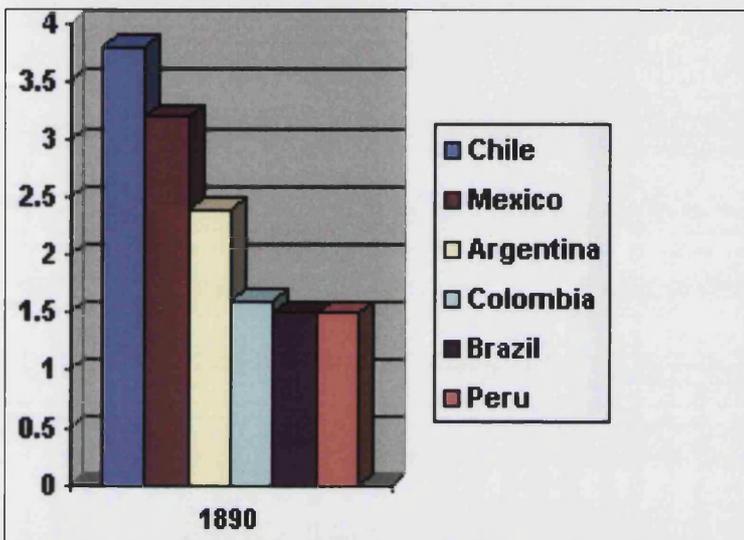
⁸ Huntington (1968) describes economic development during *el porfiriato* as "phenomenal:" mineral production quadrupled, scores of textile mills were built, sugar mills constructed, oil production became a leading industry and foreign trade and tax revenues increased tenfold.

⁹ Virtually all historians and diplomatic attachés agree on the effects that a new and expanding network of railways and improved telegraphic communications had on the armed forces' mobility and capabilities Katz, F. (1981). P. Macedo (1905) argues that communications enabled the government to make its authority and force felt in the most remote part of Mexican territory and repress whatever sign of perturbation or revolt in as many days as it takes to arrive there.

nearly 36,000 men, including soldiers and staff. It was one of the better-funded armies, and had the second highest ratio of soldiers to 1,000 inhabitants in the region¹⁰

Figure 2.2

Ratio of soldiers to 1,000 inhabitants in Chile, Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, Brazil and Peru in 1890



Source: Graphs elaborated with data from: CAPABILITIES DATA, 1816-1985. Ann Arbor, MI: J. David Singer, University of Michigan, and Detroit, MI: Melvin Small, Wayne State University, 1990. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 1993. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR09903>

If the military and *los rurales*¹¹ represented the repressive power of the state, governors and *jefes políticos* (political chiefs) completed the puzzle of control. The mission was “to keep the centre happy; and the centre is happy as long as there is no revolution and too many bandits in the countryside.”¹² With these conditions met, Díaz would tolerate corruption, inefficiency and even banditry by his subordinates as long as peace and order were preserved. Loyalty, rather than civil responsibility, was the chief desideratum (Knight 1986:17). As a result, public and political order became a credo for governors and political chiefs. The so called secret police was hardly “secret” as it

¹⁰ It is important to note that this figure does not include the National Guard, which in countries like Brazil was larger than the military apparatus itself.

¹¹ Along with the federal army, Díaz had also the rural militias or *rurales*. These armed groups were in charge of safeguarding towns and villages connected to the fast-growing railway network, by far the most important economic muscle of el Porfirato. The *rurales* were common people, sensitive to local realities and loyal to native political leaders and federal authorities. *Los rurales* did not wear uniforms but they could be easily recognised from their fine mounts and dashing *charro* outfits (Knight, 1986:33). The *rurales* became an effective channel of public control outside of Mexico City. The *rurales* and armed forces were the regime’s main instruments to keep public order.

¹² P. Vanderwood argues that *Los Rurales* acted as a sort of preventive police, an instrument of Díaz’s political machinery to maintain the status quo, while the military was rather employed in extraordinary cases, when in was necessary to crush the rebels. (Vanderwood, 1983).

was highly visible in several states. For instance, in Yucatán, Governor Olegario Molina recruited 700 agents to monitor political activities in the capital, in a period where Merida had nearly 50,000 inhabitants. In Puebla, Governor Mucio Martínez often used police officers disguised in civilian clothes to spy on political adversaries. In 1907 Enrique Creel, governor of Chihuahua, created a secret police force to keep a close eye on alleged political enemies (Knight 1986). Later, as Mexican Ambassador to the United States and Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Creel continued coordinating all espionage activities at the national level (Dirk Raat 1976). Ironically, the State of Chihuahua, Creel's centre of influence, became the main point of activity of Madero's rebellion. Neither federal authorities nor Creel's secret police or system of intelligence could prevent, or even foresee, the size of the upcoming social turmoil. Moreover, at the time of Madero's rebellion, Enrique Creel was serving as interior minister. There was the impression among the governing class that he lacked the muscle and intelligence required to confront the insurgency (Gamboa and Pacheco 1977:177)

2.2 Civil-military relations: the political side

Powerful as President Díaz was, plain authoritarianism was not his preferred approach to governing (Molina Enríquez 1985:186). One of the most prolific commentators of *el porfiriato*, Daniel Cosío Villegas, recognised that Díaz changed as time passed. "The uncultured and ambitious subversive of the Restored Republic became a talented politician and statesman"¹³. Cosío Villegas agreed with Francisco Madero: "he was superior to all of his contemporaries" (Madero 1909). Indeed, Madero's characterization of Díaz could not be more accurate. Díaz was superior to all of his contemporaries, but he was also indebted to some of them. The army generals and regional political leaders who had led him to office expected rewards for their services. This group, also known as the *tuxtepecanos*, comprised of veterans of the War of Reform, the French Intervention and the battles that preceded Díaz's conquest of power (Castañeda-Batres, 1989:29; Camp 1995). As for Díaz himself, most of his trusted allies were generals forged in battle, with little if any formal military education.

Right from the beginning, the military wing of the *tuxtepecanos* was involved in keeping the armed forces under control while Díaz consolidated his political position.

¹³ Quoted in Benjamin (1984:348)

In return, President Díaz generously rewarded their loyalty. For instance, General Luis Torres kept the governorship of Sonora for twenty years. General Juan N. Méndez became Governor of Puebla and was later replaced by General Mucio Martínez, who held the governorship for eighteen years; General Prospero Cahuantzi served as Tlaxcala's governor for twenty-six years and the list continues (Cosío Villegas, Calderón et al. 1955; Camp 1995). Others, like Generals Geronimo Treviño and Francisco Cantón received regional railways concessions (C. Beals 1932:225; Turner 1993:293).

Table 2.1

Political positions granted by President Porfirio Díaz to his political allies between 1876 and 1880

| Individual | Position |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Francisco Cañedo | Governor of Sinaloa |
| Rafael Cravioto | Senator from Hidalgo |
| Lázaro Garza Ayala | Governor of Nuevo León |
| Martín González | Governor of Oaxaca |
| Manuel González Flores | Governor of Guanajuato |
| Carlos Diez Gutiérrez | Governor of San Luis Potosí |
| Pedro Hinojosa | Secretary of War |
| Juan Nepomuceno Méndez | Governor of Puebla |
| Francisco Mena Zacarías | Secretary of Public Works |
| Luis Mier y Terán | Governor of Veracruz |
| Carlos Pacheco | Secretary of Development |
| Luis E. Torres | Governor of Sonora |
| Geronimo Treviño | Zone Commander of Monterrey |

Source: Table constructed with data taken from Camp (1995:63)

Years later, the list of loyal allies continued growing as regional political leaders or *caciques* found no option but to rally behind the dictator. That was the case of General Bernardo Reyes—nephew of Díaz's Secretary of War—who won Díaz's sympathy for his successful campaign against General Naranjo and Treviño's political influence in Coahuila and Nuevo León in the late 1880s. Reyes' political career then skyrocketed. He became Governor of Nuevo León in 1887 and stayed in power for nearly two decades. In 1900, Díaz named Reyes as his Minister of War, replacing General Pedro Hinojosa, who had held the position for fifteen years. Reyes was the first non-*tuxtepecano* to hold this cabinet position.

During his brief tenure at the War Ministry, General Reyes created the Second Reserve, a civilian volunteer militia that accounted for 30,000 recruits. His admiration for the German army strengthened the relationship between the two countries. Reyes' new ideas and projects in the armed forces deeply contrasted with the lack of initiative and submission of his immediate predecessors, General Manuel González and General Hinojosa. However, Díaz's civilian collaborators, *los científicos*, soon noticed the sharp contrast and advised the aging dictator to disband the Second Reserve as it was beginning to resemble Reyes' own military machinery. Distrustful as Díaz always was, he forced Reyes to resign and sent him back to the governorship of Nuevo León (Dirk Raat 1977:89). The Second Reserve was dissolved by a presidential decree in 1906. Despite the seriousness of the incident, loyalty to the president among the military leadership was not fragmented and General Reyes left Díaz's cabinet in an honourable way. Nevertheless, his fate was the exception, not the rule. Between 1880 and 1900, Díaz expelled 500 officers and discharged 25 out of his 100 generals for insubordination. No trials or hearings were needed, only the President's judgment. And in extraordinary cases, insubordinate officers confronted sedition charges and faced the firing squad (Beals 1932; Vanderwood 1983:126).

Along with the policy of purging the military from "subversives," President Díaz reorganised the armed forces into 11 military zones in 1885, each with two or three subordinate *jefaturas*, with about 600 men each. Chiefs of military zones enjoyed high status in the government (Grayson 1999). However, Díaz frequently transferred zone commanders, so they and their civilian counterparts would find it difficult to conspire against him (Lieuwen 1968; Garner 2001). In fact, Díaz would not just transfer the head of the military zone, but all the chain of command up to the rank of regiment chief-officer (Cosío Villegas, Calderón et. al. 1955). This policy fragmented military regionalism and prevented the creation of standing allegiances between battalions and officers. Furthermore, zone commanders were positions reserved to division generals or "*divisionarios*" who often enjoyed the full trust of the president.

This type of informal control over the armed forces was prevalent throughout *el porfirato* and constituted the first antecedent of an effective, if not entirely orthodox, method of civilian control over the military. In the absence of a defined doctrine or education system that could teach recruits discipline and loyalty to the state, Díaz resorted to non-institutional means of securing the allegiance of officers.

Based on the results achieved during his government, it seems clear that Díaz secured the allegiance of the generalship by inflating the economic and political price that seditious generals would have to pay in the event of a failed military uprising. As virtually every historical account of this period affirms, the military was in no sense an autonomous political actor. It took its orders from Díaz and obediently carried them out (Knight 1986).

2.2.1 Civil-military relations and the public administration

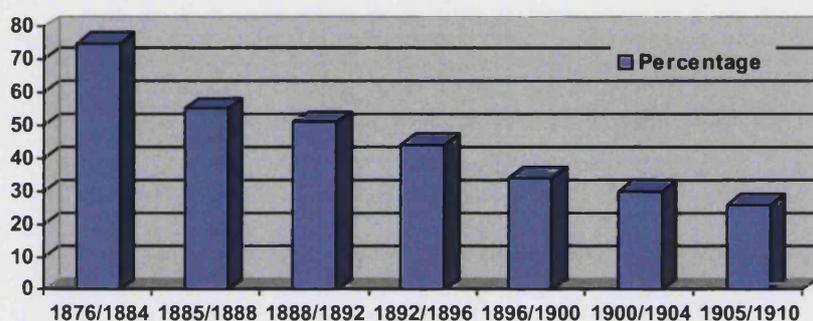
The early years of General Díaz in office were characterised by the appointment of a large number of military officers in public administration positions. By 1880, army officers occupied around 78 percent of upper echelon government positions (Lieuwen, 1968). Ten years later, in 1891, 18 out of 27 governors in the country were still army officers. Below the gubernatorial level, real social control rested in the hands of political chiefs, whose nomination derived from the direct suggestion of state governors, but ratified by the central government. Their formal responsibilities consisted of handling political and administrative affairs on behalf of the centre. By the mid 1890s, 47 out of 300 political chiefs in the country were army officers (Lozoya 1970). However, as President Díaz consolidated his position of power, military personnel disappeared from the political and administrative arena. After the elections of 1884, Díaz began to entrust important cabinet positions to professional civil servants who had gained their experience under the administrations of Juárez, Sebastian Lerdo and even Maximiliano. That was the case of former Lerdist, Ignacio Mariscal, who was Díaz's Secretary of Foreign Relations. Matías Romero, a well-known Juárez adviser, was named Mexico's ambassador to the United States and Manuel Dublán, the new Minister of Finance, had once been a member of Maximiliano's cabinet.

By appointing civilian professionals to key cabinet posts, Díaz harnessed government action to the most powerful social groups, which eventually favoured specific domestic and foreign economic interests. Most importantly, the civilianisation of his rule conveyed to the population, regional political leaderships and the military itself that the political realm was within the purview of civilians, not of military men (Camp 1992:16). According to R. Camp (1995:126), 54 percent of first-time officeholders in 1884 had had a military career. However, this share fell to 9 percent in 1909. This policy of demilitarizing the public administration can be neatly appreciated in Graph

2.1. Informally, however, Díaz continued opening congressional spaces for military officials as a way to satisfy their short-term ambitions. Still, the impotence of congress during his long tenure in office rendered deputies and senators marginal to the national power structure. In fact, these positions represented no more than a sign of political standing, suggesting closeness with the dictator.

Figure 2.3

Army-educated personnel occupying a government post as percentage of total public service 1876-1911



Source: Data taken from E. Lieuwen (1968) and R. Camp (1991).

Beyond their symbolic presence in the national congress, army officers disappeared from high administrative positions. In fact, the number of governors with military background decreased from 17 in 1889 to eight in 1903. Only survived those who displayed administrative talents in addition to military skills (Knight 1986). Nevertheless, the *tuxtepecanos*' influence never disappeared from the armed forces. Even though old age had depleted their ranks by the last years of the Díaz regime, they still monopolized the top-ranking generalships¹⁴. Similar to Díaz, most of them were not professional military officers. According to J. Kelley (1975), only a handful of the old generals could distinguish between the political arena and the battlefield, and thus, set a poor example for rising young officers. By the time the armed movement commanded by Madero came about, the army was under the leadership of aging and unprofessional generals who were of little use to defend the regime. I will return to this issue in the final part of the chapter when I address the causes of Díaz's military defeat in 1911.

¹⁴ Based on J. Kelley's research, the average age of the six Division Generals listed on the roster as still on active duty was 77. (J Kelley 1974:128)

2.3 Civil- military relations: the professional side

Improvement in military education was a major policy during *el porfiriato*. In fact, the contrast between earlier efforts to professionalize the army to Díaz's achievements while in office is striking. Even when the first military school was funded one year after independence in 1822, the number of graduated officers was extremely low. According to military records, the first class to graduate from the military academy had 16 students. By 1833, the turnout was even lower: 12. Ten years after the war with the United States, in 1858, the academy reached a record high of 22. Wars and coups were the main obstacle. Cadets often interrupted their studies as they were called to suppress uprisings or fight a foreign aggressor. That was the case in 1828, 1829, 1840, 1841, 1844, 1846, 1847, 1858, and 1863. Furthermore, the Military Academy closed its doors during the War of Reform (1858-1860) and the French Intervention (1862-1867). It is no wonder that prior to Díaz, most military officers owed their commissions and promotions to circumstances other than martial training.

The *Pax Porfiriana* changed this pattern. No war, internal uprising, or revolution interfered with the training of officers. Under such conditions, the Military College generated, on a regular basis, graduates who entered active duty right after leaving school. By 1887, 53 technical and 134 line officers graduated from the Military College. In 1888, during the President's annual address to the nation, Díaz stated that the Military College had graduated enough officers to fill every vacancy in the army. In fact, by the turn of the century, half of the army officers, approximately 4,500, acquired their qualifications in the Military College (Jerram 1899). According to J. Kelley (1975) and E. Lieween (1968), Díaz hoped to instil military professionalism in the rising generations of officers as a way to divert them from the political arena¹⁵.

¹⁵ To head military education, the Dictator appointed General Sostenes Rocha. General Rocha was a respected professional military man. He had been educated in the Military Academy during the turbulent 1850s and owed his reputation to his heroic defence of President Juárez's rule in 1871 against Díaz's failed revolt of La Noria. Rocha's nomination to become president of the Military Academy reflects two central elements of Díaz's governing style. Even though Rocha had been a declared enemy of Díaz, the dictator was willing to grant him an important role in the reconstruction of the federal army. Rocha's appointment showed that Díaz was not one to hold a political grudge, but was willing to use the talent at hand. Second, Rocha's return from exile reflects the lack of military professional expertise in Díaz's inner circle. After all, "*El Director del Colegio Militar*" was not a position that could be trusted to any of Díaz's loyal but self-made generals. During this period, Rocha set up the Military School of Medicine; ordered the settlement of a permanent army garrison in the territory of Baja California; imposed the first military code of the country (*Ordenanza Militar*) and put to work the first weapons factory in Mexico City. After Rocha's resignation in 1886, General Juan Villegas occupied his position. As in the case of

Still, pure military education was one of the weaknesses of the military college (Valadés, 1977:64-66). L. Pérez (1979) argues that theoretical studies pursued at Chapultepec (Military College) had little relevance to Mexico's needs. Preparation focused on external defence, despite the country's long history of domestic unrest. A second problem was the system of promotion. Most upper-echelon positions in the army were only available to those who enjoyed Díaz's trust, so senior offices usually got their rank because of favouritism¹⁶. In fact, Díaz's manipulation of assignments, appointments and promotions helped to create an officer corps that was more sensitive to political expediency than to military efficiency (Pérez 1979). For those who had the goodwill of the president, life was sorted out. Generals were often honoured guests at Presidential parties and would be seated next to Díaz in public parades and national celebrations. Most high-ranking military officers were also *hacendados* or large landowners. Government protection to run their business was never denied. Díaz often stated that "all men of arms [making exclusive allusion to military officers] have the right to the paternal protection of the state" (Beals 1932).

While this system worked fine for the old generation of officers, it became problematic afterwards for the new graduates of the Military College as it made it very difficult for them to secure a promotion without the direct recommendation of Díaz. According to Vanderwood (1976), few graduates of the Military College reached the rank of general during *el porfiriato*. In fact, one year before the onset of Madero's revolution, Díaz's military command was still monopolised by his old military cronies (most of them aged 70 or over). The overrepresentation of Díaz's generation in the upper end of the military's command structure clearly indicated his intention to keep young and professional soldiers away from positions of responsibility. If politically efficient, this way of controlling the military created a serious problem. Since hierarchy and discipline were not entirely defined by rank, zone Commanders often circumvented the orders of military chiefs by consulting Díaz or the War Ministry directly. This attitude and disregard of authority and hierarchy proved harmless while the military did not face a

Rocha, Villegas was also a renowned general who had fought Díaz during the Tuxtepec Rebellion. Villegas stayed in charge of the Military College until 1900 when Joaquin Beltran replaced him.

¹⁶ For instance, Article 361 of the Army's "*Ordenanza*" (Internal Law) specified that no military officer could be promoted while retired, on leave of absence or employed by a government office other than the Ministry of War. However, most Division Generals reached such rank while working outside the military. According to D. Fernández, Pablo Escandón was a respectable civilian who reached the rank of lieutenant without even ever knowing a military officer. (Fernández, 1919)

situation of war. However, it became deadly when Díaz's army faced a real enemy in 1910-1911.

Another problem facing the military at the onset of the century was recruitment. Ordinary troops were enrolled by force and received little or no military training; "Vagabonds and beggars were rounded up from the city streets... jails were often emptied to provide troops. Such conscripts felt no pride, but only fear and hatred for the officers. They were garbed shabbily, fed inadequately, trained poorly and treated badly" (Lieuwen 1968:5). Not surprisingly, they were notoriously unreliable. J. Guerrero, a sociologist of the time, described the troops of Díaz as a contingent of criminals that were periodically delivered from state prisons (Guerrero 1901). For L. Rowe (1912), the system of recruitment was such as to make the army a kind of penal colony rather than a real national fighting force. If convicts were forced to enlist, it is not difficult to imagine what ordinary citizens thought about the military life. In fact, forced service in the army was one of the most feared punishments (Knight 1986). On the eve of the Revolution, William E. Carson wrote: "the regulars are quite untrustworthy and have little or no patriotism. The explanation is simple. Most of them are men who as penalty for some crime have been sentenced to service in the army, thus forcing them into service, ill drilled and with little or no knowledge of the use of fire-arms, so that is scarcely expected that they will make good soldiers" (Carson 1909:219).

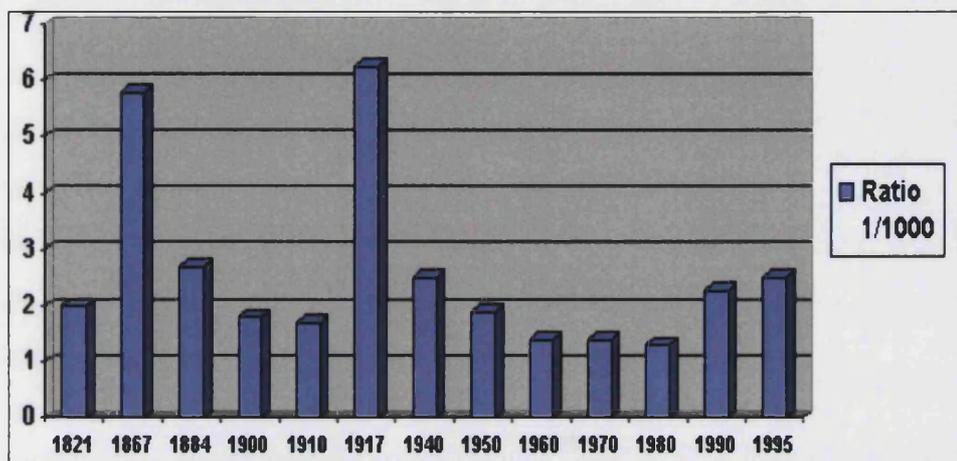
Endemic corruption among high-ranking officers completes the picture of President Díaz's army. It was no secret that officers who received *per diem* allowances for their men would inflate their numbers by 40 percent in order to pocket the extra money. This situation made it difficult to assess the actual size of Díaz's army. Some commentators estimated the size of the army at nearly 40,000 members. Estimations that are more accurate cite about 9,000 officers and 18,000 troops (Beals 1930; Creelman 1912, Lieuwen 1968). L. Pérez (1979) affirms that the size of the military fluctuated between 14,000 and 20,000 officers and soldiers. The American ambassador, Henry Lane Wilson, reported that the military seemed to be much less effective than the published records indicated; this was due to the existence of skeleton regiments and padded rolls¹⁷. Yet, according to Díaz's own calculation, he had no more than 14,000 troops. These discrepant figures suggest that not even the regime knew the real size of its force

¹⁷ Quoted in L. Pérez (1979). Letter, Henry Lane Wilson to Philander C. Knox (8 Feb 1911) 812.00/796

when it had to suppress Madero's rebellion. As shown in Graph 3.1, Díaz's regime had the lowest ratio of military manpower to inhabitant in more than 90 years.

Figure 2.4

Ratio of military manpower to inhabitants 1/1000: Mexico 1821-2000



Source: Graph made with information provided by The Secretary of Defence through petition 21805 and (Castro Soto and Ledesma 2000).

By looking at the available statistics, it is clear that after 1892, military budgets rose steadily, while the number of enlisted soldiers continued falling (SEDENA 1979:297-303). Even though multiple factors might have played a role on this phenomenon, such as the procurement of modern military equipment or the creation of new military infrastructure, the evidence points in the direction of widespread corruption and administrative carelessness. Under these conditions, the emergence of professional armed forces in *el porfiriato* was far from becoming a possibility. First, the education systems lacked a clear logic of training and education. Basic military values, such as patriotism, honour, discipline and loyalty to the state did not occupy a central role in the military's education system. In other words, the military had no doctrine apart from blind loyalty to President Díaz. Second, the close linkage between army officers, elected politicians and business communities precluded the creation of an armed body centred exclusively on military affairs. Third, widespread corruption among zone commanders deeply limited the ability of the military to protect the regime from its political enemies.

2.4 Díaz's military defeat (1910-1911)

In 1908, President Díaz declared to James Creelman, an American journalist, that he considered Mexico was ready for democracy, so the time to hand over power to the next

generation of politicians was imminent (Creelman 1911). Therefore, he said he would grant his political adversaries the guarantee of fair elections. As expected, those whose intervention in politics had been denied by the regime took the dictator's words very seriously. Francisco I. Madero and his *anti-reeleccionista party* emerged as the most important challenger.

Nevertheless, a few weeks before the election, Díaz broke his promise and imprisoned Madero. Weeks later, as it had occurred seven times in the past, Díaz won the presidential race. Madero escaped from prison and requested asylum in the United States. Shortly thereafter, he launched the Plan of San Luis. His programme called Díaz's rule illegitimate and asserted that Mexico needed to end the rule of generals in order to enter the era of civilian rule and democratic politics. He encouraged all sectors of society, even officials of the federal army, to rally to his movement, and reminded military officers that their duty was to protect and be loyal to the institutions of the republic, rather than support tyranny. To the improvised militias that joined his cause, Madero promised to grant military ranks to participants and integrate them into the National Army (Duncan and Goodsell 1970).

Madero's movement profited from a prevailing environment of social anger, and rapidly found support among the bourgeoisie and middle class groups that resented Díaz's exclusionary policies. A similar situation occurred with thousands of landless peasants who laboured on the great *haciendas* of Morelos, Oaxaca and Guerrero. Francisco I. Madero scheduled his attack to start on November 20, 1910 at 6 pm. Given the openness of Madero's plan, the surveillance operations that were put into effect that day by Díaz's troops, police bodies and the *rurales*, came as no surprise. In fact, in Tlaxcala, Jalisco and Chihuahua, especially in Guadalajara and the City of Chihuahua, local police bodies carried out preventive arrests of alleged insurgents and confiscated arms and ammunition. Apart from a few proletarian protests in distant areas and some minor guerrilla activity in Chihuahua and Puebla, nothing serious happened that day or the week after. In fact, the War Ministry reported that no disorder was recorded in Jalisco, Coahuila or Sinaloa.

The disorganised nature of Madero's movement and Díaz's quick military response suggested in the first two weeks a victory of the federal forces. The US Ambassador, Henry Lane Wilson, sent a message to the State Department saying, "Revolutionary

movement has degenerated into bandit warfare, but the government seems in complete control.”(Vanderwood 1976:562). Conventional military doctrines of internal defence, also known as Low Intensity Conflict¹⁸, indicate that ruling elites confronting insurgency movements must be aware that any military operation can generate serious political repercussions (Charters and Tugwell 1989). In other words, guerrilla warfare seldom leads to the obliteration of the enemy. Guerrillas fight a mobile war. Their tactics are hit-and-run and hardly engage the enemy in pitched battles. Therefore, the public-relations dimension of the confrontation is crucial to win the hearts and minds of the general populace. This objective is often achieved through steadily discrediting the rebel’s political aims in the press. Therefore, military supremacy is essential to convince the people at large that sufficient force exists to protect their interest, since crushing the enemy in the short term is hardly a feasible possibility (P. Vanderwood 1976:552). The historical account of Díaz’s response to Madero’s rebellion shows that neither public relations nor the combat dimensions of the conflict were efficiently addressed by the regime (Portilla 1995:362).

To begin with, President Díaz found the scattered distribution of military troops in the country, an essential element of his strategy of internal security, to be very problematic. By the time the uprising started to gain momentum (late December, 1910), the regime was forced to move entire battalions to reinforce besieged positions. D. Charters and Tugwell (1989) argue that counterinsurgency tactics require at least a 6 to 1 superiority in manpower in order to succeed. However, Díaz’s total military presence in Chihuahua barely reached 1,500 when Madero’s military force accounted for at least 3,000¹⁹ by the beginning of December 1910. In agreement with the 6-to-1 principle, Díaz would have needed 18,000 men in the state of Chihuahua alone to defeat Madero’s forces (Vanderwood 1976: 560). That was two thirds of the total size of his military force. In fact, by the time Díaz capitulated in May 1911, the rebel force consisted of nearly 40,000 armed men. According to Portilla (1995:398), the total force of Díaz (military, *rurales*, police bodies and some national guards under the jurisdiction of state

¹⁸ “Low intensity conflict is a limited politico-military struggle to achieve political, social, economic, or psychological objectives. It is often protracted and ranges from diplomatic, economic, and psychological pressures through terrorism and insurgency. Low-intensity conflict is generally confined to a geographic area and it is often characterised by constraints on the weaponry, tactics, and level of violence.” (Command, 1986)

¹⁹ There seems to be no agreement on the size of Madero’s troops in Chihuahua by December 1910. Figures range from 8,000 (*El Heraldo de México* December 10, 1910) to 3,000 (*El País* January 6, 1911). See Vanderwood (1976:559). In order to apply the 6 to 1 principle of counter guerrilla tactics, I took into consideration the lowest figure available.

governors) accounted to 30,000. It was, by all means, insufficient to confront the momentum that Madero's revolution had already gained.

Recruiting was also a problem for the federal army. While new volunteers increased the numerical advantage of the insurgents, the army was experiencing serious difficulty to remain cohesive and solid. For instance, the Governor of Zacatecas informed the War Ministry that he was unable to provide troops because he needed local police forces to guard communities. He also announced that recruitment was impossible, "because people sympathise with the rebels". Similar incidents were reported in other parts of the country, where even *jefes políticos*' loyalties rapidly shifted (Portilla 1995).

If recruitment and size of the federal army were a handicap, lack of unity and discipline at the top of the military structure completed the picture. In less than three months, Díaz appointed three Governors of Chihuahua, hoping to contain the unrest. However, he failed each time and made the relationship between the Zone Military Commander and civilian authorities even more fractious. A further field where the military failed to perform was on intelligence gathering and analysis. Due to the clandestine nature of the enemy, effective military actions relied on steady inflows of information on the insurgents' whereabouts, social bases of support and short-term objectives. As mentioned earlier, different bodies and government agencies were in charge of intelligence gathering. However, it seems that the lack of information about the strength of the guerrilla forces represented an inescapable handicap for Díaz's military. Katz (1985) suggests that governors, political chiefs and army commanders often manufactured intelligence reports in order to tell the dictator what he wanted to hear. Intelligence, like many other technical functions of the regime, had been politicised, and had therefore become worthless for decision-making. According to F. Bulnes (1927), Díaz's decision to capitulate was apparently triggered by intelligence information that claimed that Zapata's militia in the south was powerful enough to sweep the rest of the federal forces out of Mexico City. However, Francisco Bulnes argued that Díaz greatly overestimated Zapata's military strength.

Finally, the regime was also defeated in the field of public relations. The series of victories of the revolutionary forces against the federal army changed rapidly the views of the population concerning the presumed invulnerability of the federal forces. The heavy movement of troops fed the impression, particularly among inhabitants of

Mexico City, that Díaz's military did not have the muscle to face the uprising. Under these circumstances, the early victories of Díaz's military force against the *alzados* were quickly overshadowed by peasant guerrilla activity in Morelos, Hidalgo, Guerrero and Oaxaca. In large cities, such as Guadalajara and Mexico City, organised workers and urban middle classes saw in the revolution an opportunity to play a greater political role and soon joined Madero's movement. This hodgepodge united by a common opposition to the regime strengthened Madero's *Ejército Libertador*. On May 10, the border City of Juárez felt under the control of rebels. This victory ensured the steady supply of arms to Madero's army from the United States and in less than a week, the US President, William Taft, had already recognised the authority of Maderistas over the border point. Taft's recognition of Madero's insurgency force came as no surprise, since it was clear the United States had tolerated the supply of military equipment to Madero's forces throughout the confrontation with Díaz's regime (Hart 1987; Portilla 1995). Days later, the aging dictator acknowledged his defeat, resigned, and left the country.

In sum, Madero's Revolution lasted less than six months, and was relatively bloodless. However, when Díaz capitulated, the federal army had not yet been defeated (Lozoya 1970). In fact, many of its battalions, particularly in the central region of the country, had hardly suffered fatalities as most battles were fought in the northern part of the country. Aware of the structural weaknesses of the federal army, it is likely that Díaz knew that it was only a matter of time for Madero's forces to succeed. A protracted war against the insurgents would've meant, inexorably, the destruction of his industrial and infrastructure legacy: railways, highways, ports, etc. Furthermore, the political side of the war had already been lost. That is, Díaz's credibility to maintain peace and stability in the country had already vanished away. In the end, President Díaz signed the Ciudad Juárez Agreement and Francisco de la Barra became interim president. In October 1911, Madero won the presidential election and became the first democratically elected president of the new century.

2.5 Conclusions

The disastrous performance of the federal army during Madero's Revolution shows that political rather than military considerations determined the way in which the armed forces evolved during the protracted rule of Porfirio Díaz. Compared to other countries

in Latin America, where military establishments achieved a superior ability to defend the state from external aggression, Mexico's military focused on combating the regime's domestic enemies. In other words, Mexico's military did not evolve to achieve what S. Huntington calls military security, but was intended to guarantee the safety of the ruling elite.

Important changes in civil-military relations took place during *el porfiriato*. The most important was the imposition of civilian supremacy over the armed forces. The deference shown by the military elite to Díaz's authority, even during the last hours of his presidency, was a clear sign of subordination (Rowe 1912). In fact, there is no record of massive desertion of army officers or soldiers that later adhered to the insurgent side, even though there were documented attempts of people close to Madero to gain the allegiance of Díaz's military chiefs (Franco y González Salas 1979) 24-39. Despite its effectiveness, Porfirio Díaz's control over the armed forces was flawed and built upon shaky foundations. Patronage, bribery and handsome rewards or business opportunities to loyal officers remained the means of keeping the military away from politics. Even when Díaz's administration witnessed some advances in military professionalism, his military was not prepared to counteract guerrilla movements. The army lacked of internal discipline, its leadership had grown old while the rising generations of professional officers were prevented from performing management positions.

Finally, Díaz failed to forge an institutional bond between the officer corps and the state. Indeed, the armed forces were loyal to the President, but as his successor would tragically discover two years after assuming the presidency, the federal army was loyal to Porfirio Díaz, not to the office of the president. Two years after Madero's victory, General Victoriano Huerta waged a successful coup, assassinated Francisco Madero and placed the armed forces at the centre of the political landscape. After this tragic event, the task of reinstating civilian supremacy over the armed forces would take nearly 30 years to be fully achieved. Not surprisingly, it was re-established in a way that resembled many of the key characteristics imposed during *el porfiriato*.

Chapter 3. El Porfiriato Revisited: the Consolidation of Civilian Supremacy in Post-revolutionary Mexico, 1911-1934

Introduction

Since the end of the Mexican Revolution, the executive has had an exclusive and almost undisputed authority over the military. This chapter presents a narrative of the reconstruction of state power in Mexico after *el porfiriato* and the way the post-revolutionary elite redefined civil-military relations in the 1920s and '30s. Finally, it examines the consequences of this institutional arrangement on the armed forces.

The time frame covered in this chapter opens an interesting case for the analysis of how each of the five elected presidents after Madero's downfall in 1913 contributed to institutionalising a vertical and undisputed form of control over the armed forces. I will argue that the role of political interests and the policy preferences of the ruling elite after 1920 are key elements to understanding the logic behind the reform of civil-military relations. It seems clear that the post-revolutionary elite learned the lesson of relying too much on informal means of control to keep the sword and rifle away from the political arena. Still, they did not hesitate to continue using the military in an utterly partisan fashion.

In the second section of this chapter, I will briefly argue that Mexico's regional security complex (Buzan 1991) precluded the formation of a clear defensive orientation in Mexico's military. This part is relevant to explain why the Mexican armed forces behaved differently from most of their South American counterparts that by the end of the 1910s were regarding each other with a high level of suspicion. In other words, Mexico was unlikely to be at war with Guatemala and unable to challenge the United States military power. According to the U.S. State Department archives on Mexico's military relations during this period, it is seems this notion was very clear in the mindset

of the post-revolutionary elite. For instance, while serving as Secretary of Defence in 1931, Plutarco Elias Calles declared: “the Mexican Army is primarily a police force, as the army would be virtually useless against that of the United States [...] moral reasons only, and not the condition of Mexico’s military resources and armament, could prevent the United States from conquering Mexico.”¹

I will argue that this relatively secure geopolitical position ruled out the emergence of a conventional conception of national defence in the construction of the post-revolutionary doctrine of national security. In turn, this characteristic allowed the creation of a more profound internal dimension where the armed forces have been extensively employed to impose public order, address political and electoral conflicts and promote economic development².

3.1 Madero’s brief presidential term, 1911-1913

Díaz’s military defeat in 1911 did not signify an immediate political demise of the regime, its institutions, political culture or dominant social groups. Even when Díaz negotiated his departure from office from a position of weakness, the outcome of the peace process did not entirely reflect such a condition. From the outset, the political abilities of the dictator and his associates sharply contrasted with the excessive goodwill — some historians may also call naïveté — of his successor (Bulnes 1972). To begin with, Madero agreed to follow the constitutional procedure specifying that the minister of foreign affairs should become interim president in case of death or resignation of the acting president (Aguilar Camín and Meyer 1993). Therefore, Francisco León de la Barra, Díaz’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, assumed the executive power, which he held for five months after Díaz’s resignation. Presumably, Madero left the transition in De la Barra’s hands to meld the political and economic interests of the upper classes and traditional social groups with those of the incoming political regime.

However, for more acute political observers of the time, Madero’s first concessions were far too generous (Cumberland 1972:3-22). Defeated in the battlefield, but triumphant at the table of negotiations, the rational response of the porfirian elite aimed

¹ Rueben Clark, American Ambassador to The State Department. October 24, 1931. General Records of the Department of State, RG 812.20/91 NARA

² G.R Wilson., American Consul to State Department. November 15, 1938. Military Forces in The Piedras Negras Consular District. General Records of the Department of State, RG 812.20/181 NARA

at delaying, if not preventing altogether, the diverse social agenda that had triggered the Revolution in the first place. Judging from the tragic death of Madero in 1913 the remnants of Díaz's crew succeeded in this task for a while. First, and with the political backing of Madero, President De la Barra ordered the dissolution of *El Ejército Libertador*, cognizant of the power of the defeated, but still standing Federal Army. Among a long series of political miscalculations, Madero's decision to disband his military muscle was the most damaging. Only a small fraction of the rebel forces was integrated into active service under a new military force that was known as "*Los Cuerpos Rurales de la Federación*" (Lieuwen 1968). Other than this minor role, few of the informal militias and their leadership get positions in the public service, not to say in the military as agreed in *El Plan de San Luis* —the Revolution's manifesto. Not surprisingly, division and growing disenchantment with the revolution's leader started to gain ground, particularly among the improvised but politically popular generals who were reasonably expecting rewards for participating in the winning side of the armed struggle³.

If the political arena was not running according to Madero's expectations, civil-military relations did not offer a different scenario. Undisturbed by the arguments of his former colleagues in arms, Madero appeared considerably more concerned with securing the loyalty of the Federal Army. On this issue, Madero appealed to the promotion of the military's corporate interest as a way of recreating a more democratic relationship with the officer corps. In fact, during his first year in office, officers' salaries were raised and promotions were granted to those officers who had been neglected in Díaz's times for lacking proper political connections. Furthermore, the newly promoted generalship was given unprecedented room of manoeuvre that aimed at improving its performance and professional character. No doubt, this strategy proved efficient in the short term. It allowed the new administration to open a space where the armed forces could evolve without the extreme political meddling that had characterised the Díaz years.

Eventually — although temporarily — the Mexican armed forces started to look and act more like a war machine than a political interest group. In fact, this attitude proved to be instrumental in the survival of Madero's presidency, particularly when political

³ For instance, General Pascual Orozco in Sonora and Navarro in Chihuahua aired their discontent in the press by criticising the counter-revolutionary character of the interim president's policies. But, their grievances found no echo and Madero lost no time demanding total respect for the executive's decisions.

tensions in the countryside got out of control as a result of De la Barra and Madero's decision to suspend the long awaited restitution of communal lands (Katz 1979: 34-37). To make it worse, President De la Barra sent the Federal Army to combat Zapata's militia as a way of stopping ongoing illegal occupation of land in the states of Morelos and Guerrero. It is not difficult to conclude why the policies of the interim president soon started to demolish the fragile unity of the revolutionary movement. By the time Madero won the presidential election on November 5, 1911, the loyalty of *El Ejército Libertador* to the executive power was irremediably broken. This was, in part, the result of Madero's stubborn determination to introduce democratic practices without changing the Porfirian structures of power, the armed forces included (Knight 1986:448-466).

Madero's erratic and contradictory policy soon took its toll. Some of his former powerful allies, Zapata and Orozco, rebelled within twenty days after he had assumed the presidency. At the same time, there were no clear signs that the President had successfully attracted the allegiance of the Federal Army either. It soon became clear that the decision to leave the leadership of the Revolution outside of the new political agreement interfered with the peace and stability that Mexican society demanded. On the contrary, such exclusion left charismatic leaders with great ascendancy among their armed men with an appealing objective to resume hostilities: "To fight for the unfulfilled goals of the Revolution."

The consequences of Madero's choice to terminate his alliance with Zapata and Orozco and the measures he adopted to maintain control over the federal army portrays the paradox inherent in most approaches to civil-military relations. That is, how to keep a military force strong enough to guarantee the defence of the state against its internal and external enemies and, at the same time, sufficiently loyal to the civilian leadership to remain secluded from the struggles for political power. Eventually, the Federal Army, under the expedient command of General Victoriano Huerta, reduced both uprisings to a level that could not represent a threat to political stability. It seems that Madero's strategy of reducing political meddling in strict military affairs and the promotion of the army's corporate interest boosted the regime's capacity to defend itself against guerrillas. Unfortunately, for the president's cause, this strategy was not entirely

successful in bringing under control a praetorian army that was still tightly controlled by a handful of Porfirian generals.

Less than a month after Pascual Orozco's defeat, a faction of the military elite commanded by the leader of the counter-revolution, General Victoriano Huerta, carried out a coup that put an end to Madero's impractical politics. Soon after, he was assassinated in a well-researched passage of Mexico's history known as "*La Decena Trágica*" (Ross 1970). With Madero's assassination, the last trace of the Revolution as it was planned in 1910 died too. It was also the end of the first real effort —perhaps the only one so far — to bring the armed forces under a more democratic fashion of control. It is not difficult to suggest that the generalship that betrayed Madero soon concluded they were not only fighting the war Díaz refused to continue in May 1911, but also sustaining a president with no support other than the military itself. Despite Madero's complacent treatment toward the military elite, his authority was superimposed. No new formal or informal mechanisms were created to ensure their loyalty. Furthermore, the inability of the president to set minimum conditions of stability— apart from eroding legitimacy — made upper classes and managers of foreign capital highly skeptical about his capacity to bring peace to the country. It was clear that, when these groups were confronted with the choice of supporting Madero or a military regime, they opted for the rule of the generals.

At this point, comparisons between Díaz and Madero are relevant to explain how each president tackled the civil-military paradox described above. It also clarifies why Madero's attempt to reform civil-military relations did not work as he expected. Unlike Díaz, Madero had no military experience and he hardly knew the workings of the Federal Army as an organisation. Therefore, he had no unconditional allies within the military, and his rule never reached the levels of popularity and political alliances that Díaz once had (Beezley, Wolfskill et al. 1979:19). Regardless of the clear signs that the army was plotting a coup and the warnings of his political advisors — the Madero family included — the president maintained his blind faith in the institutional allegiance of the armed forces.

Madero clearly failed to consider that Díaz's informal method of controlling the armed forces was not a capricious choice the dictator made to establish his authority over the generalship. On the contrary, the empowerment of Díaz's trustful agents (*tuxtepecanos*)

was, above all, a pragmatic solution to keep under control a semi-professional armed body with low institutional cohesion, low differentiation from civil society, and dubious loyalty towards the state and its civilian leadership. As explained in the second chapter, Díaz's trusted agents allowed him to have the military doing whatever he wanted and the way he wanted. This often allowed him to maintain reasonable levels of political stability that could serve as an incentive to attract investment and sustain economic growth. Therefore, it seems that Madero's failure to control the armed forces after 1911 was not necessarily related to his unwillingness to transform a path-dependent relationship he not only considered to be morally wrong but pernicious for proper democratic development (Madero 1909). It was rather due to his inability to recognize that the military he inherited and empowered within the new political conditions responded to a specific style of leadership that he was either reluctant to provide for ethical reasons or not even able of truly identify during the two years he remained in office. In the end, Madero failed to change the nature of civil-military relations, because the inertia from the Díaz era proved to be much stronger than the will or the formal powers of the president.

Ultimately, Madero experienced exactly the opposite problems Díaz had at the end of his reign in 1910. That is, his rule proved to be less vulnerable to a revolution, but poorly equipped to prevent a military coup. His tragic fate also made clear that military coups were an inevitable result in the absence of a strong and popular president, as it had been the case throughout the largest part of the 19th Century. Twenty years after Madero's assassination, this pattern of political instability changed via a slow but continuous development in the direction of a more firm, institutional and secure form of civilian supremacy. The following two sections of this chapter deal with this transformation.

3.2 Huerta, Carranza, the United States and the internal dimension of security

Tracking civilian control over the armed forces after Madero's assassination until the end of Plutarco Elias Calles' Presidency in 1928 depicts a historical process of discontinuities that incessantly moved backward and forward like a pendulum. The arrival of General Victoriano Huerta to the presidency in 1913 marked the arrival of the armed forces to political supremacy. Unlike Díaz, the new regime did not hide its

militarism. Huerta's was truly a military regime. It gave prominence to violent solutions to social and political conflicts as opposed to conciliation and negotiation, which was Díaz's preferred method. One of his first actions as president was to replace state governors with trusted members of the federal army. A similar situation occurred with most the senior positions in the public administration. In fact, even civilian members of his cabinet were made Brigade Generals. According to Sherman and Greenleaf (1960), Huerta's regime came close to converting Mexico into the most militarist state in the world. His rule was fundamentally counter-revolutionary, as there was the clear goal to eliminate all traces of Madero's liberal experiment and to return (at least strive for it explicitly) the country to the good old days of the *porfiriato* (Knight 1986a:62).

Not surprisingly, the country's military apparatus also got significantly enlarged. Once more, federal prisons were emptied and the ominous *Leva* returned as the only feasible option to recruit soldiers⁴. On strictly military issues, Huerta intended to construct a professional army of 250,000 soldiers in less than three years. In real terms, this meant the creation of a military force almost 7 times bigger than Díaz's had been in 1910.

Contrary to Huerta's expectations and that of the political groups that supported his presidency—including the US Ambassador, Henry Lane Wilson—his arrival to power did not bring the expected peace and political stability. Quite the opposite, it led to the bloodiest stage of the Mexican revolution. Madero's assassination made him a martyr, and soon his old allies embraced his image to regroup forces, this time under the command of Venustiano Carranza, by that time the governor of Coahuila. As occurred with Díaz, the most important challenge to the regime came from the north. However, this characteristic was, perhaps, the only point of coincidence between Madero and the new leader. Carranza's approach to the Revolution was more pragmatic. He tried to avoid Madero's obvious mistakes such as neglecting the Revolution's social agenda, denying the political positions that would correspond to his followers or leaving the Federal Army untouched after peace negotiations.

Carranza's political pronunciamiento, known as "*El Plan de Guadalupe*," was concise. It did not call for a social revolution, but merely a statement of general goals for

⁴ According to L. Meyer (1976), Huerta recruited between 800 and 1000 new soldiers during his first month in office.

toppling the Huerta dictatorship (Richmond 1979:51). The core of *El Plan de Guadalupe* was that Carranza would be appointed provisional president at the end of the armed struggle and elections would be organised once the country was in a position of peace and stability. In military terms, Carranza's war machinery was not far from being a second edition of Madero's *Ejército Libertador*. However, it also had important differences that are worth noting. To begin with, *El Ejército Constitucionalista* was clearly divided into three geographical commands that initially responded to Carranza's leadership. General Alvaro Obregón headed the North-west force; Francisco Villa was responsible for the Northern Division (Katz, 1979); and General Pablo González commanded the Northeast forces (Krauze 1997). Forces loyal to Emiliano Zapata fought in the south⁵, but they did not respond directly to Carranza's orders (Lozoya 1971).

If not professional, the generalship of "*El Constitucionalista*" had experience in the practice of war. For instance, Obregón had participated in Madero's revolution as a middle-ranking officer, but he gained most of his reputation while fighting the Orozquista rebellion during the second half of 1912. By the time the military campaign against Huerta erupted, Obregón had become the natural leader of the resistance in Sonora. Unlike Villa's armed force, the Northwest army came into existence under the initiative of the Governor of Sonora, José María Maytorena. The objective of this regional army was to provide the State with a standing force capable of maintaining control over the territorial claims of Mayo and Yaqui tribes in the region. The Sonoran militia was hierarchically organised and disciplined. Its soldiers received their salaries directly from the State's treasury⁶. On this basis, it is not difficult to understand why Carranza took Obregón's militia as the backbone of the new military force of the country, as it was the only group accustomed to receiving orders from civilian authorities.

⁵ Zapata's objectives were mainly focused on territorial claims of indigenous communities that had been summarised in *el Plan de Ayala*. Collective gain, rather than individual interest, appeared to be the main popular appeal of the Zapatistas. In contrast, Villa's armed force, as with Serrano rebellions, accounted for a more diverse composition of interests and objectives of its membership (Knight 1986). Agrarian reform played an important role for most of them, as well as old grievances of communities that deeply resented the imposition of political chiefs. Unlike *Carrancistas* and *Zapatistas*, Villa's military force lacked a political manifesto. This was also an indication of the more individualistic character of their demands and political objectives

⁶ By 1913, this military force had 15 generals, 155 officers, nearly 3,000 soldiers and more than 8,000 volunteers (Aguilar Camín, H. 1982). They were all commanded by General Obregón, but were subordinated to the civilian command of Sonora's state Governor, José Maria Maytorena.

After sixteen months of relentless battle, Huerta's illegitimate regime crumbled. The initial support his rule got from the United States under the Presidency of William Taft was revoked soon after President Woodrow Wilson assumed the Presidency on March 3, 1913. Almost all historical accounts of this period agreed that the new American President saw with suspicion Huerta's rule and highly condemned the assassination of Madero (Wilson-Hackett 1926; Colegio de México. Centro de Estudios Históricos. 1981; Katz 1981; Knight 1986a). In real terms, Wilson's animosity towards Huerta strangled the inflow of weapons and resources from the United States. This situation deeply affected the ability of the regime to keep on fighting the armed subversion. Furthermore, the occupation of Veracruz in 1914 by American warships also precluded the importation of weaponry from Europe and placed not only Huerta but also Carranza in a difficult political situation. It was clear that Huerta could have used and, in fact, tried to use, the American invasion to raise some internal support by appealing to a deep rooted anti-American feeling among Mexicans (Katz 1981). Contrary to his intentions, President Wilson's actions to harm Huerta's rule were actually causing the opposite effect.

The role of the United States played during this period is central to understanding both the external dimension of the Mexican revolution during those years, and the evolution of Mexico's policy of national defence. Despite the deployment of U.S. warships in Veracruz and the punitive expedition headed by General Pershing to hunt down Pancho Villa in 1916 (Stout 1999; Marcovitz 2003), it seems the United States did not seriously consider a war in Mexico as a way of protecting its economic or geopolitical interests in the region. Additionally, Carranza seized the window of opportunity opened by the Great War. Within the context of global war confrontation, which was later confirmed by the famous "Zimmerman Telegram," it became clear that the United States needed to have an amicable relationship with its southern neighbour. Through his political envoys in Washington, Carranza demanded both the withdrawal of American soldiers from Mexican territory and the recognition of his rule by the American Government to his rule.

On civil-military relations, Carranza's use of diplomacy in the relationship with the United States, made evident that Mexico's policy of national defence was not in the direction of developing a strong military force. In fact, the security measures of the

United States did not call for a well-developed professional military apparatus in Mexico. (Piñeyro 1985). Compared to other countries in the continent whose military were looking at each other with a high degree of suspicion (table 3.1), the regional security complex of Mexico was pointing in a different direction.

Table 3.1

Latin American wars 1906-1941

| Year | Name | Participants |
|-----------|-----------------------------|---|
| 1906 | Second Central American War | Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador v. Nicaragua |
| 1907 | Third Central American War | Honduras, El Salvador v. Nicaragua |
| 1932-35 | Chaco War | Bolivia v. Paraguay |
| 1932 | Leticia War | Peru v. Colombia |
| 1939-1941 | Zarumilla War | Peru v. Ecuador |

Source (Mares 2001)

In other words, while other Latin American countries were fighting regional wars or investing heavily in military professionalism to confront potentially hostile neighbours, the Mexican ruling elite was struggling to address the social and political disarray dragged since the Revolution, the dissolution of the Federal Army and the resignation of Huerta from Mexico's presidency in August 1914. Unfortunately, for Carranza and his followers, the evaporation of the last traces of Díaz's regime as well as the incorporation of the revolutionary forces into the country's payroll did not pacify the country. For the next 15 years, the main threat to the country's stability was domestic and it came concretely from a multitude of regional military chiefs or caudillos who insisted on influencing the political arena from their respective positions and standings in the armed forces. Under these circumstances, it was clear that Carranza's *Plan de Guadalupe* was efficient in supplying a minimum sense of order while all revolutionary factions had a common enemy. However, this plan was unable to provide a stable basis for long-term leadership once the hostilities with the federal army were over.

This situation, in part, explains why the different military factions of the revolution were so eager to welcome the leftovers of the Federal Army into their ranks. Francisco Villa even granted amnesty to all *federales* (former members of the Federal Army) who were willing to join his militia and banned only those who had taken part in the

assassination of Madero⁷. Villa's proposition could not disguise the fact that he was preparing to wage war against Carranza in search of becoming the supreme power in the country. Soon after attempts failed to mediate between political contenders, the battle of the winners, as A Knight (1986) named it, divided the Revolution into two visible factions. General Obregón and General Pablo González decided to play the cards of Carranza and put their semi-professional military forces at his service. In turn, Villa bet for his substantial army, which Zapata promptly joined (Gonzales 2002).

Despite having a greater military force, the stubbornness of General Villa could not compete with the apparently superior military skills of General Alvaro Obregón. Between May and November 1915, Villa was defeated in three consecutive battles and his military force was reduced to a few squads. The same outcome befell forces loyal to Zapata, as well as other armed groups that profited from the state of lawlessness that reigned after the collapse of Huerta's rule. The configuration of power that derived from Villa's and Zapata's military defeat was decisive for the definition of the new institutional equilibrium in the following years. Finally, Carranza's rule was considerably consolidated when the United States granted de-facto recognition of the new government in October 1915.

Carranza's victory over Villa and Zapata made clear that military force was the final arbiter of politics, particularly in deciding who could serve as president. As a result, it provided a minimum of consensus over the leadership of the country and the national army. However, it could not do much to tame the political ambitions of a multitude of army officers, whose political standing stemmed from their alleged military feats. In that sense, the new national army was born politicised, as most regional military leaders continued commanding their troops in a patriarchal fashion. This factor alone kept the country under conditions of latent political instability.

3.3 Carranza's rule and the Constitution of 1917

Despite the problems with control over the armed forces described above, pitched battles between contenders gave way to an active debate of ideas in the renovated

⁷ Formally, ex-members of the Federal Army could only be admitted in the new military institution as long as they were graduates from the Military College and were willing to work in the military academy as instructors. Nevertheless, informally, an important percentage of ex-federal soldiers and officers were integrated into the forces of Villa, Zapata and General Pablo González (Knight, A. 1986a).

Congress. The shape of social reform started to take real dimension when a victorious President Carranza called the leadership of the Revolution to redefine the rules of the political game in December 1916. The Constitutional Project that Carranza proposed to the new Congress incorporated the broad social demands of the Revolution, such as labour, agrarian reform and anticlerical provisions on public education (Richmond, 1979 48-55). The new Constitution gave the Revolutionary ideals a strong legal and institutional referent. Reforms included Labour rights (Article 123), Agrarian Reform (Article 27), Presidential Power (Article 80 to 93) and even control over the Church (Article 130). Civilian supremacy over the armed forces was also clearly stated in Articles 16 and 89, which favoured Carranza's *civilist* project. Nevertheless, achieving peace and stability in the country remained an elusive goal. Two main obstacles arose. First, the remnants of Villa's and Zapata's armies were still operating in different regions of the country, forcing Carranza to keep the armed forces involved in tasks of internal security and public order. Secondly, Obregón's successful military campaign against Francisco Villa made him a national figure that tacitly challenged the political standing of Carranza.

Therefore, Carranza's rule confronted the superior need of keeping a powerful military machinery to fight internal enemies while also keeping in check the political ambitions of regional military leaders. Strictly speaking, Carranza confronted a problem with civil-military relations far more complicated than Madero had encountered after Díaz's resignation in May 1911. Regardless of all its flaws, the Federal Army was a highly centralised body whose generals or "empowered military brokers" responded to a single command. In contrast, the informal militias that composed the new national army after 1914 lacked a clear sense of broad political or military leadership. In practice, this meant that Carranza's authority over the military depended, once more, on finding charismatic brokers or agents who could effectively keep the troops under control and aligned to civilian leadership. Wisely enough, Carranza appointed General Alvaro Obregón as Minister of War and soon delegated to him the task of reforming the military (Hall 1981).

Obregón's record in the war ministry was not particularly impressive⁸. He effectively played the role of a broker that Carranza so badly needed to maintain the armed forces

⁸ Obregón's first challenge was to reduce a military force of nearly 200,000 soldiers, five hundred

under control. Despite this fact, Carranza did not offer Obregón any position in the cabinet when the former got elected Constitutional President in June 1917 (Loyo Camacho 2003). Obregón returned to civilian life in his home state of Sonora, and, even when he aired his differences with Carranza's policies to the press, he made no attempt to overturn the regime.

In theory, Obregón's decision to abandon, if temporarily, the political scene reduced the level of political pressures over Carranza's presidency. However, Carranza lost more than he won with Obregón's departure. Beyond real progress on taming and fostering professionalisation in the national army, Obregón's allegiance to Carranza represented an important deterrent to other strong military figures who might have considered the possibility of mounting a military coup. Obregón was the most important personality in the military and any coup that ignored his political standing was most likely doomed to failure. On the other hand, Obregón's resignation forced Carranza to diversify the number of agents or brokers to maintain order within the military. Under such conditions, Carranza attempted to control the military elite by buying off loyalties of the generalship, not only with generous salaries, but also by ignoring the rapacious behaviour of many military chiefs. It was not long before the population once more began to become restive because of the behaviour of the new military force.

Furthermore, Carranza's strategy to control the military did not strengthen discipline in the new organisation. The way he tackled civilian control over the generalship was still very informal in nature. In fact, it made the impression that buying off allegiances of self-interested generals was the only way to control their political ambitions. In many ways, Carranza's regime was still poorly institutionalised and decisive political influence was still a commodity of the generalship. The military and its leadership did not behave as a military apparatus, but as an armed political party with the ability to influence or veto policies, allocate political representatives in states and regions and influence the selection of presidential candidates. The following election scheduled in November 1920 confirmed this hypothesis. It was no secret that the most influential

generals and an immense number of high-ranking officers. This was essential, not only because it posed a problem of control, but because of its heavy burden upon Mexico's public finances. As War Minister, Obregón offered early retirement packages to high-ranking officers who chose to return to civilian life. He also launched an initial program of military education that aimed at improving the military skills of hundreds of self-made officers and created special premises to repair war materials, established hospitals and started to develop Mexico's air force (Hall 1981). However, poor progress was achieved on military expenditures, as almost 72% of the budget was still committed to cover the army's payroll.

general of the Revolution, Alvaro Obregón, appeared as the leading presidential contender, while Carranza was clearly favouring a civilian candidate in Ignacio Bonillas, Mexico's ambassador to the United States.

From the start, the electoral competition looked unequal for Bonillas. Carranza's bases of social support were not particularly strong. His record on social reform was unimpressive. Restitution of land in Morelos and Guerrero was modest. In fact, many *hacendados* that lost their properties during the long years of anarchy that followed Díaz's departure from office had their lands returned by direct presidential intervention. The incipient labour movement was not supportive either, as Carranza had, on a handful of occasions, dispatched the armed forces to crush strikes⁹. Actually, Carranza's declarations to workers in 1914 went as far as to say that "Trade Unionism is atheistic and an enemy of the Fatherland" (Paniagua 2001:20). This counter-revolutionary character of Carranza's policies helps to explain why organised labour created the *Confederación Obrera Mexicana* (CROM) to favour Obregón's political aspirations in 1919. If these signs were not clear enough to portray the low political capital of the President, the poor response that Bonillas' candidacy received from the military demonstrated that he had no chance to win the election. To Carranza's surprise, even his trusted friend and head of the National Army, General Pablo González, resigned his position to run for the Presidency.

Carranza's choice of Bonillas tested the loyalty of the National Army towards the executive power. It was a test the military would not pass. Apparently, Carranza saw in Bonillas's candidacy the possibility of consolidating civilian domination in the post-revolutionary period. However, the leadership of the armed forces saw things differently. For them, Ignacio Bonillas represented the informal extension of Carranza's rule. Benjamín Hill, one of Obregón's die-hard supporters and nephew, declared that there was no chance for a civilian candidate to triumph in the presidential race. For Hill and other military leaders, the country was still in "an era where force rules, as it has been shown by the great amount of problems that civilian governors are experiencing with military representatives" (Loyo Camacho 2003:58). In contrast, Carranza argued that Mexico had suffered enough from the maladies of militarism, which had also proved to create political and social unrest, Díaz and Huerta's rule being

⁹ For a comprehensive description of labour relations during Carranza's rule see (Bortz 2000).

the clearest examples¹⁰. There is evidence that Carranza not only wanted a civilian to succeed him in the presidency, but also intended to keep Obregón away from the political scene (Bailey 1979:85). A high degree of mutual animosity between these two figures of the Revolution once more was about to trigger violence in the country.

Clearly, Carranza was mistaken about the sources of political power of the time. The hub of the political system had not transited yet to the presidential office, but remained attached to the military and its generals. Carranza was the President, but the loyalty of the armed forces did not belong to him. Under such conditions, the result was highly predictable. When the military had to support one of the contenders, it massively followed Obregón and opposed the President.

3.4 The Agua Prieta Revolution and Obregón's Presidency

A bloodless uprising followed, as nearly ninety-five per cent of the armed forces favoured Obregón in what is known as "*La Revolución de Agua Prieta*". Only the young cadets of the Military College remained loyal to the President, but it did not help much. Soon after, Carranza experienced the same fate of Madero. He was hunted down and assassinated by Obregón loyalists, apparently against Obregón's wishes (Corona del Rosal, 1995). Adolfo de la Huerta, by that time Governor of Sonora, was appointed Interim President. A few months later, Alvaro Obregón overwhelmingly won the electoral race of December 1920. The tragic fates of Madero and Carranza highlighted in retrospect Díaz's remarkable achievement in subordinating the military to his authority for more than thirty years. It was then time for the new political leadership of the country to learn from Díaz's experience if the idea was not to repeat Madero's and Carranza's mistakes and tragic end.

Considering civil-military relations in the ten years that followed, they did learn. Even though there were at least five well-orchestrated military uprisings in the country that seriously attempted to overturn the president after 1920 (Table 3.2), Obregón's coup was the last that managed to succeed. From that year, the army started a long and not always easy transition toward becoming a more professional military force at the service of the state, as opposed to a heterogeneous blend of militias that responded to the

¹⁰ Obregón contradicted Carranza by arguing that he had stopped being a soldier years ago and, in any case, what he had done during the revolution was to fight the excesses of militarism in the country. "My spirit is *civilista*" was a phrase Obregón continuously used in his speeches.

interests of the regional *caudillos*. *Agua Prieta*, therefore, marked the end of a permanent climate of social insurrection. It did so partly because the Sonoran elite — Alvaro Obregón, Plutarco Elias Calles and Adolfo de la Huerta — was considerably more eager to carry out social reform and certainly had the political capital to demilitarise the political system. It also made possible the achievement of whole deals, surrenders and submissions of old guerrilla leaders, such Francisco Villa and the Zapatistas (A. Knight 1986a:493). Their surrender alone brought a sense of peace to the countryside that had not been seen since *El porfiriato*.

Table 3.2

Major military rebellions, 1920-1940

| President | Rebellion date | Size of Rebellion | Successful? |
|-----------------------|----------------|--|-------------|
| Venustiano Carranza | 1920 | 274 generals (97%), vast majority of troops | Yes |
| Alvaro Obregón | 1923 | 102 Generals (20%), 573 colonels and majors (23%), 2,417 other officers (28%), 23,224 troops (39%) | No |
| Plutarco Elias Calles | 1927 | 28 generals, 20% of the troops | No |
| Emilio Portes Gil | 1929 | 5 generals, 30% of the officers, 17,000 troops (28%) | No |
| Lázaro Cárdenas | 1938 | 1 general and his private army | No |

Source: This table was originally made with information retrieved from E. Lieuwen (1968) and later corroborated in the following studies : (Quiros Martínez 1928; Dulles 1961; Lieuwen 1968; Lieuwen 1984; Corona del Rosal 1995)

But why did the famous Sonoran elite want to act like this in relation to the armed forces? It seems possible to argue that in a planned and concerted way Obregón, later Calles and Cárdenas (who was not part of the Sonoran elite but was politically linked to Calles), understood that the survival of the political system, their rule and even their lives, were tightly attached to securing control over the armed forces. In fact, they proved to be highly skilled leaders and politicians. The most outstanding case was definitely Obregón, who was also a gifted military strategist. The opposite case was Cárdenas, who was a brilliant politician but a poorly skilled general (Krauze 1997). None of these three personalities were professional soldiers nor —at least before their exposure to political power— members of wealthy families. Obregón was a muleteer; Calles was a schoolteacher and public servant; and Cárdenas was a young shepherd before he joined Carranza's army in 1914. This condition precluded a firm attachment to a series of vested interests that allegedly precluded Madero and Carranza from committing to a far-reaching agrarian and social reform. In fact, their original position

in the social ladder reinforced their identification with the demands of large underrepresented social sectors that had been consistently neglected by the politicians since the independence. There was also a clear strategic thinking; especially in Calles and Obregón who were able to foresee the enormous political capital the revolution had won among large underrepresented social groups. Not surprisingly, “The Revolution” became a highly profitable brand Calles and Cárdenas capitalised on later in the foundation of the political party that ruled Mexico for the following 70 years.

The Institutionalization of civil-military relations

Once in office, Obregón diversified mechanisms to achieve control over the armed forces. He laid emphasis on institutionalising¹¹ civilian control, and reduced the ability of generals to influence politics. Since 1920, informal procedures to separate the military from the political scenario, as briefly intended by Carranza between 1917 and 1920, had been discarded as the dominant strategy to maintain the military’s allegiance to the political regime. It was then the beginning of the end of the “trustful agents” or *caudillos* within the armed forces. After 1920, loyalty would need to have an institutional and normative basis, meaning respect for rules, discipline and doctrine rather than personal appeal. On this issue, Roderick Ai Camp (1991) argues that, after the Mexican Revolution, the leadership of the triumphant militias concluded that political stability could not be achieved if charismatic *caudillos*, with strong ties to military divisions, were allowed to engage in politics from a position of power within the armed forces. It was the same conclusion that Porfirio Díaz had arrived at fifty years before. However, Obregón and the presidents that came after him opted to address the situation differently.

From the start, Obregón adopted a strategy that tackled the political standing of the generalship from different angles. First, he deliberately aimed to strengthen labour and agrarian organisations that could counterbalance the influence of the military in the political arena. The labour and agrarian sectors were organised into political parties, such as the *Partido Nacional Laborista* (PNC) and the *Partido Nacional Agrarista* (PNA) (Carriedo 1992:59). Furthermore, he appointed civilians with no participation in

¹¹ I adopt the definition of Calvert (1969:505) on institutionalization as “applied to non-violent politics suggests the creation of institutions within which a particular set of political interactions can be maintained”

the revolution into key areas of the military establishment and government. As a result, well-known members of the labour movement, such as Luis Morones, occupied the direction of the army's firearms factory. The *Regencia* of Mexico City was also given to the Labour Movement (Bailey, 1979:86). Along with a quasi-civilian invasion of the military's high bureaucracy, Obregón became the first President in the new century to fulfil his promise to protect the workers' right to organise strikes¹².

A second wide social group that Obregón attempted to attract was the peasant movement. This strategy took place by putting into effect Article 27 of the Constitution that specified agrarian reform (Gonzales 2002). Obregón redistributed 921,627 hectares of land, five times as much as Carranza (Krauze 1997). Furthermore, his increasing closeness to civil society organisations, such as trade unions and agrarian organisations both counterbalanced the political influence of the military and strengthened the presidential institution. It was soon obvious that Obregón was acting more as a statesman, looking after the interests of the Presidency as an institution, rather than protecting the interests of the army (Wager 1994).

On strictly military issues, Obregón adopted a mixture of draconian and lenient measures to establish his authority over the armed forces. Officers and generals who were identified with *el carrancismo* or did not entirely agree with Obregón's policies were either shot or expelled from the country. Not particularly differently from Carranza, the new president never hesitated to grant generous compensation to guarantee the loyalty of the generalship¹³ or to make things easy for those who opted to return to civilian life, as was the case with Francisco Villa in 1921. In any case, civil-military relations did not normalise overnight. Even when Obregón managed to clean rival generals from the military, he still had to deal with those that, being *obregonistas*, used their position to plunder communities and regions they were supposed to protect (Hansis 1979).

¹² His alliance with the labour movement remained functional until June 1922, when the military was sent to crush two strikes. Apparently, excessive government protection of labour organizations degenerated into widespread corruption and threatened the Neo Porfirian character of Obregón's rule — promotion of private investment and capitalist economic development.

¹³ This was a problem Obregón identified since his years as War Minister. Apparently, he warned Carranza about the effects that brutal, untrained and self-interested army officers could have on the good name and progress of the Revolution. According to A. Loyo (2003), Obregón's office was filled with complaints from citizens and local authorities, because of abuses perpetrated by military chiefs. They often requested loans from local banks that they would not pay back, trafficked with gambling organizations, allied to *hacendados* to obstruct agrarian reform and, above all, used their position to commit abuses against the civilian population.

To tackle this problem, Obregón ordered once more the creation of a special commission to evaluate whether officers deserved the ranks they claimed they had. Another important group of soldiers were transferred to the first military reserve and were entitled to collect half of their salaries for up to three months. For instance, General Francisco Serrano, Obregón's Minister of War, offered inducements that included allocation of land to those who decided to lay down their arms and return to civilian life. According to E. Lieuwen (1968), Obregón sought to achieve a fifty per cent reduction of the military's membership and to cut military expenditure by one third. In the first year, the army experienced a reduction of nearly 70,000 soldiers. By the end of his administration, the army passed from absorbing forty-eight percent of the total government expenditure to thirty-three percent in 1923. The size of the military budget throughout the 1920s is a good indicator of the firm determination of the political elite to redirect military resources to other social groups (Table 3.3).

By looking at Table 3.3, it seems clear that Obregón and succeeding presidents had strong incentives to relieve the public administration of high military expenditures. In fact, military budgets decreased almost at the same speed as military personnel did. However, as the size of the military consistently reduced, the number of generals remained steady or even grew between 1923 and 1929, both being years of failed military uprisings. To put in numbers, while in 1917 there were 966 soldiers for each general (1/966); in the last year of the *obregonista* regime, this ratio passed to one general to 150 recruits (1/155). This apparently contradictory move is explained by the need of the civilian rule to avoid confrontation with the military elite. Furthermore, the promotion of a high number of die-hard *obregonistas* before and after the *de la huertista* uprising was aimed at counterbalancing, in number and power, the political standing of the old Revolutionary veterans.

Table 3.3

Military budget 1917-1940 (budget in millions of pesos and military personnel in thousands of soldiers)

| Year | President | Total Budget (million pesos) | Military Budget (million pesos) | Military Budget (%) | Military Personnel (thousands) | Number of Generals |
|------|--------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1917 | Venustiano | | | 69.6 | 200 | 207 |
| 1918 | Carranza | 253 | 140 | 55.5 | 135 | |
| 1919 | | 171 | 81 | 47.4 | 155 | 281 |
| 1920 | | 364 | 176 | 48.4 | 137 | 500 |
| 1921 | | 684 | 363 | 53.0 | 120 | 318 |
| 1922 | Alvaro Obregón | 820 | 380 | 46.4 | 103 | |
| 1923 | | 790 | 265 | 33.6 | 85 | 514 |
| 1924 | | 970 | 413 | 42.6 | 66 | 439 |
| 1925 | | 1007 | 311 | 30.9 | 52 | 459 |
| 1926 | Plutarco Elias Calles | 1105 | 329 | 29.8 | 64 | 398 |
| 1927 | | 1080 | 345 | 31.9 | 64 | 413 |
| 1928 | | 1043 | 337 | 32.3 | 69 | 392 |
| 1929 | | 1002 | 374 | 37.3 | 74 | 373 |
| 1930 | Emilio Portes Gil | | | | | |
| | Portes Gil/Pascual Ortiz | 997 | 308 | 30.9 | 70 | 426 |
| 1931 | Pascual | 917 | 274 | 29.9 | 65 | |
| 1932 | Ortiz Rubio | 941 | 271 | 28.8 | 61 | |
| 1933 | Abelardo Rodríguez | 1029 | 253 | 24.6 | 54 | 398 |
| 1934 | | 1072 | 243 | 22.7 | 54 | |
| 1935 | Lázaro | 1208 | 252 | 20.9 | 59 | 394 |
| 1936 | Cárdenas | 1538 | 266 | 17.3 | 54 | |
| 1937 | | 1530 | 266 | 17.4 | 48 | 350 |
| 1938 | | 1541 | 257 | 16.7 | 54 | 354 |
| 1939 | | 1733 | 274 | 15.8 | 49 | |
| 1940 | | 1786 | 352 | 19.7 | 49 | |

Source: (Wilkie, 1970:22; 102:103). Version 3.0 of the National Material Capabilities data set developed at the Pennsylvania State University by the Correlates of War 2 Project. Lozoya (1971) Lieuwen (1968), Hernandez- Chavez (1980) and Toral (1979).

In any case, the transition of the armed forces from being a protagonist to a subservient role was difficult and a good deal of this objective was achieved when Obregón deliberately made no attempt to encourage the participation of military men in the political arena. Candidates with a strong military background did not receive official support to run for public office, and Obregón kept only three generals in his cabinet. He also publicised that the progress of an officer's career would depend upon his loyalty to the National Army and the central government, not to allegiance to local military chiefs or state governors. In fact, this trend towards diminishing the role of the armed forces in the political arena is reflected neatly by the presence of office holders in the public administration as it can be appreciated in Table 3.4. This shift is not only reflected

between Obregón and Carranza's presidency, but in the general trend that continued in the following administrations.

Table 3.4

Mexican military officers working in the public administration as percentage of entire public service, 1914-1940

| Years | Presidential Term | Percent Military |
|-----------|-----------------------|------------------|
| 1914—1920 | Venustiano Carranza | 46 |
| 1920—1924 | Alvaro Obregón | 40 |
| 1924—1928 | Plutarco Elias Calles | 34 |
| 1928—1930 | Emilio Portes Gil | 29 |
| 1930—1932 | Pascual Ortiz Rubio | 32 |
| 1932—1934 | Abelardo Rodríguez | 33 |
| 1935 | Lázaro Cárdenas | 24 |
| 1935—1940 | Lázaro Cárdenas | 27 |

Source: Table elaborated with information from R. Camp (1992:67)

At the same time, high profile positions and the upper level of the government gradually became the natural dominion of civilian officers. This policy was not entirely different from Díaz's practices during the late 1880s and 1890s. For instance, during the interim presidency of Adolfo de la Huerta, six out of eight cabinet ministers were active members of the armed forces. This figure declined to twenty-seven per cent with Cárdenas in the late 1930s. (Boils 1976:175-182)

Furthermore, Obregón's war minister divided the military force into thirty districts, instead of twenty-three as Carranza defined it in 1919. Less than two years later, Calles opted to subdivide the military zone once more to thirty-five in 1925 with the objective of limiting the ability of zone commanders to command a large number of soldiers that could threaten the stability of the central government. At the same time, the War Ministry adopted the Díaz tradition of frequently rotating army generals as a way of preventing any one general from establishing personal influence over a defined sector of the military (Prewett, 1941:613). Apparently, a high concentration of troops was no longer necessary in a mostly pacified country. Behind this strategy was also Obregón's need to reinstate the hegemony of the centre by undermining regional military leaderships.

Along with the measures mentioned above, President Obregón placed great emphasis on revamping the system of military education. President Carranza had reopened the Military College in 1919, but it was Obregón who started to invest heavily on improving it. In general, new courses were created in each of the military colleges and instructors were presumably more qualified and better trained. The new education system successfully incorporated the revolutionary ideology and placed it at the same level as loyalty to the national government. The important element here is that, gradually, the abstract concept of the military as defenders of the Revolution evolved into a more concrete idea. This was the military as defenders of the government institutions that transpired from the Revolution (Carriedo 1992:132). Not surprisingly, these polices soon started to widen the gap between civil and military organisations. They also placed the executive power as the ultimate representation of the Revolution's heritage.

In any case, while the political elite had no difficulty in defining the type of relationship it wanted to establish with the armed forces, high-ranking army generals still disagreed with this vision. Despite Obregón's efforts to professionalize and depoliticise the armed forces, the 1923 military uprising headed by Adolfo de la Huerta was a reminder to the president that firm subordination of the army was not yet a reality. Once more, the presidential succession proved a difficult test of the military's loyalty to civilian authority. Apparently, the sympathy of the president for Plutarco Elias Calles's presidential candidacy was not welcome by other revolutionary veterans with high political ambitions (Alessio Robles 1949). The unsatisfied generalship conspired once more with the expectation of repeating the success of Obregón's Agua Prieta Revolution (Valenzuela 2002:84), but this time they only managed to attract half of the military toward their cause, which, compared to ninety-five percent that had supported Obregón in 1920, looked quite modest. Social appeal was also more difficult to attract, as public opinion rapidly pictured those that opposed Obregón as being moved by purely political opportunism.

At any rate, the rebellious army looked considerably bigger than Obregón's loyalists did. However, this time the political environment in Mexico was different. The alliance the president had knitted with the labour and agrarian movement started to pay off. Soon after De la Huerta's uprising turned public, the National Army was rapidly

enlarged by thousands of citizens and peasants who volunteered to defend Obregón's rule. The rebellion was defeated in three months. The occurrence of the rebellion had a benefit to Obregón in that he and his followers were able to expel or kill those generals and middle-ranking officers of dubious loyalty to the central government. Besides, De la Huerta's failed rebellion only reinforced the unity of the armed forces and incremented, rather indirectly, the electoral appeal of Obregón's candidate. A few months later, Plutarco Elias Calles won the Presidential race in 1924 without difficulty¹⁴.

Eventually, failed coups and the possibility that the incumbent president might throw his support behind his chosen successor gave the regime continuity over several policies, civil-military relations included. The De la Huertista rebellion made clear that, even when the military had lost an important share of its original budget, the size of its personnel and political influence via cabinet positions and fragmentation of military zones, it was still not willing to abandon its role in the selection of the "official" presidential candidate. However, De la Huerta's failure showed that the strategy to shape the military through institutional measures as opposed to just focusing on buying off the loyalty of the military leadership was starting to displace the centre of the political system off the armed forces. In that sense, the triumph of Obregón over the disgruntled generals and the election of Calles for the following four years gave way to more than a redefinition of formal and informal rules of civilian control. It was also the consolidation of the measures already taken by Obregón. The capacity that showed the regime to resist a military uprising made clear that the supreme authority of the military was no longer the generals, but the president.

3.5 The presidency of Plutarco Elias-Calles

Calles continued constructing convenient allegiances with labour and peasant organisations to counterbalance the political influence of the armed forces. The sustained alliance with CROM and its political arm, *El Partido Laborista Mexicano* (PLM) ensured continuous support from the urban and organised political groups that emerged from the Revolution (Córdova 1995). At the same time, agrarian reform was

¹⁴ The new president also had a military record, but it was far from impressive. Calles was governor of Sonora and Chief of Military Operations in different regions of the country. He joined Madero in 1910, fought against Victoriano Huerta in 1913, helped Carranza in the Constitutionalist Army, and fought at Obregón's side at all times.

intensified. In fact, during Calles' administration, twice as much land was given out to peasants than the already high total during Obregón's rule.

Military professionalisation continued, this time under the expedient command of General Joaquín Amaro, Calles' Minister of War. Amaro's reputation as a man of strong convictions, discipline and no political aspirations were valuable assets for bringing the military under a more structured model of civilian control. Throughout his many years as the Secretary of War, Amaro won a reputation as a rigid, tough-minded man who was both a strict disciplinarian and a brilliant organiser (Beals 1932). In many ways, Amaro set a benchmark for future secretaries of defence as a highly organised man, always eager to enforce the will of the President, and at the same time keeping the discipline of the armed forces under tight control. At Calles' request, Amaro focused on disciplining the "strong men," meaning the divisional generals who, being revolutionary veterans, had continuously proven to be a nuisance to political stability. It seems that the idea was to eradicate the power of the last "brokers" who still kept regional troops aligned to their individual interest as opposed to the State and its political leadership.

Under this logic, one of Amaro's first actions was to declare a moratorium on all promotions. He reduced the number of regular troops to 55,000 and, by 1926, the military budget passed from thirty-six percent of the government's budget to twenty-five percent. It could not go lower, because Calles confronted a different kind of social uprising, not over land or political vindications, but over religious issues known as *la crstiada*¹⁵.

On the institutionalization of civil-military relations, General Amaro requested the Mexican Congress to approve four laws aiming at governing the internal life of the military. These laws were: the Organic Law of the Army and Navy; The Law of Promotions and Rewards (LPR); The Law of Military Discipline and The law of Pensions and Retirement. The Organic Law defined once and for all the military's basic structure and organisation. Its mission was to "defend the integrity and independence of the nation, to maintain the authority of the constitution, and to preserve the internal order." Most importantly, the President was recognised as the supreme authority of all

¹⁵ For a detailed study of the Cristero movement, see J. Mayer (1976)

military forces. While the Organic Law defined the scope of the military's mission and its political leadership, it was the Law of Promotions and Rewards that caused the immediate impact. The new law formally protected the integrity and independence of the armed forces to operate its system of promotion. This measure weakened political intervention in the appointment of generals and other key military positions. The enactment of the new law successfully conveyed the idea to the new generation of officers that military service required the withdrawal of personal ambition for the good of the nation. Gradually, Amaro's effort toward the creation of a strict military space enhanced the corporate identity of the military, understood as a shared sense of unity as a military institution. No doubt, Amaro's personal philosophy was one of the major shaping influences on the new relationship between the ruling elite and the armed forces.

General Amaro also succeeded on bringing to order those divisional generals who used their position within the armed forces as a springboard to politics and personal gain. The new scheme stressed the idea that national politics was no place for the armed forces. In that sense, Amaro's famous phrase of "Give up politics or leave the military"¹⁶ was more than a rhetorical artifice to discourage the political ambition of restless army generals. It was the cornerstone of a new institutional agreement between civilians and soldiers as commanded by former president Obregón and later on ratified by Calles¹⁷.

Calles' confidence in Amaro was later justified when the latter opted to close the Military College in 1926 in order to redefine the system of military education altogether. One year later, the Military College reopened its doors with new programs that highlighted the professional formation of military officers and the new doctrine aimed at securing the acceptance of discipline of recruits from superiors and undisputed

¹⁶ Sheffield, Mexico, NAW, RG59, M274, 812.00/28312, April 7, 1927. Quoted in Carriedo (2003:169)

¹⁷ In September 23, 1923, and after a series of rumours of upcoming uprisings, President Obregón wrote the following letter to all officers of the army "Seldom in the lives of men and expediency found to be running parallel... Duty demands from the members of the army a complete abstinence from the political conflict and expediency counsels the same abstinence, for it the Army takes no part in the politico-electoral campaign,... whatever man who is called upon to represent the Executive Power will have to respect the members of the army, which in one of the most transcendental and delicate crisis of our national life, will have zealously fulfilled its duty. On the other hand, if... the members of the Army forget the dictates of their duty and the suggestions of their own expediency, and take part as military political factors, they will be exposed to the contingencies of the contest and will share its vicissitudes" U.S Archives RG 29, M274, 812/00/26468, report to Charge d'Affairs Summerlin in Mexico City to The Department of State. Quoted in Hansis (1979:221)

loyalty of the institution to the executive power (Ackroyd, 1991:85)¹⁸. However, perhaps the largest achievement of Amaro as War Secretary was the establishment of the Superior War College (ESG) in 1927. Its aims were to prepare outstanding officers for responsibilities of command and to instil in them the “fruits of superior character” necessary to form strong bonds of loyalty to superior officers. The ESG came to be the nursery of the future elite of the army and those who would eventually replace the veterans of the Revolution. The institutional transformation of the armed forces during the 1920s and the high investment that Calles, Obregón and later Cárdenas made in education ensured that, sooner or later, the military was going to respond to the political necessities of the executive and not to the political short-term motivations of politicised generals. Finally and as occurred during the presidency of Carranza and Obregón, General Amaro continued employing military personnel on road building and other public-works projects (Gruening 1968; Carriedo 2005:189), as well as firmly attaching the content of his discourse to Calles’ guidelines¹⁹.

In the light of what occurred in the 1920s, it is clear the mission that Carranza weakly started in 1917 and later Obregón and Calles vigorously continued —demilitarising governmental authority—highlights the importance this generation of politicians placed on political stability. In the end, containing the political ambitions of the military aimed at securing the survival of each presidential mandate as the recurrence of military uprisings was still endemic. For instance, despite the great progress General Amaro achieved in terms of military professionalism, the ghost of the military uprising reappeared as Calles’ presidency approached its final year in office. Moreover, an extra complication came into play because of Obregón’s wish to run again for the presidency in 1928. As expected, the situation caused discomfort between those veterans of the Revolution who saw in the Calles-Obregón formula the intention to keep the presidency indefinitely.

However, the political environment in the late 1920s had changed radically. This time, Obregón’s support emanated mainly from the organised political groups that his and Calle’s administration had strengthened since 1920. The military had gained in

¹⁸ According to W. Ackroyd, the Mexican concept of discipline means unquestioning, unyielding deference and personal obedience to superiors. This means that no order is questioned and no action is taken independently from superiors. (Ackroyd 1991:85)

¹⁹ Rueben Clark, American Ambassador to The Secretary of State. October 15, 1931. General Records of the Department of State, RG 812.20/90 NARA

professionalism and the De la Huertista rebellion had helped to clean political activism from the military. In sum, the general picture surrounding the political situation of the country and the emerging character of the military made it very difficult for the old generalship to compete with Obregón's popularity or to orchestrate a successful coup. Despite the poor odds, Generals Arnulfo Gómez and Francisco Serrano organised an uprising that managed to attract nearly twenty per cent of the National Army. It was suppressed by Calles' rule and Amaro's expedient intervention within a few weeks. Serrano and Gómez faced the firing squad, and a clear message was sent to other veterans of the Revolution that a military coup to seize the presidential office would meet with little likelihood of success (Corona del Rosal 1995).

Obregón won the presidential election, but weeks after his triumph, a religious fanatic ended his life with a bullet in the chest. The assassination of the winning candidate placed the country in a state of shock that rapidly raised the expectation for a renewed period of violence. *Obregonistas* were seriously sceptical about the incumbent president and more than one suggested that Calles was the mastermind behind the death of the elected candidate (Calvert 1969:509; Córdova 1995). However, the political genius of Calles helped him through a very tense situation during this period. The President met with the elite of the armed forces to ensure agreement on the choice of a provisional president to replace Obregón (Dulles 1961). Calles stressed the necessity of avoiding the nomination of an active duty officer and advised the military to participate with Congress in the selection of the interim president. They finally selected Emilio Portes Gil, a well-known *obregonista*, who had no military background.

During his last address to the nation a few months after Obregón's death, Plutarco Elias Calles made sure to convey his sorrow at Obregón's assassination. Calles pictured Obregón as a true, honest and patriotic man. However, he also said that Mexico needed to take advantage of such a tragedy by transcending to the period of *caudillismo* where institutions, and not men, define the future of the country. Calles made it clear that he had no intention of remaining in office or of running for the presidency in the future. Most importantly, Calles proclaimed himself the guarantor that no *caudillio* would ever get to the presidential chair again.

Apart from defusing an explosive situation, Calles' most important legacy was announced the same day he publicly gave up his political aspirations: the foundation of

the *Partido Nacional Revolucionario* (PNR). The idea behind the PNR was to provide the nascent regime an efficient instrument for processing social and political demands through institutional means. It also allowed the regime to renovate the country's leadership without risking political instability. The bottom line was that the new party represented the end of battlefield contests for the presidency and the need to maintain it through the use of force. Therefore, the participation of labour, agrarian and military representatives was taken as an imperative. It did not take long for this party to evolve into a formidable instrument of political domination at the service of the so-called revolutionary elite. The PNR became the seed of a hegemonic party system where the line that divided the official party and the bureaucratic structure of the State was not easy to identify for the next seventy years. For civil-military relations, the foundation of the PNR contributed to the termination of the independent participation of the military in the political arena.

With Calles' support, a well-known *Obregonista*, Emilio Portes Gil, became interim president and General Amaro remained as the Secretary of War. Amaro's protracted service as War Minister allowed the continuation of the process of military professionalism. At the same time, the informal position Calles acquired after 1929 — as the Maximum Head of the Revolution — contributed to maintaining control over the political ambitions of divisional generals. Once more, history was being repeated. As had occurred when Obregón was appointed Secretary of War in Carranza's first cabinet, Calles performed the informal role of the powerful broker, the last of the Revolution's dynasty. The message was clear: as Calles had given up his political ambitions, so other Revolutionary Generals would have to follow suit. In that sense, Calles represented a different kind of broker. He was one with no presidential ambitions, although he continued playing high-level politics behind the scene. It was no coincidence that the three presidents between 1928 and 1934 often addressed him in official communications as *Jefe Máximo*, that is the maximum chief of the revolution (Macias 1991).

3.6 Conclusion

The end of Madero's regime marked the collapse of stable civil-military relations built on informal procedures. The two decades that followed his downfall in 1913 witnessed the definition of new rules governing the relationship between the armed forces and the

civilian leadership. It seems also clear that the lack of an external threat contributed to the emergence of a more intense internal dimension of action for the armed forces.

As presented in this chapter, a second element that shaped the relationship between the civilian elite and the military was the Mexican Revolution and the reformulation of the Mexican state. However, it is important to underline that even when the institutional endowment of the country changed importantly after 1917, the essence of the political system did not suffer drastic changes. In other words, the end of *el porfiriato* in 1911, and its temporary revival in 1913 under the rule of Victoriano Huerta, did not suppose a transition to a more democratic fashion of doing politics. It rather meant the institutionalization of a different variant of authoritarian rule. This became clear with the formation of the PNR in 1929 and the implicit allegiance of the military to the dominant political groups (bureaucracy, labour and agrarian movement) that emerged from the Revolution. At any rate, it was a unique political system, whose leadership regarded it as democratic in spite of having the armed forces formally linked to the ruling party.

Under this logic, the military passed from being the main source of instability to become one of the agents of the executive to protect the regime from its political enemies, assist the population in case of natural disaster and cover up the incapacity or insufficiencies of other state agencies. The last two characteristics were not strikingly different from its missions during *el porfiriato*. In that sense, it seems that the particular way civil-military relations evolved after the Revolution created specific conditions that favoured the participation of the military in areas that transcended its conventional expertise, always at the request of the executive power. The clearest expression of this phenomenon is the current participation of the military in anti drug-trafficking operations and missions of public security that will be addressed in detail in subsequent chapters. The politics of civil-military relations in Mexico rests on these elements and in the significant influence of the philosophy and wisdom of one man: Amaro.

Institutionalisation of military missions and the enactment of the organic laws were also important, since the more constrained the military became through norms and rules, the lower its capacity was to intervene in the political arena. In the same way, as the military behaviour became more regulated — therefore predictable — the president won important room to manoeuvre in allocating missions to the armed forces. The

cornerstone of the new system was that the military only enforced the wishes of the president and remained autonomous from the other branches of the state and civil organisations. In that sense, it was more a system of presidential control over the military, rather than civilian control. Under these conditions, Mexican presidents have found it unproblematic to drive the armed forces to accommodate to their changing political preferences. This is in part because they do not feel threatened by an expanding military agenda. Under the same logic, the military, as a complex institution, has been always willing to reshape the character of its internal procedures to address the changing nature of its missions. By doing so, the military protects its corporate interest as new missions have always come along with more budgetary resources and greater opportunities to participate in areas beyond their strict professional expertise.

Therefore, it is difficult to agree with the thesis that the military in Mexico became apolitical after the revolution. It was apolitical only in the sense that was not directly involved in the struggles for political power. However, it was made institutionally politicised, as the military assumed the duty of playing the cards of the president, regardless who that person was and what he stood for. In that sense, the real revolution in civil-military relations after 1911 was the elimination of the empowered brokers in the armed forces and the institutionalization of the exclusive subordination of the military to the executive power. It is also the story of a new rationality that deeply constrained the decisions of the generalship regarding the opportunities to seize political power through violent means. After the revolution, generals no longer engaged in backstage negotiations with politicians or civil society organisations and its role in the political system became institutionalised through its own organic laws and autonomous system of justice and law enforcement.

Chapter 4. Defending the Mexican Revolution: Military Intervention in Politics, Social Policy and Internal Order (1934-1946)

“The Mexican military forces support the civil authorities in keeping order, guard the polls during elections, guard railway trains, and keep on lookout to prevent revolutionary activities”¹.

Josephus Daniels

US Ambassador to Mexico 1933-1942

Introduction

As observed in the last chapter, the foundation of the PNR in 1929 and the increasing separation of military men from public office redefined Mexico’s political scenario in the early 1930s. If positive in terms of regime stability, the removal of the military from the political arena widened the room for confrontation between the acting ruling elite and grass root leaders of the Revolution (Leal 1975:52) —labour and agrarian leagues— whose membership accounted for more than 90 per cent of the ruling party. Regardless of the progress achieved during Obregón’s and Calles’ presidencies on labour and agrarian reform, the revolutionary tide on policy making started to shift in the late 1920s towards a more conservative path. The impact of the Great Depression on the overall economic performance of the country had a negative impact on the moral capital of the ruling elite and the Revolution as a whole. At the same time, the shift towards more conservative policies in the early 1930s increased tensions between the ruling elite and peasants’ organisations and unionised workers. In the end, these groups were certain that the promises of the Revolution were still largely unfulfilled. By 1934, it was clear that labour and agrarian leaders were not only dissatisfied with the overwhelming political influence and conservative tendencies of former President Calles, but also actively looking to play a more decisive role in the definition of policies.

In many ways, Cárdenas’ political victory in 1935 over Calles had a much larger impact than his electoral triumph in 1934, mainly because it closed a cycle where the so-called

¹ G. R. Wilson, American Consul to The State Department. November 21, 1938. General Records of the Department of State, RG 812.20/181 NARA

caudillos were able to appeal to the armed forces in order to achieve specific political objectives to the detriment of the executive's authority. In other words, it seems that the task of taming the military that had started with General A. Obregón under Carranza's Presidency in 1916 finally ended with Calles' demise in 1935. I will argue that this was the result of a multitude of small and big victories of the executive power over the protagonist role of the revolutionary generalship. In turn, the new army was no longer motivated by loyalties to a particular *caudillo*. On the contrary, it began to behave as a professional unit: ruled by strict codes of conduct; acting independently from civil society; hierarchically organised and autonomously managed by officers whose ultimate loyalty was to the executive branch of power.

In this chapter, I will argue that having a disciplined and loyal military force allowed President Cárdenas to delegate to his generals a wide variety of social, political and security missions without being pressured by the threat of a military coup. Cárdenas and his successors maintained the new political equilibrium by taking good care of the military's corporate interest through a strategy that kept both material and ideological consistency². It seems possible to argue that the combination of these two realms gave the military a competitive head start that —given the underdeveloped stage of other government agencies— made socially acceptable, and even socially celebrated, their intervention in areas that, ideally, should be carried out exclusively by civilian lead government agencies. That is the case for policing, intelligence and social policy missions.

This discussion is important for the overall argument of this study, because it examines the overwhelming capacity of the executive power to involve the armed forces in a variety of internal missions that not always corresponded to their conventional expertise. The first section of this chapter deals with Calles' political downfall that, given the dominant role he played since the assassination of Obregón in 1928, resulted in the ultimate test of loyalty of the armed forces to the executive power. The second part focuses on the political uses of the armed forces to support specific and sometimes

² Material matters included salary improvements, appropriate pension schemes, housing packages, favourable financial aid, exclusive access to specialised health services and a considerable amount of funds assigned to defence budgets that supported, among other things, an ongoing programme of professionalisation of troops and modernization of military equipment. On the other hand, the ideological phase ran in unison with the myth of the Revolution. That is, the executive power managed to construct a positive image of the armed forces through speeches that matched the revolution heritage with the orientation of their missions.

controversial reforms and policy paths chosen by President Cárdenas in 1938 and 1939. Within this section, I also look at the presidential term of Manuel Avila-Camacho and the positive effect that the war in Europe brought to the armed forces in terms of technological modernization and military professionalism. The last section explains how, after 1946, the military found itself trapped in a political system where their external dissuasive role was secondary while its internal missions were closely identified with the preservation of the regime it had helped to create.

4.1 The military under Cárdenas

Lázaro Cárdenas, who was the Minister of War when he won the PNR nomination to succeed President Abelardo Rodríguez, was clearly the choice of Plutarco Elias Calles. According to E. Krauze (1997), *El Jefe Máximo*, as Calles was also known, always had a profound appreciation for Cárdenas : “I love Cárdenas like a son”³ he often said (Krauze 1997). Still, for other political personalities of the time, such as Jesús Silva Herzog and the US diplomat and historian William C. Townsend, Calles supported Cárdenas because he thought the young general would welcome his unsolicited political advice (Townsend 1952)⁴. It was no secret that President Rodríguez could not escape the image of being identified as a man of Calles after the failed presidency of Pascual Ortiz Rubio. This deprived him from a decisive involvement in the selection of his successor and reinforced the role of his mentor as the final arbiter of the political arena. Under these conditions, Cárdenas’ nomination hardly surprised anyone. As early as November 1932, the US Ambassador, Rueben Clark, informed the State Department that the young general was the leading candidate to represent the PNR in the upcoming elections⁵.

Besides being close to Calles and his political group, General Cárdenas also had other qualities that made him an adept presidential candidate. Apart from his military

³ According to E. J. Correa (1941), Calles declared that Cárdenas would not be able to advance an extremist policy: “I know him, he owes everything he is to me, I made him and moulded him and I have such appreciation for him that when I see Cárdenas I feel the same emotion I have when I see my son Rodolfo. I am sure he will hear my advice because we know each other and he cannot be disloyal.” (Correa, 1941)

⁴ According to Miguel Osorio-Marban (1990:356), Luis Cabrera, one of the drafters of the Constitution and famous agrarian leader linked to Calles and Obregón since 1916, was convinced that Cárdenas was the perfect candidate to endorse the principles of PNR and follow Calles’ political direction.

⁵ Rueben Clark, American Ambassador to The State Department. November 4, 1932. General Records of the Department of State, RG 812.20/104 NARA

credentials, Cárdenas was on good terms with the agrarian and labour movement⁶. His revolutionary past and his young age — 36 years old when he assumed the presidency — increased his electoral appeal among the younger generation that had little if anything in common with the old Sonoran dynasty of leaders. Moreover, his moderate position towards the Catholic Church was a prerequisite to heal the wounds left by The Cristero War⁷, especially among the middle and upper classes. In sum, Cárdenas offered a combination of conciliation and balance between the dominant political forces, and his closeness to Calles was initially seen as an asset to soften the reactionary character of his political sponsor.

Despite Cárdenas' credentials and proven commitment on certain key policy issues, the power of the president and the nominated presidential candidate were still far from what they turned into during the following decades. Their influence was still heavily counterweighted by the political ambitions of some veterans of the revolution operating under Calles' complacent eyes. Regardless of the progress in taming the political activism of the armed forces, the possibility of a military coup was not completely ruled out, in part because Calles maintained a high ascendancy over key personalities with strong regional presence and close ties with the military⁸.

Still, if powerful and relatively well organised, Calles' authority in the political system was fading away by the end of 1933. The strength of *el Callismo* responded to a particular period of history where the institutions of the nascent regime lacked the legitimacy and operational capability to handle disputes between the main political actors. Between 1928 and 1934, Calles represented the moral figure of The Revolution and the only individual in the system with enough political stature to define specific policy paths. However, as the regime evolved in the direction of clearer rules of the political game, institution-building, and mass labour and peasant political organisations aggregated in the PNR, Calles and his followers faced the urgent need to accommodate to the new political conditions if they still aspired to extend their domination beyond the informal and rapidly changing realm of personal relationships.

⁶ While governing Michoacán, Cárdenas showed great commitment towards labour and agrarian causes, even when against Calles' advice. (Krauze, 1997)

⁷ For a comprehensive work on the Cristero movement see D. Bailey (1974).

⁸ That was the case with General Joaquin Amaro in Mexico City, Abelardo Rodríguez in Baja California, Juan A. Almazán in Nuevo León, and Saturnino Cedillo in San Luis.

The chosen means to secure a convenient policy-path for him and his followers was known as *El Plan Sexenal* (six-year programme). In its simplest terms, this plan was intended to become the PNR's general guideline on public policy that the presidential candidate would need to endorse if elected to the presidency. Not surprisingly, it did not lack the reactionary character that was common in Calles' political positions towards labour and agrarian demands⁹. *El Jefe Máximo* was convinced that the subdivision of large estates was not conducive to a model of rational and efficient agriculture. He went on to saying that the Revolution had failed the peasants. Therefore, it was time to rethink the direction of land reform and start planning the best way to exploit the countryside. On labour affairs, the former president believed that strikes in strategic sectors of the economy should not be allowed as they represented a major threat to Mexico's economic development (Dulles 1961:629-638).

If the idea of *El Plan Sexenal* was good in terms of promoting the institutionalisation of party procedures, its reactionary content did not recognise the broad interests and mobilization capacity of the organisations that were also represented in the PNR. In fact, Calles' statement on land reform triggered a series of popular protests organised by labour and agrarian leagues. In time, such events forced the party leadership to appoint a special commission to revise it during its annual convention. Unfortunately for Calles, the revision process resulted in major changes. The new Plan called for greater state intervention in the economy and proposed the creation of a minimum salary for workers. In the final chapter, it also demanded a deep revision of the agrarian reform as it was considered insufficient and incomplete (Meyer, 1981:157). In a broader sense, the new document stressed nationalistic sentiments by making explicit that domestic natural resources should belong to and be exploited by Mexicans. This position alone was consistent with Article 27 of the Constitution, but entered in direct opposition to strong interests of international companies whose property rights on mining and oil exploitation had been widely respected since the onset of the Revolution in 1910 (Knight 2001:256).

Failing to impose a defined policy course was not just a small defeat for a politician accustomed to dominate the political arena since 1924. It became clear that

⁹ In essence, Calles' idea of stability and ideal conditions for economic development were not particularly different to Porfirio Díaz's policies in this area. It emphasised protecting property rights, privileging public order and political stability to promote investment and economic growth.

Personalism in the way Calles and others before him practiced it became non-operational as the ruling party lost no time to align with its main political clienteles. In the long run, Calles' first political failure also marked the onset of a deeper rearrangement of the institutional framework of the country. In the new setup, the armed forces would be displaced by the PNR from the core of the political system. Instead, the military would turn into the constitutional ally and main political instrument of the President.

4.1.1 The presidential succession of 1934

Despite the antagonisms generated by the *Plan Sexenal*, the presidential campaign and handover of power in 1934 occurred without turmoil. The PNR acted to amalgamate the political forces around Cárdenas, which helped to erase the ominous tradition of violence that had characterised earlier presidential elections. The PNR won the election by an overwhelming majority, 98 per cent of the vote. The electoral result clearly reflected the high degree of political control of the post-revolutionary regime. Under these conditions, Cárdenas assumed the presidency in December 1934. Not surprisingly, his first cabinet included a high number of *Callistas*. The list started with Calles' son, Rodolfo, who became the Secretary of Communications. It continued with the top ranks of the public service, the secretary of the interior included, and into the armed forces. For instance, General Joaquín Amaro was ratified as Director of the Military College in 1934 and Juan Andrew Almazán, another recognised callista, was appointed chief of the military zone in Monterrey.

However, the high number of concessions to Calles and his followers was not going to stop the collision between the two icons of the Mexican Revolution. It seems clear that by 1935, the dark figure of *El Jefe Máximo* operating behind the curtains of the political system represented a handicap for Cárdenas' presidency for a variety of reasons. First, it limited the possibilities of the president to create his own basis of social support as any concession to workers or peasants would necessarily be identified as a challenge to Calles' ideology and vested interests. Additionally, the long and bitter confrontation between Calles and the Catholic Church added an unnecessary source of distress. It was clear that Cárdenas had no intention to intensify the conflict with *los cristeros*. Under such circumstances, the political struggle with Calles threatened almost every corner of

the political system. Not surprisingly, the war was ignited by a dispute for the control of the organised social forces of the revolution, meaning labour and agrarian leagues.

Cárdenas began by accelerating the agrarian reform and consolidating the collective or “*ejido*” form of ownership, in the way he had done in Michoacán while serving as governor between 1928 and 1931. There was also the idea of rebuilding the relationship of the state with the labour movement as a way to weaken the prevailing alliances of the CROM and its leader, Luis Morones, with *el callismo*. In fact, Cárdenas engaging in a perilous policy of encouraging unions to go on strike to pressure the owners of capital to improve labour conditions. In the short term, the president’s strategy to break the decaying monopoly of the CROM proved effective. By 1935, the unions that deserted Morones’ control were running at least 650 strikes in the country while in 1933 there were only 12 in total. Unofficial sources reported more than 1,000 strikes during Cárdenas’ first year in office (Hodges and Gandy 2002:57). Under such circumstances, the CROM lost its capacity to unify the labour movement and represent it at the PNR’s council, and also, most importantly, it lost the capability to protect industrial groups linked to *el callismo* from labour disruption.

As expected, the apparently uncontrolled activism of unions in the country soon led to a confrontation between the President and Calles. The latter declared that the country had entered “a marathon of radicalism”¹⁰(Córdova 1995). Calles went as far as to suggest that Cárdenas’ rule could follow the tragic fate of Pascual Ortiz Rubio in 1932 (Dulles 1961; Calvert 1969:516). If Calles’ remarks were certainly ignited by his discontent with Cárdenas’ policies, it was also true that too much unrest could eventually force a more active participation of the military in the political arena. In fact, Calles foresaw this situation when he declared that “division into groups based on persons begins first with the deputies, then the senators, governors, cabinet ministers, and, finally, the Army takes sides” (Dulles 1961:213).

No doubt that manipulating the labour movement from the presidential office to achieve specific political objectives was a risky strategy for Cárdenas. His tactic heightened the confrontation of economically accommodated classes with unions and organised peasants. The immediate result was the generation of an overheated political situation.

¹⁰ “Mexican trend towards right seems on rise.” The Democrat-Post, March 4, 1938.

High levels of political instability could have triggered the return of the military to the political arena as the state's ultimate response to restore order. Furthermore, there was always the possibility that some sections within the armed forces could take sides with the former president. However, this possibility was not favourable to Calles either. The military and its generals had proved loyal to the executive power before, and the mass organisations of the revolution had already turned their back to Morones' and Calles' leadership. In other words, Cárdenas had broader sources of support, which made it good politics for the military to remain loyal. Additionally, most of the generals ideologically close to Calles for reasons of age and background had already been incorporated into the new commercial and financial bourgeoisie of the country (Pyñeiro 1985:46). It was clear that as the Revolution grew older, the choice of joining a military uprising became even more difficult for the first generation of revolutionary generals. They became increasingly reluctant to risk everything they owned (Hans-Werner, 1971:50-73).

If it were true for the generalship that joining a military uprising would have represented a serious threat to their privileged economic position, the situation was not strikingly different at lower levels within the armed forces. President Cárdenas had consistently supported the professionalisation of the new generation of officers in a way that reinforced their allegiance to the regime. The corporate interest of the military was not being threatened in any way by the president's policies (Córdova 1974:135-38). Moreover, the new educational system stressed a doctrine of full respect and obedience to the superior chain of command (Ackroyd 1991). Apart from the purely military sphere, a military coup against a president who was presenting labour and agrarian reforms as the keystone of his policy programme would have meant an attack against the myth of the Mexican Revolution and a serious problem for national unity. Under these conditions, Calles lost virtually every instrument, formal or informal, to oppose policies and, therefore, the aftermath of his political dispute with the president turned highly predictable. Cárdenas exiled Calles to the United States on July 20, 1935. Soon after, the public administration and the top ranks of the armed forces were also cleared from callistas. Influential figures such as Joaquín Amaro were among the excluded and Cárdenas' die-hards filled the vacant positions. Regardless the good name Amaro enjoyed in the Armed Forces, no reaction came as a result of his dismissal (Loyo Camacho 2003:177). His attitude of submission and discipline towards the president's

decision served as example for future generations of recruits¹¹. It also showed how much political influence the military had lost in political life, as no one dared to stand up against the president's will¹².

At this point, President Cárdenas' success on the political arena may portray him as an intrepid politician who took high and risky bets that ended up paying off. However, it is also possible to argue that Cárdenas understood, better than his predecessors, that given the origin and the authoritarian characteristics of the revolutionary regime, the legitimacy and strength of the presidential office as well as his capacity to carry out specific policy projects rested on ensuring the subordination of the armed forces to his will. According to Serrano (1995:428), Cárdenas' approach to civil-military relations during the early years of his administration resembled Huntington's definition of subjective control (Huntington 1957). However, as discussed in the first chapter, Huntington's concept only captures a single dimension of the *Cardenista* regime. This refers to the way the president exploited the operational capability of the armed forces to get rid of political enemies or deter them from conspiring against the regime¹³. It seems that Serrano (1995) does not take into consideration the heavy ideological content that portrayed the use of the armed forces as a legitimate instrument of the state to convert the ideals of the Revolution into specific policy paths. In many ways, the role Cárdenas gave to the armed forces comes closer to the pragmatic use of the military M. Janowitz (1960) discusses. That is a constabulary force, intertwined into civil society and conducting missions that are both agreeable to the government and socially accepted (Janowitz 1960). In fact, the military still relies heavily on the revolutionary mythology to obtain legitimacy (Wager 1984:88).

If uneasy, Cárdenas' resilience during this period rested on the assumption that the military would remain disciplined to civilian authority, regardless of the degree of political or economic instability in the country or even his lack of popularity among

¹¹ Salvador Novo, one of the most influential poets of his time, wrote on Amaro as "always loyal and just, his name was never linked to a military coup or a conspiracy. He was the first military man that understood the role of the army within Mexico's political institutions..."(Novo, 1994)

¹² The political casualties of these actions were not just those who lost their posts within the public administration, but also those whose interests benefited from military patronage and state's financial support. For instance, former president Abelardo Rodríguez was forced to close down his gambling houses in the border cities of Tijuana and Ensenada and some others saw their estates fragmented as a result of the unprecedented land reform policy.

¹³ General Calles was definitely the most representative actor of this kind, but the list of political casualties during the late 1930s included General Saturnino Cedillo in San Luis Potosí, General Tomás Garrido Canabal in Tabasco, General Adalberto Tejeda in Veracruz, and Fidencio Osornio in Querétaro

dominant sectors of society. In fact, the absence of a serious threat of military revolt, not only during Cárdenas' term in office but in the decades that followed, suggests that the armed forces did not truly consider the possibility of a coup even in the event of extreme political or economic instability. While this condition has proved quite advantageous for the executive power, it also granted the military a status of autonomy that still precludes other government agencies, Congress and Judiciary included, from intervening or supervising the armed forces in any sensitive way.

The sharp differences between the Porfirian and the Post-Revolutionary armies can now be seen clearly. If disciplined and loyal, the Porfirian army lacked the legitimacy to act in the political arena because it could not get rid of the image of being the instrument of the ruling elite and international capital to suppress subordinate classes and political enemies (Knight 1986). In contrast, Cárdenas turned this relationship upside down. He presented the armed forces as the unconditional allies of peasants and labourers against the owners of capital, and the army's leadership immediately adopted the populist and nationalistic rhetoric of the executive. This new image provided the army with an immense amount of moral capital¹⁴ that was later reinforced by a consistent professionalisation programme¹⁵. Once more, the corporate interest of the armed forces was reinforced by both the policies the president implemented to protect it and through the construction of an image that portrayed the armed forces as the ultimate guardian of the revolution's legacies¹⁶.

In sum, Cárdenas' contribution to the normalization of civil-military relations consisted on the institutionalisation of the military within the presidential system. The armed forces played a subordinate political role and had no voice on mainstream public policy definitions. Their approach to professionalisation was less focussed on a policy of

¹⁴ For a detailed discussion on moral capital see J. Kane (2001).

¹⁵ In terms of military professionalism, Cárdenas succeeded in taking care of the corporate interest of the armed forces. The new president improved the standard of living of soldiers and their families by building schools and hospitals for officers and their dependants, increasing salaries, improving uniforms and pension schemes. Together, these policies started to raise the dignity of the common soldier by giving the military the appearance of being a more honourable profession. At the level of organisation of the armed forces, the War Ministry, later renamed to Secretary of National Defence, started to perform competitive technical examinations as a prerequisite for promotion. Along with these measures, the new system added or subtracted points from an officer's score based on age, health, physical condition, seniority and ability to command troops. (Grayson, 1999)

¹⁶ This idea is encapsulated in a speech by President Cárdenas to cadets from the Military College in 1940. On that occasion, Cárdenas stressed the continuity of the New Army as the Popular Army of the Revolution. He insisted that by defending the gains of the revolution, the army still served the interests of subordinated classes against internal reaction and external threats. (Avila Camacho, 1942)

deterrence and national defence (Buzan, Wæver et al. 1998; Buzan and Wæver 2003), than with filling the gaps where the executive power considered that state action was absent, insufficient or inadequate.

It appears that the ruling elite perceived the military as an effective tool to deliver policy results in those areas where civilian performance involved a high number of transaction costs, as well as in those that needed fast state response. The first area included sanitation campaigns, plague control, reforestation, literacy programs, infrastructure building, school construction and disaster relief operations. The vertical, hierarchical and highly disciplined behaviour of the institution, as it was encouraged and socialised through the educational system, favoured military intervention on those missions. D. Ronfeldt (1985) named these roles residual or complementary, specially those related to conflict management or "crisis management," in Wager's words (Wager 1994). In contrast, the internal security component represented the other side of military missions. This included an active gathering of political information (intelligence) and selective enforcement of presidential orders against political enemies. This side of military missions accounted for the preservation of order on behalf of partisan elites (Ronfeldt 1984c:58-72). At local and regional level, zone commanders played and still play the role of gathering political intelligence through the compilation of first hand information concerning subversive or guerrilla activity in rural and remote areas. At the same time, senior military officers helped to shape interest articulation and representation when discontented peasants considered that appealing to the zone commander represented a straightforward way to attract the president's attention.

The role zone commanders played during *el porfiriato* and after the revolution had a number of similarities in the sense that they continued being identified as the exclusive agent of the executive power. The main difference, particularly after 1940, was that senior military officials played more the role of a depoliticised and professional state bureaucracy than that of semi-independent individuals with some fairly defined regional interests or local political objectives. For this reason, increasing professionalism of the armed forces did not entirely limit the political role of the military in the years that followed the end of the armed phase of the revolution as Lieuwen and others argued (Lieuwen, 1968; Lozoya, 1970). Greater professionalism lessened the independent role

of the military in the political arena insofar as it emphasised strict discipline¹⁷, and obedience towards superior command¹⁸ (Ackroyd 1991; Benítez 2000). However, the focus of military education maintained a high, if relatively concealed, political content as it prepared the armed forces to address the changing political priorities of the executive power and the specific needs of survival of the political regime. Not surprisingly, Cárdenas' actions during the second half of his presidential term showed he had no fear for the old generalship linked to Calles, their powerful economic allies or their loyal *camarilla* of public servants. Additionally, he was not only determined to renovate the political elite with a new generation of civilian politicians but also to refine once more the rules of the political game.

4.1.2 The new rules of the political game and the foundation of the PRM

In December 1937, President Cárdenas made the decision to integrate the armed forces within the formal structure of the ruling party and changed its name to Party of the Mexican Revolution (PRM) (Lozoya 1970:64). While in principle this political move suggested the return of the military into the political arena, some political analysts argued that Cárdenas' intention was to devise a scheme where all representative powers of the revolution kept each other closely balanced while giving the president the final decision-making authority on national policy (Weyl and Weyl 1939:344-349). For more contemporary authors, such as Aguilar and Meyer (1993) the intention of the president was to transform the PNR into a more active organisation, where the forces that supported his presidency were fully represented (Aguilar Camín and Meyer 1993:148). Lieuwen (1968) and Brandenburg (1964) offer a different explanation. For them, Cárdenas intended to dilute the political standing of the military by forcing the generalship to bargain directly with the other three organised social bases of the revolution¹⁹, meaning the peasantry — organised in the National Confederation of Peasants (CNC) — the powerful labour movement assembled in the new National Confederation of Workers (CTM) under Vicente Lombardo's leadership, and the

¹⁷ In the Mexican Context, discipline means unquestioning deference and personal obedience to superiors. (Avila Camacho, 1942)

¹⁸ W. Ackroyd's research concluded that military education in Mexico restricted the political content of instruction to only a few people, specially at the highest ranks. This characteristic differed a great deal from its counterpart in Latin America, specially Peru and Brazil, where their four-tier military educational system stresses politically orientated subjects.

¹⁹ According to L.J. Garrido (1987), the idea of turning 50,000 soldiers into party members (1% of the total PRM membership), strengthened the role of the PRM as a single political front, that in turned helped to reinforce a broad notion of civilian supremacy. (Garrido, 1987)

bureaucracy that belonged to an incipient professional and urban sector, a “catch all” organisation named *El Sector Popular*²⁰.

While the two explanations presented above are not mutually exclusive, Cárdenas’ attention on the institutional design of the new Party suggests he did not want the military to evolve into a special caste that, given the political circumstances of the country, would only look out for its own corporate interests, to the detriment of those of the revolution and Mexican society as a whole (Camp 1992:22). Cárdenas saw in the party’s new institutional design the opportunity to reinforce orderly communication between the organised forces of the revolution. His intention was to socialise the priorities of the military as an institution as well as to impose political insurance against counter-revolutionary tendencies within the armed forces (Nunn 1984:34). Bearing these ideas in mind, each of these groups was provided with a similar number of representatives so their bargaining capacities could be kept in reasonable balance at the time of choosing candidates or establishing policy directions (Brandenburg, 1964:91). In real terms, the new institutional design forced the military to integrate its political agenda, or what was left of it, into the rejuvenated version of the ruling party. Not surprisingly, the new political arrangement also meant the elimination of the last traces of *el callismo* within the armed forces.

The inclusion of the military into the structure of the PRM had two benefits for the President. Being seen as one of several components, its weight lowered. Also, it supported an ambitious agenda that less than a year later put key natural resources and industries under state control. In that sense, Cárdenas used the legitimacy of the armed forces to imprint the “revolutionary” twist to his policy programs—labour and agrarian reform—and to ensure their support on specific policy objectives affecting dominant economic groups²¹. By doing so, Cárdenas created the precedent of the military backing up the president regardless who may be affected as a result of reforms. In the short run, the Mexican state reinforced its autonomy to design and carry out specific policy

²⁰ To those who criticised the President’s decision, Cárdenas responded: “we did not put the army in politics, it was already there. In fact, it had been dominating the situation, and we did well to reduce its influence to one out of four. (Lieuwen 1968:126)

²¹ According to *El Nacional*, General Castrejón, Military Chief in Pachuca, Hidalgo, declared that the National Army was naturally close to the labor movement so it supported the creation of Unions. Castrejón also said that all army chiefs see with joy that the ideals of the revolution are taking shape regardless the obstacles that its enemies have put in the way. “*El Ejército Mexicano y el Proletariado*”. *El Nacional*, September 5, 1936.

projects. The technocracy started to gain ground as state missions expanded accordingly. In sum, Mexico started a long period of state-led economic growth that continued until the early 1970s.

The first real test of this new relationship came with the nationalization of the oil industry in March 18, 1938. Not entirely surprisingly, the strongest complaint Mexico received as a result of the expropriation decree did not come from the United States, but from the British Government, which had come to the support of one of the most affected companies, El Aguila Oil Company, owner of the highly promising oil fields of Poza Rica in the Gulf of Mexico. Retaliation came in the form of restrictions and partial closure of international oil markets where Mexican products were traditionally traded. Furthermore, the oil multinationals agreed to withdraw their cash from the banking system, which eventually worsened the economic situation of the country. In turn, the United States recognised the right of Mexico, as a sovereign nation, to nationalise the property of foreign companies, but pressured Cárdenas to quickly make compensation to the original owners. To make things worse, the US cancelled the purchase of silver and its derivatives that represented the main export commodity of the country. The effects of these measures were particularly threatening for a simple reason: Mexico was being pressured to comply with its financial obligations to foreign creditors while its main sources of income were reduced drastically due to the elements described above (Cronon 1960:209).

The discussion of the nationalization of the oil industry is important for civil-military relations, since the worsening of economic conditions rapidly turned into a deep political crisis. In fact, the intelligence unit of the American Embassy in Mexico acknowledged that a number of rumours were spread among the military elite, indicating that a military coup was being plotted to halt the radical and even communist character of the incumbent administration. In fact, Cárdenas' actions to ameliorate the threat of insurrection within the military show that some of these rumours had solid grounds. The President started with the inclusion of the rural guards aligned with the National Confederation of Peasants (CNC) within the national structure of the army. With this measure, it was expected that subversive officers, if any, would think twice before planning a military coup as thousands of armed peasants would immediately rise to defend the achievements of the agrarian reform. In other words, Cárdenas managed

to enlist the support of his political clientele against the possibility of a reaction of dominant classes through the participation of the armed forces. Additionally and within the wider context of the incoming war in Europe, Cárdenas encouraged the membership of the CTM to engage in proper military training, apparently to assist the military in case of a national emergency.

Arming the two mass organisations that had benefited the most under Cárdenas' administration provided the regime key guarantees of continuity. However, it also had one serious and obvious drawback as it increased the tension with loyal groups of the armed forces. According the US State Department, the hierarchy of the army saw in the CTM, particularly in the actions of its leader, the emergence of a parallel military organisation that was acquiring strength under the complacent eye of the president. The U.S. ambassador considered that the majority of army generals looked upon the militarised workers with contempt²². The report went on by commenting that a trusted informant within the armed forces pointed out that there was almost "universal dissatisfaction found among Mexican Army officers towards President Cárdenas' policies [...] the army feels that the fact that Cárdenas is training the agrarians and labourers indicates he does not trust the army"²³.

Days later, the same source²⁴ informed that there was a manifesto being circulated from division generals down to the rank of major that condemned Cárdenas' policies and indicated the Mexican Army was preparing to take revolutionary action²⁵. While no major military uprising took place during this period, other than the failed cedillista uprising in 1938, rumours of "potential" military coups never disappeared entirely. In fact, the ominous defeat of General Cedillo's revolt in San Luis Potosi under the command of General Miguel Henríquez Guzmán made even more explicit that Cárdenas' extreme and frequent measures to tame the political ambitions of some members of the army were fully justified. However, this time the president was

²² Pierre de L. Real, *Charge d' Affaires*. The US Embassy. General Records of the Department of State, RG 812.20/224 NARA

²³ Josephus Daniels, American Ambassador to The State Department. July 18, 1838. General Records of the Department of State, RG 812.20/175 NARA

²⁴ According to other documents of this period, it is possible to suggest that the "trusted informant" was in fact former President and army General Abelardo Rodríguez, whose differences with Cárdenas were public. In fact, General Rodríguez had already offered to cooperate with the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City under the most rigorous secrecy. Josephus Daniels, American Ambassador to The State Department. August 11, 1942. General Records of the Department of State, RG 812.20/415 NARA

²⁵ Josephus Daniels, American Ambassador to The State Department. July 30, 1938. General Records of the Department of State, RG 812.20/178 NARA

probably pushing the loyalty of the armed forces too hard, given that the creation of a competitor was running against their corporate interest and moral capital. In fact, a few months before the presidential election, the Secretary of Defence, General Jesus Agustín Castro, declared that The National Army was the only institution in the country “entitled to provide military training, which, apart from the police, was also the only organisation that had the right to bear arms”²⁶.

The echoes of the military’s disagreement were not unheard this time. The labour union leader, Lombardo Toledano, declared that the CTM and its workers had no intention of operating in a conflict to the military and its purposes. However, he clarified that the CTM was instructing workers as aids to the army officers, in case such aid were to be needed in a moment of national crisis. In fact, Toledano ended up asserting that the CTM was also defending the benefit of the workers’ health from military training. Despite his explanations, the Secretary of Defence demanded once more the immediate dissolution of the workers’ battalions and the absolute prohibition of similar forces disguised under the name of sport (Kirk 1940). It seems President Cárdenas had no intention of opening new political conflict with the armed forces by defending the plans of his loyal ally. Soon after, the CTM suspended the creation of its military college and ended the militarisation program altogether²⁷.

Up to this point, it seems that Cárdenas’ approach to civil-military relations moved freely between the extremes of a policy of give and take. The military got their voice back in the political system through their incorporation in the PRM. However, Cárdenas had apparently no problems, if only briefly, with a military programme run by the CTM. It can be suggested that these swings in the way Cárdenas managed his relationships with the armed forces made even more evident that the president had consolidated a complete command over the army’s hierarchy and the military had lost its ability to autonomously intervene in a political crisis or oppose a given presidential order. Having lost such capacity, the military reinforced its role as a loyal and unconditional ally of the executive power against any threat endangering the political stability of the country. It soon became a relationship of mutual convenience. The army bureaucracy

²⁶ “No habrá más milicias que las del Ejército, La Armada y las Fuerzas de las Policía” Excélsior. May 8, 1940.

²⁷ Josephus Daniels, American Ambassador to The State Department. May 8, 1940. General Records of the Department of State, RG 812.20/216 NARA

maintained a high level of autonomy and even despised other state agencies; but acknowledged that their missions could easily deviate from the realm of national defence to enter in the undefined terrain of safeguarding internal security. In turn, the ideological and symbolic weight of the revolution made such missions familiar rather than extraordinary to the Mexican Military. They were legitimate in a sense that the incumbent president could easily covert any issue into a matter of national security or *securitize it*²⁸ to justify the intervention of the armed forces. While this characteristic was positive as it solved some basic problems of governance, it also legitimised the partisan use of the army, which still represents one of the most recognisable characteristics of the system of civil-military relations and a visible obstacle for the current process of democratic consolidation.

Having these simple rules of the game in action made the last year of Cárdenas presidency far less complicated than Carranza's, Obregón's or Calles' experiences. As expected, the political effervescence of the presidential election started to monopolise the political agenda as soon as 1938 ended. Despite the mass support of his policies, Cárdenas apparently chose not to show his support for any of the presidential candidates. In real terms, his unwillingness to show open support for a candidate immediately destroyed the chances of General Francisco J. Múgica to seize the PRM's presidential nomination (Kirk 1942:239-244). With Múgica out of the presidential race, the CNC and the CTM lost their most important political card. On the other hand, the political and economic casualties of *el cardenismo*, meaning the traditional oligarchy and senior members of the armed forces, saw in a more moderate candidate a chance to regain some of the ground lost against the labour and the agrarian confederations. Under these conditions, it did not come as a surprise to see General Manuel Avila Camacho, Cárdenas' Secretary of Defence, to advance confidently towards the nomination of the ruling party for the next presidential term. Months later, when the

²⁸ The term securitization, developed by Buzan, Weaver and de Wilde (1998) and their collaborators in what has been named the Copenhagen School, subtracts the objective conditions to the term security to portray it as the outcome of a specific social process. This scholarship stresses the social construction of issues tagged with the label "national security", which usually takes place through a series of "securitizing speech acts", mostly from the president of the head of the state, through which threats become represented and recognised. See also M. Williams (2003:513). This concept is key for the discussion of civil-military relations after 1917, because it encapsulates the importance that the new political leadership of the country gave to the legacy of the Mexican revolution, in the sense that anything that could be taken by the executive power as an attack to this heritage could easily become into an issue of national security and so, "claims a special right to use whatever means are necessary to block it" O. Weaver (1995:55).

odds clearly favoured him within the PRM, the CTM and the CNC put away their radicalism and rushed to support Avila Camacho's candidacy.

Manuel Avila Camacho won the presidential election without major difficulties and by 1940, the economic situation of the country was starting to clear up²⁹. Largely promoted by the economic momentum created by the Second World War, Mexico started a steady process of economic growth. At the same time, Germany had completed the invasion of Poland and France and the participation of the United States in the conflict was seen as an imminent event. In such a convulsive international scenario and given a long history of German flirtations with the Mexican government (Katz 1981), the United States wanted to avoid any source of conflict with Mexico, needing a politically stable ally on its southern border.

No doubt, the war in Europe played an important role in the decision of the U.S. to gradually resume imports of Mexican oil. Behind such actions was also Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy, aiming at solidifying a great Inter-American alliance against fascism. Silver exports were recommenced a year earlier as the Silver Lobby in Washington feared that Cárdenas could easily expand his expropriation policy to the silver mines (Townsend 1952:256-259). On military professionalism, World War II created a formidable force and political will that brought together the agendas of both countries on a number of issues. Reluctantly but steadily, the American military started to provide greater assistance to its Mexican counterpart and military expenditure rose from 15.8 per cent in 1938 to almost 20 per cent of the budget in 1940. At the same time, the Mexican government accepted a loan from the United States to purchase modern military equipment, and a significant number of Mexican soldiers received military training in US Army bases (Torres Ramírez 1984).

²⁹ Electoral fraud allegations and demonstrations were seen in different cities of the country in support of the losing candidate. There was also the report that Almazán and his close group of supporters, most of them with a military background, were planning a military coup. Less than a month after the presidential election, General Almazán left the country with the promise of coming back to lead a military uprising against the regime. There is no doubt that his candidacy enjoyed considerable popularity in some urban centres, particularly in the northern part of the country. However, his electoral structure in the countryside was poor and could only do very little to counteract the strong affinity between *el cardenismo*, the PRM and the agrarian leagues. Despite the initial belligerent tone, none of the rumours proved to have solid ground. Almazán did come back in November 1940, but it was a quiet event. Soon after, his close collaborators, for example General José Mijares Palencia, were readmitted to the armed forces.

Almost overnight, the United States ceased to be commonly regarded as the most important menace to the territorial integrity of the country, to become Mexico's most powerful ally. In fact, the State Department helped the Mexican Foreign ministry to solve the disputes with the expropriated oil companies and assisted the Secretary of Treasury to negotiate the first international loan since the times of Victoriano Huerta (Aguilar Camín and Meyer 1993:164). In return, Cárdenas condemned the Nazi occupation of Austria, Albania, Belgium, France, Norway and Poland as well as the Japanese invasion of China. At the same time, Cárdenas actively supported the Spanish Republic and opened the country's borders to hundreds of political refugees. The only point where cooperation came to a standstill was on the US request to set up military bases on Mexican soil. However, Cárdenas and later Avila Camacho made sure to indicate that Mexico would welcome such bases if the war situation demanded it³⁰.

4.3 Civil-military relations during the Presidency of Manuel Avila-Camacho

The first important move of President Manuel Avila Camacho in terms of civil-military relations was the reversal of Cárdenas' decision of including the military within the party structure. By the end of his tenure in office, the PRM had changed its name to Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI)³¹. In his first speech as president of Mexico, Avila Camacho reassured the country that "the membership of the armed forces should not intervene directly or indirectly on political affairs while being on active service." He explained that any sort of political activity within the army's barracks could provoke division within the armed forces³². It was known that Avila-Camacho did not agree with Cárdenas on the inclusion of the military while serving as Secretary of Defence back in 1937, but could not do much to convince the president to act otherwise. Under the new scheme, the military returned to its position of exclusive agent of the executive power and was deprived from any decisive say on political matters. Most important, it reaffirmed the relationship of the military with the state's institutions as opposed to their connection with the ruling party. On strict civil-military relations, the war scenario naturally pushed a profound process of modernization that ended up refurbishing the

³⁰ It is also possible to argue that Mexico's unwillingness to accept a U.S. military mission responded to the president's decision to prevent further foreign influence as well as to maintain the military attached to the goals and nationalistic sentiments of the Mexican Revolution.

³¹ *Diario de Debates de la H. Cámara de Diputados*. Primero de Septiembre de 1941.

³² *Diario de Debates de la H. Cámara de Diputados*. Primero de Diciembre de 1940.

military's capacity. The new Secretary of Defence, General Pablo Macias, announced in May 24, 1941 that the armed forces were about to start a complete transformation that would provide the army with modern military equipment³³. However, the events of Pearl Harbor later that year gave civil-military relations a new political dimension.

To start with, it made possible for ex-president Cárdenas to return to active duty, this time as Military Commander of the Pacific Region (Ibarrola 2003:20). In an interview with Mary Saint Adams, a foreign newspaper reporter, Cárdenas stated that Mexico was willing to cooperate with the United States and other Latin American Nations "to defend the Americas and the victory of democracy"³⁴. Even when the international war scenario justified the new role of the former president in the military, documents produced by the US embassy suggested that the former president appeared to be devoting more time to political affairs than military issues. It is important to highlight that the Pacific Region, particularly the Baja California peninsula, was mainly under the political influence of Abelardo Rodríguez, who was not only a national political figure, but presumably the richest man in the country back then (Niblo 1999). His unsympathetic positions towards *el cardenismo* were a matter of public knowledge. The U.S. embassy indicated that Cárdenas was using his moral capital in the region to undermine the political standing of his rivals. The attention the American Embassy paid to this issue was not coincidental. General Rodríguez was recognized as "a good friend" of the United States; a status that Cárdenas definitely did not have. The same source revealed that Cárdenas' constant comments on regional and national politics made Avila Camacho ask the ex-president to stop doing so, because it was interfering with national unity³⁵. Soon after, the president appointed Rodríguez as chief commander of the Gulf Region in July 1942 and reinstated former president Calles in the armed forces by giving him a symbolic position.

Bringing Cárdenas' political enemies back to active military duty could have suggested that AvilaCamacho wanted to counteract his political stature in the system and the armed forces. However, Cárdenas' appointment as Secretary of National Defence in

³³ "Modernización del Ejército. Una transformación completa será operada, según proyecto en estudio". May 21, 1941. *Excelsior*. Mexico

³⁴ Raleigh A. Gibson. First Secretary of Embassy. December 16, 1941. General Records of the Department of State, 14595 NARA

³⁵ Herald D. Finley. First Secretary of Embassy. July 3, 1942. General Records of the Department of State, 812.20/351

November 1942 suggests that there were other motives too. First of all, his appointment reinforced Avila Camacho's image as a leader capable of conciliating apparently divergent interests, who was in total control of the political situation. Not surprisingly, such actions boosted his popularity throughout his term and enabled him to escape from the greater shadow of his predecessor. In a far less radical manner in comparison to what Cárdenas did to Calles, Avila-Camacho also started to shape the political forces of the revolution according to his more moderate policy preferences. Moreover, the presence of Cárdenas as the Defence Minister contributed to keep his activities under close supervision. No doubt, the good general still enjoyed huge popularity among the public and members of the cabinet, three of whom were army generals. However, it was also clear that in his role as Secretary of National Defence, he would need to subsume his views to those of the president³⁶.

For the armed forces, the constant inflow of retired generals into active military service was a clear signal of unity with the incumbent government and positively exhibited the loyal and professional values of the armed forces. Moreover, its natural role in the strategy of national defence provided a degree of legitimacy and media exposure that hardly any other agency within the public administration could possibly aspire to during the first half of the 1940s. This position was taken to an even higher level when the United States agreed to assist Mexico in its intention to send troops to the fighting front in Europe and the Far East in June 1944³⁷. For the United States, sending Mexican soldiers to the warfront during the final months of the war was not expected to be of any significant contribution. However, it allowed the President to obtain more recognition, militia training, and military equipment from the United States (Torres Ramírez 1984). Furthermore, it created a deep internal impact that improved the image of the regime³⁸, and reinforced the already strong legitimacy of the armed forces among the

³⁶ George S. Messersmith. American Ambassador to Admiral A.W. Johnson U.S.N. Chairman. United States Section. Joint Mexico-United States Defense Commission, Washington D.C. December 27, 1942. General Records of the Department of State

³⁷ George S. Messersmith. American Ambassador to Laurence Duggan, Advisor to the U.S. President. American Embassy. Mexico City February 17, 1944. General Records of the Department of State 812.20/455

³⁸ It can also be argued that the US state Department saw in the eventual inclusion of a Mexican Squadron in the war effort an opportunity to undermine the political standing of General Cárdenas, who was openly against a direct intervention of Mexico in the war scenario. They knew that whatever objections General Cárdenas may have, he would be necessarily overruled by the sentiments of the President and most of the members of the government and the army (Mexico's active participation in the war) and for even broader action. Laurence Dugan Secretary of State to George Messersmith, American Ambassador to Mexico. February 18, 1944. General Records of the Department of State 812.20/455

population³⁹. By the end of 1944, there was no doubt that Mexico had become the main ally of the United States in the Americas.

Internally, the Presidency and the armed forces emerged as the most cohesive and trustful institutions of the political system. When the war ended, Avila Camacho ordered the retirement of 1,100 high ranking military personnel between Generals and Colonels (Piñeyro 1985:64). Despite the protests of those who lost their posts in the armed forces, the president explained that the military needed to open new space to officers who had graduated from the Military College and the Superior School of War. In many ways, this event ended the career of most military men who had had some experience in the revolution and paved the way for a peaceful government change in 1946⁴⁰. One year later, the ruling party proposed the Secretary of Interior, Mr. Miguel Alemán, as presidential candidate. Once more the ruling party obtained an overwhelming electoral victory.

4.4 Conclusion

The Mexican Revolution and the Constitution of 1917 redefined the formal and informal rules governing civil-military relations, but maintained the core of the vertical and exclusive subordination of the armed forces to the executive power, which was inherited from *el porfiriato*. It also gave the armed forces the legitimacy and moral capital the Porfirian army lost at the onset of the 20th Century. In time, widespread recognition and legitimacy gave the armed forces the consistency and even the moral authority to act in the political sphere under the ultimate command of the executive power. This role became widely accepted, insofar that the executive could justify military intervention to achieve the goals of the Mexican Revolution.

If positive for the military as institution, this high quota of moral capital disseminated unevenly among its membership was frequently used by disgruntled generals to challenge central authority. The 1920s and early 30s tells a chronicle where the ruling elite, specially the holder of the executive power, were committed to the task of eliminating real and potential political rivals who attempted to use the military as a

³⁹ Guy W. Ray. Second Secretary of Embassy. American Embassy in the Mexico City. March 13, 1944. General Records of the Department of State 812.20/462

⁴⁰ However, the leadership of the ruling party, by that time renamed as PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) remained in the hands of General Alfonso Corona del Rosal, arguably the most famous member of the first generation of professional military officers.

political springboard. Apart from the draconian measures implemented to enforce soldiers' discipline and loyalty to the president, the new political leadership also overhauled the system of military education under the leadership of General Joaquín Amaro. As observed in this chapter, the institutional relationship between the armed forces and the civilian leadership proved to be highly beneficial for both parties. The executive power ensured the protection of the armed forces' corporate interest. It also favoured their autonomy and separation from other state agencies and representative powers. In turn the generalship turned very vigilant and jealously self-enforced a disciplined loyalty to the executive, and kept silent on political matters.

Calles' political downfall in 1935 is important because it confirmed the concentration of authority and political power in the executive power. The consequences of this transformation were relevant for the system of civil-military relations in the following decades, since the presidency emerged from this dispute as the uncontested national political leader. In the late 1930s, this condition allowed Cárdenas to rearticulate the social bases of the revolution in ways that supported an ambitious agenda of reform. Under this scheme, the armed forces became the moral and material support the president needed either to challenge powerful transnational economic interests or to favour the disadvantaged groups represented by the ruling party. The clearest example of these measures was the expropriation of the oil industry and the escalation of agrarian reform throughout his term in office. Subordinated to the executive power, the armed forces acquired a number of missions that suited the policy preferences of the incumbent president and the needs of political survival of the regime.

In the years that followed World War II, the ramifications of these missions reached almost every corner of the political system. Within the landscape of the Cold War and given the characteristics B. Buzan recognises in the North American Regional Security Complex, the Mexican armed forces did not focus on the external defence of the state but on the policy preferences and political priorities of the president (Buzan and Wæver 2003). The soft side of this mission was concentrated on the social policy role of the armed forces. This role was highly applauded by the population as it represented a valuable channel for the executive to deliver results. On the other hand, internal security became the dark side of military missions as it exhibited both the authoritarian nature of

the regime and the areas of the state machinery that were seriously underdeveloped (Sánchez Ruíz 1996:4).

Chapter 5. Guarding Political Security and Growth: a New Era of Civil-Military Relations during Mexico's Economic Miracle: 1946-1970

Introduction

When Miguel Alemán arrived at the presidency in 1946, the social groups supporting the governing coalition had already undergone a process of accommodation to the institutions created by the Mexican Revolution. Peasants' and workers' organisations did play a key role in the construction and legitimization of the regime after 1929. Their representation in two of the three corporate bodies of the hegemonic party underlined their importance within the overall structure of governance. In real terms, this formal arrangement expanded the room of manoeuvre of the ruling elite to define and impose specific policy choices without being forced to build consensus with Trade Unions and Peasant Leagues. Undoubtedly, this political strategy facilitated decision making at the top of the structure of political power, but lessened the individual capacity of interest groups to influence policies.

This was particularly noticeable under the leadership of President Alemán. From the start, the promotion of a national-based industry occupied again the centre stage to achieve rapid economic growth. The evolution of the import substitution industrialization (ISI)¹ approach to development, implemented since 1942, put too much stress on building a climate of labour stability to invigorate national and foreign investment appeal. However, tensions with the labour movement built up as the regime restricted the unions' right to go on strike. Furthermore, tightened control over salaries did not help to ease the situation as workers' living standards diminished steadily (Middlebrook 1995:107). Not surprisingly, these tensions crystallised in a series of union mobilizations during the first year of Alemán's administration. The situation in the countryside was not particularly different. The subdivision of the large Haciendas

¹ The strategy of ISI consisted on fostering national supply of manufactured consumer durable and intermediate goods instead of foreign imports. (Middlebrook 1991:209).

came almost to a standstill after 1947, leaving behind enormous grievances among peasant communities that were still waiting the Revolution's promises of land redistribution.

Since this policy shift was centrally planned and conducted from the presidential office, peaceful and violent responses from labour organisations and agrarian leagues were expected and the ruling elite prepared itself to deal with both. As a first approach, the regime was willing to settle grievances with organised groups, either labour or peasant in origin, through consent, negotiation or co-optation. This mission was mainly performed by the CTM (Confederation of Mexican Workers), the CNC (National Confederation of Peasants), the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and tripartite conciliation and arbitration boards. The core of this relationship represented one of the enduring sources of legitimacy and survival of the political system. It enabled disciplined social groups with real roots in society to achieve a limited amount of intervention in the definition of policies. It also portrayed the government as willing to provide legal, financial and political support to allied (state-subsidised) labour and peasant organisations in exchange for political loyalty and control over their membership.

When mediation failed or national unions wished to reclaim independence from the post-revolutionary agreement, the regime often opted to securitize union dissent. This task was entrusted to police agencies and the armed forces as their actions in this field were deemed necessary to guarantee the success of specific political and economic programmes. The present chapter is mainly concerned with that policy choice and the way it was implemented after 1946. In other words, it deals with the intervention of the military, intelligence agencies and police bodies in the resolution of political conflicts involving trade unions, peasant leagues, student demonstrations or incipient guerrilla movements.

According to the principle of exclusive subordination, I will argue that the armed forces and police agencies remained subjected to the will of the president, but not necessarily to the rule of law. In practice, this combination generated paradoxical consequences. On the one hand, it shaped the armed forces' doctrine in a way that placed social peace and internal security as integral components of the national interest that needed to be maintained at all costs (Servin 2002:17). On the other hand, this anxiety for pacifying

all political sources of public disorder created a myriad of perverse motives. First of all, it granted security agencies a wide room of manoeuvre and even tolerance to engage in illegal activities as long as the internal security mission, their *raison d'etre*, could be fulfilled according to the president's orders.

For the overall system of civil-military relations, I will argue that the frequent utilization of the armed forces in the domestic arena under a clear political criterion eroded the margins of civilian control. It also created a situation where the military would need to risk its moral capital by implementing the regime's will to restrain social representative groups with an independent political agenda. I suggest that President Miguel Alemán and his successors rewarded the armed forces for their internal security role by conceding greater levels of independence over corporate issues —salaries, retirement benefits, promotions, education system, socialization of officers and recruits— and autonomy on the use of allotted military funds and military intelligence.

In the first part of this chapter, I will look at the way civil-military relations evolved during the Presidency of Miguel Alemán and the way conflicts with the labour movement were addressed. For conflicts from the paralysis of the agrarian reform, I look at Rubén Jaramillo's political and later guerrilla movement. In this section, I will also analyse the role played by the Federal Directorate of Security (DFS) to exemplify the civilian mechanisms President Miguel Alemán established to assist the armed forces on the internal security mission. The termination of the DFS in 1985 after a series of high profile corruption allegations is a useful example to demonstrate the paradoxical consequences for granting too much independence and autonomy to security agencies. In the second section, I will address the effects generated by the Henriquista Movement on the transformation of the political arena after 1952. I will also look at the generation of new political rivalries that drew from the fragmentation of *el henriquismo* and were eventually addressed by the armed forces. Finally, I analyse the nature of military missions after 1960 by evaluating the capacity of the armed forces to adjust to the changing preferences of the executive power, while safeguarding their corporate interest.

5.1 Civil-military relations after 1946

From the start, President Alemán proved to be willing to promote young professional officers to the highest ranks and responsibilities. In less than three months, the President

granted the rank of General to all new army zone chiefs, with similar action in the navy². In fact, when Alemán left power in 1952, there were 716 army officers with the rank of the three categories of general, for a military force of nearly 50,000 soldiers (Ibarrola 2003:63). It was the highest ratio of general per troops of all armies in Latin America—one general for every 69 soldiers—and probably one of the highest in the world³. In real terms, the political power of the military elite was impressively diluted. But still, the new appointees were naturally indebted to the new president⁴. At lower levels of the military structure, salaries were raised and labour conditions were significantly improved (Corona del Rosal 1995). The Bank of the Army was created and its junior and senior members managed to contract credits under advantageous conditions. The effects were similar when the president improved the Military Hospital and laid the first stones of *El Campo Militar Número Uno* (CM1).

Regardless the improvements that were made in the army's infrastructure, military expenditure markedly dropped as a proportion of the government's budget. It went from 18 percent of total expenditure in 1947 to 7.2 per cent in 1952 (Wilkie, 1970). In fact, it continued dropping until 1988, as can be appreciated in Table 5.1. President Alemán's changes were visible in the yearly composition of the army's budget and his discourteous treatment of high-ranking military officers, and in the configuration of the new ruling elite⁵. During his six years in office, not a single army officer occupied a non-military position in the cabinet and the number of governors with military background dropped to 13 percent while during the Administration of President Avila Camacho, this was around 40 percent. A similar trend can be seen regarding military Senators, who dropped from 20 percent between 1940 and 1946 to 5 percent in the

² Other than a clear political logic aiming at tightening his control over the armed forces, it was known that Alemán heavily distrusted the old generals. His father was a military officer, killed in 1929 during one of the numerous military rebellions. Alemán himself saved his life two years before when he actively supported General Arnulfo R. Gómez who was executed in 1927 with Francisco Serrano for mounting a failed military uprising against Alvaro Obregón.

³ There was also the idea that Alemán's hostile and interventionist position towards the military was the result of personal grievances and distrust since his younger years when his father was killed by the military during the Escobarista Rebellion in 1929. Interview granted by former president Miguel Alemán to Roderick Ai Camp in 1976. (Camp 2005:27)

⁴ The task also needed to get rid of the last remnants of the first generation of revolutionary officers who had little, if anything, in common with the new ruling elite. The masterstroke of this strategy came with the creation of the Mexican Legion of Honour that effectively sent the old generals to retirement despite most of them being more than willing to serve and intervene in political affairs.

⁵ It is important to notice that the size of the military budget was already high in 1946 because extraordinary defence spending fostered by the Second World War. Therefore, this shift is not explained only by the executive's decision to cut down military spending, but by the bigger size of the government budget in the years that followed.

following period (Camp 2005:76). Certainly, this policy shift contributed to clean the political arena of military presence and stressed the separation between the civilian and the military sphere of influence. However, it also restricted the channels of communication and socialisation between public servants and military officers, which is essential for effective civilian control.

Table 5.1

Military expenditures as a percentage of government expenditures 1935—1994

| Period | President | % of Government Expenditure |
|-----------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1935—1940 | Gen. Lázaro Cárdenas | 22.03 |
| 1941—1946 | Gen. Ávila Camacho | 18.85 |
| 1947—1952 | Lic. Miguel Alemán | 10.08 |
| 1953—1958 | C. Adolfo Ruíz Cortines | 7.87 |
| 1959—1964 | Lic. Adolfo López Mateos | 6.92 |
| 1965—1970 | Lic. Gustavo Díaz Ordaz | 2.63 |
| 1971—1976 | Lic. Luis Echeverría A. | 4.86 |
| 1977—1982 | Lic. José López Portillo | 2.55 |
| 1983—1988 | Lic. Miguel de la Madrid | 2.33 |
| 1989—1994 | Lic. Carlos Salinas de Gortari | 3.08 |

Source: Table elaborated with data from G. Boils (1975) and R Benítez (2002)

While changes indicated above were important in the new configuration of civil-military relations, it was the political side of Alemán's policies that set a long lasting transformation. Under his leadership, the military turned into one, if not the most, efficient agent of the state to free the regime from groups opposing the political status quo and the new direction of economic policies. In the eyes of the ruling elite, the internal enemies⁶ were likely to be those who openly expressed their grievances towards the policy choices of the executive or the autocratic nature the political system (Leroy 2004:107). In other words, fierce presidential control over the armed forces was regarded as a key element for the regime's survival, not because the ruling elite feared a military coup, but as an instrument to confront organised political opposition.

⁶ In the introduction of a draft version of Mexico's Special Prosecutor for Social and Political Movements of the Past (*Fiscalía Especial para Movimientos Sociales y Políticos del Pasado* — FEMOSPP), it states that Mexican State prevented, criminalised, and combated different sectors of the population that organised themselves to push for greater levels of participation in public policy decisions. (...) those groups of society were considered as enemies.

Under this basic condition, the political role of the military was understood as an essential backup to the president on specific policy choices—as it was definitely the case during Cárdenas' Presidency—and as the president's exclusive agent to control groups and individuals challenging the ruling party and its elite. The strategy consisted of criminalising political dissent. This was revealed through a series of speeches where the President, the Interior Minister and the Secretary of Defence portrayed the politically discontent as disenfranchised individuals and opposed to the true representatives of large social organisations⁷. They also labelled them as traitors to the revolution, thieves, murderers and professional agitators and often accused them of being funded by foreign or communist powers intending to halt the Revolutionary project (Servin 2001; Servin 2002)

Along with this rhetoric, the regime preserved in full working condition the Law of Social Dissolution, approved by Congress in September 1941 within the context of Mexico's participation in World War II (Stevens 1970:62)⁸. This law had been originally planned to prevent the incursion of Nazi propaganda. In fact, the Mexican Academy of Penal Sciences expressed the hope that this law could be repealed as soon as the circumstances that promoted its creation disappeared (Rosales-Aguilar 1959). But the law was not revoked when the war ended. On the contrary, it gained an internal political dimension—some even named it the Anti Labour Law—and it was used to justify state intervention with suspicious trade unions and peasant organisations.

This was clearly the case of actions against independent cells of the National Union of Railroad Workers, Oil Workers and Miners (Boils 1975). As will be explained later in this chapter, these groups lacked the strength and the organisational capability to challenge the regime on their own, but they were fiercely combated anyway. Apparently, the disproportionate use of force was in response to the fears of the elite

⁷ Labelling political dissent as the enemy of the revolution was entirely rhetorical. The goals of The Revolution seen in its briefest definition, as labour and agrarian reform, had slowed down since the presidency of Cárdenas. In other words, the division of the haciendas was not longer an issue of national policy since Avila Camacho, and it stopped almost completely during the rule of Miguel Alemán. On the other hand, the regime had already strengthened its control over the trade unions, though the creation of the CTM and their compulsory affiliation to the ruling party (Schmidth, 1991).

⁸ The Article 145 (promulgated in 1941 and revised in 1950) and 145 bis (promulgated in 1950) of the Penal Code specified that a prison term of two and up to twelve years and a fine of one to ten thousand pesos "to any foreigner or Mexican national who in speech or in writing, or by any other means, carries on political propaganda among foreigners or Mexican Nationals, spreading ideas, programmes or forms of action of any foreign government, which disturb the public order or affect the sovereignty of the Mexican State."

regarding the possibility that discontented trade unions and peasant leagues could gain enough political momentum, and therefore provoke a real challenge to the status quo (Piñeyro 1985). It seems also that intelligence agencies deliberately overestimated the risk that these organisations posed to the polity as a way of obtaining a higher portion of budget and political influence.

For the armed forces, Alemán's drive for internal security countered a historical weakness by focusing on confronting radical expressions of political opposition, such as guerrilla movements (Vanderwood 1976)⁹. The Army reorganised its geographical deployment through the sub-aggregation of the 32 military zones into nine military regions. This transformation created a new command ring headed by newly appointed generals. At the same time, it diminished the interaction between the chiefs of military zones and state governors, as regional chiefs took control over dealings with local and state authorities. In addition, Alemán ordered the installation of a private phone network between the presidency and each military zone in the country (Servin 2001:114). Finally, the central command began to shift military zone chiefs more frequently. As during *el porfiriato*, the objective was to disrupt political alliances between regional political leaders and army representatives.

The map presented below shows how the geographical deployment of the armed forces in Mexico followed an internal logic of defence, rather than conventional priorities associated with deterrence¹⁰. There was nothing new in this, it was created during *el porfiriato* and reaffirmed on many occasions by Obregón, Calles and Cárdenas (Lieuwen 1968). It seems clear that the army distributed its battalions in expanding rings around Mexico City. In fact, around 65 per cent of the army's capability was deployed within a radius of 300 kilometres from the country's capital. It is also noticeable that while the northern region was still kept reasonably secure, military presence in the South East was almost nonexistent. Furthermore, the creation of the Presidential Guards Unit and its integration into the Presidential Chief of Staff -*Estado*

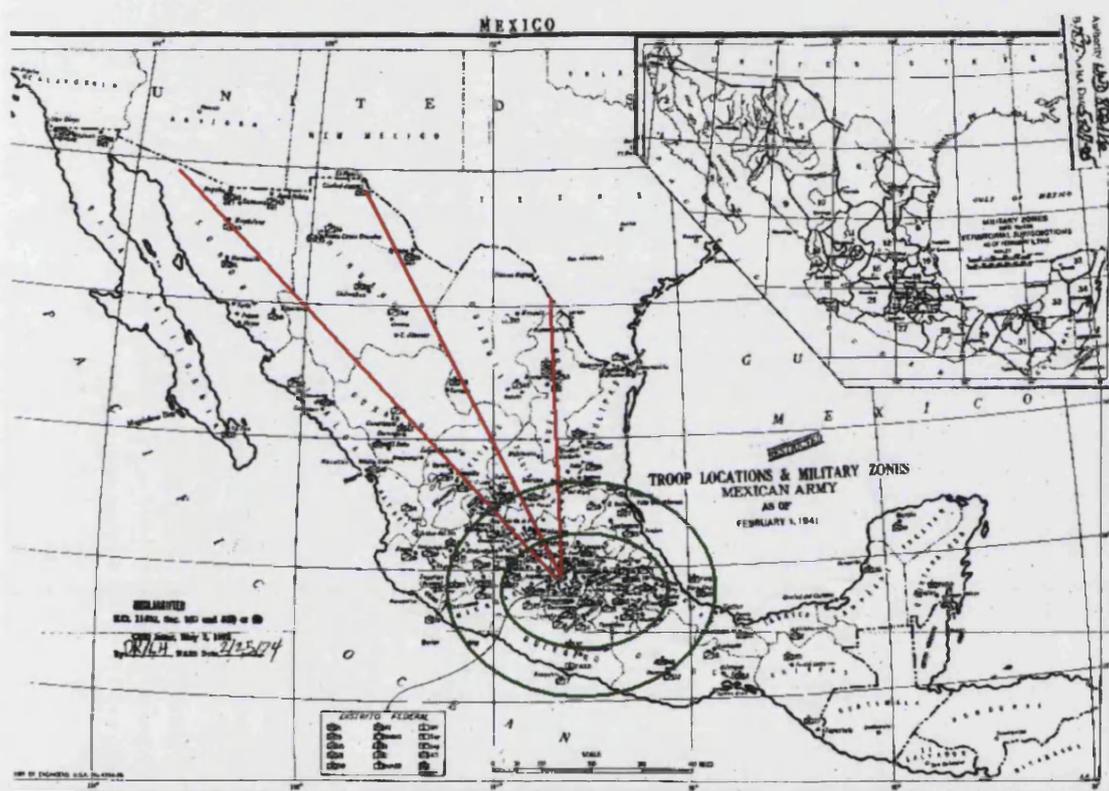
⁹ The downfall of *el porfiriato* occurred partly in response to the federal army's inability to confront the simultaneous attack of poorly organised guerrillas in the north and south of the country. Likewise, Francisco Madero's legitimacy had also been seriously undermined by the inability of the federal army to deal with the widespread presence of movements in the north and the centre of Mexico. It seems that the executive power after 1930s paid considerably more attention than their predecessors to preventing revolutions.

¹⁰ Riding, A. "Mexican Army, Amid Rumors, Insists it Steers Clear of Politics". The New York Times. February 5, 1974 p 4.

Mayor Presidencial (EMP) reinforced the capacities of the president to define the character of military missions. The EMP grew in size and continued to be recognised as an elite body of the armed forces. In general, it was better equipped than other military units and its personnel was carefully selected from the top classes of the Military College (Ortega 1995:16).

Figure 5.1

Troop locations and military zones. Mexican Army 1941



Source: Map retrieved from the General Records of the Department of State. February 1, 1941, The National Archives. Declassified EO 11652 Sec 3(E) 5(D) OSD letter May 3, 1972.

5.2 The Federal Directorate of Security

The armed forces were assisted by specialised government agencies on the civilian side of internal security. In this category, it is possible to identify the Judicial Police, the Secret Service under the command of the Mayor of Mexico City, and state and local police bodies. Such assistance was considerably reinforced through the creation of the Federal Directorate of Security (DFS) in 1947. According to President Alemán, the DFS was meant to become the Mexican version of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) (González 1996). Not particularly different from other intelligence agencies on the

continent, the DFS directed its energies to infiltrate trade unions, political parties and student organisations with undercover agents as a way to keep a close eye on every corner of the political activity in the country¹¹. They also carried out analyses of open sources of information, such as newspapers and magazines. In many areas, their missions overlapped with those of the *Estado Mayor* as they were also included in the protection of the president and high profile visitors. However, its most important mission included the supervision of political groups, individuals and organisations that had presumably assumed a critical and even challenging stand towards the ruling elite.

Within the terrain of civil-military relations, the Federal Directorate of Security came to counterbalance and supervise the missions delegated to the armed forces on internal security. Yet, its assignment was never centred on preventing abuses committed against civilians, but ensuring that the armed forces performed the internal mission according to the executive's orders. Having the DFS installed next to the presidential office automatically conferred the agency a high standing within the public administration. The DFS participated, along with the armed forces, in the intervention against the Oil Workers Union disturbances in Azcapotzalco as well as the occupation of oil facilities in Veracruz and Tamaulipas on December 19, 1946¹². A few months later, the DFS destroyed a political movement organised by several national unions opposing their automatic affiliation to the ruling party¹³. In 1948, the DFS intervened to dissolve the strike in the Railroad Workers' Union¹⁴. In sum, there were at least 8 major incidents

¹¹ Marin, Carlos. "Los cargos en su contra en Estados Unidos aún vigentes. Resucitan a Nazar; no importaron las acusaciones de represor, de torturador, de informante de la CIA...". *Proceso*. December 26, 1988

¹² Right after some sections of the Oil Union agreed to suspend activities, the army occupied PEMEX (Mexico's State 'Oil Company) facilities and arrested the union leaders. The regime accused them of subversion, attacking vital communications infrastructure and sabotage. As a result, 40 members of the oil union who were allegedly linked with the disturbances were seized by direct presidential orders. Concurrently, the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM) cooperated with the president and completely abandoned the discontented cells of the Oil Union in Mexico City, Veracruz and Tamaulipas.

¹³ This decision generated widespread discontent of the most representative union organizations of the country. The oil workers, railroad, electrical power generation, telephone and mining unions opposed the CTM as it was clearly not in their best interest. These unions had a long tradition of independence from the ruling party that enabled them to increase their political and economic bargaining power, mainly on yearly salaries' negotiations. Not surprisingly, the regime's response followed the same pattern. It sent the military and the DFS to placate the dissidents, but this time the DFS stayed longer to oversee the appointment of a new leadership. The automatic affiliation of the oil workers membership was approved on November 16, 1947.

¹⁴ Jesus Díaz de León, its General Secretary, accused José Luis Gómez Z., by that time President of the Unitary Workers Confederation (CUT) — the CTM's independent competitor — apparently of mishandling the workers' fees to the trade union. When the accusation against Gómez Z. did not initially succeed, Díaz de León was accused by the Union board of fuelling internal division and dismissed him from the position of General Secretary. The problem with these actions was that Díaz de León was being protected by President Alemán himself. The next day, one hundred DFS agents dressed as railroad

between 1946 and 1952 with national unions where the DFS and the armed forces were called to restore order. In all cases, the CTM and its national leader, Fidel Velazquez, in conjunction with the president, put an end to the problem by denying support to the dissidents and publicly condemning their actions. These episodes show how the regime mounted an effective, perhaps brutal, strategy to limit the potential of unions and other organisations to cut their ties from the corporatist arms of the PRI. It was clear that in the eyes of the executive power, the emergence of independent trade unions was seen as a matter of internal security that needed military intervention. Under these conditions, the creation of the DFS had a positive side for the armed forces as it allowed a rearrangement of division of labour within repression duties. In terms of control, the strategy proved adequate. Labour strikes during Alemán's *sexenio* dropped dramatically in comparison to the lapse of General Avila Camacho's mandate as it can be appreciated in Table 5.2. Ironically, the administration of the first elected civilian president since 1911 had shown even more intolerance, willingness to repress and authoritarianism than its military predecessors.

Table 5.2

Labour strikes 1938-1962

| Presidential Administration | Year | Federal Jurisdiction Strikes | Local Jurisdiction Strikes |
|------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Lázaro Cárdenas | 1938 | 32 | 287 |
| | 1939 | 35 | 268 |
| | 1940 | 15 | 342 |
| Manuel Avila Camacho | 1941 | 17 | 125 |
| | 1942 | 19 | 79 |
| | 1943 | 569 | 197 |
| | 1944 | 734 | 153 |
| | 1945 | 107 | 113 |
| | 1946 | 24 | 183 |
| Miguel Alemán | 1947 | 13 | 117 |
| | 1948 | 34 | 54 |
| | 1949 | 35 | 55 |
| | 1950 | 28 | 54 |
| | 1951 | 17 | 127 |
| | 1952 | 29 | 84 |
| Adolfo Ruíz Cortines | 1953 | 20 | 142 |
| | 1954 | 18 | 75 |
| | 1955 | 13 | 122 |
| | 1956 | 10 | 149 |
| | 1957 | 10 | 183 |
| | 1958 | 11 | 729 |
| Adolfo López Mateos | 1959 | 18 | 361 |
| | 1960 | 52 | 325 |

Source: This table was constructed by K. Middlebrook (1995:165)

workers, along with army soldiers, assisted Díaz de León to assume the Union's leadership by force. The overwhelming use of force succeeded and the undisciplined leaders went into hiding for months. The regime mounted a manhunt against them until the DFS found them. Valentín Campa and José Luis Gómez Z were incarcerated in the Federal Prison of Lekunberri.

On the negative side, sending soldiers against representative sectors of Mexican society significantly affected the military's corporate interest. On many occasions, trade unions and agrarian leagues demanded the dissolution of the armed forces as they considered them the regime's instrument to repress the population and serve big transnational capital and land owners. This position was clearly stated in their manifestos and press releases (Jaramillo 1950). On the face of it, the presidency made every effort to protect the army's corporate interest by praising their institutional loyalty in events and parades. It also prevented the publication of negative comments in newspapers through its control over the mass media¹⁵. In return, the military missed no opportunity to show their support for Alemán's policies and leadership. On August 13, 1948, zone army chiefs and the Secretary of Defence met with the president to reiterate their loyalty and commitment. A similar encounter was repeated two months later with the presence of the entire generalship. These public displays became a ritual in which, every time the president confronted some degree of internal unrest, the military rushed to his office to show support. In the late 1940s, the main reason behind these acts was to reaffirm their allegiance *vis-à-vis* the trade unions. In the 1960s and 70s the approach changed by showing both their commitment to counteract massive student demonstrations, and by dealing with the upsurge of rural and urban guerrilla groups. Nowadays, it is a mixture of responding to wide public insecurity, guerrilla movements, and drug trafficking.

Among many other disadvantages of this form of interaction, missions delegated to DFS and the armed forces were used to put entire state agencies at the service of the private interests of key political officers¹⁶. For instance, the DFS was used by President Alemán to carry out personal vendettas like the persecution of the journalist Rafael García Travesi (Taracena 1979:12). It also served its own members as a useful façade to conceal their engagement in illicit activities¹⁷. According to the State Department Records on Mexico's politics and military affairs, it was well known that the DFS was involved in the traffic of drugs. According to Col. Holden, Army Attaché at the US Embassy in Mexico City, the second in command of the DFS, Mr. Juan Ramon Gurrola, used his subordinates and official vehicles to traffic illegal substances to the United

¹⁵ Up to the 1980s, it was well known in the country that freedom of press ended when journalists attempted to criticise the incumbent president, his wife or the armed forces (Batiz, 1999:72)

¹⁶ Maurice C. Holden, Assistant Military Attaché "Misuse of power by National Security Police." D.F. July 17, 1947. General records of the Department of State Rg 59, LM112m 1945-1949. Confidential Files, 812.00-812.34, roll 17, NACP

¹⁷ Tirado, E. (2000). "El Cisen: el salto del trapecio o cirisi de identidad". *Proceso*. October 1, 2000

States. Holden even described in detail how the Director of the DFS was sometimes in charge of overseeing such highly profitable activity. The military attaché affirmed that Col. Serrano, one of the two founders of the DFS, tried to take advantage of his close friendship with President Alemán to convince him to centralise the anti narcotics campaign by assigning the entire task to the Federal Directorate of Security. In fact, Colonel Carlos Serrano was publicly accused in the United States for his alleged participation in the smuggling of heroin. Holden also believed that the profits of the illicit business were being shared among high profile politicians¹⁸.

Despite the rumours and the evidence that the DFS was involved in illegal activities, the ruling elite did nothing. It was taken as a small price to pay for assisting the regime in maintaining economic growth and political stability (Aguayo 2001:93; Lupsha 1991:41; Toro 1995); Nadelmann 1993; Pimentel 2000). In time, such deviant behaviour created a competitive and highly profitable market of state protection (military and police officers) to individuals and organisations committed to the traffic of drugs and other illicit activities such as weapons trading, kidnapping and car theft. (Nadelmann 1993:287-288). It was during this period when the concept of “*La Plaza*” was forged. It defined a franchise system by which drug traffickers paid police and military chiefs a fixed, usually monthly, amount of money for the monopoly of illegal activities in a defined region or city. The way this system works has been elegantly described by Terrence Poppa in his book about the life of the famous trafficker Pablo Acosta (Poppa 1991). According to this scheme, the profits made in the underworld are passed on as percentages up through the system until they reach the office of the president. (Lupsha 1991; Bailey and Godson 2000; Pimentel 2003; Willoughby 2003).

Following this logic, the appropriation of some high profit illegal activities by the regime, especially by police agencies, created a cash cow system where high profile politicians tolerated criminal organisations as far as they could safely profit from such illegal activities (Lupsha 1991). Tolerance from above was granted and maintained as long as it did not become a matter of friction with the United States and, most

¹⁸ Besides a number of cases cited by the US Embassy personnel, sinister stories of corruption in the DFS were never in short supply. According to the weekly magazine *Proceso*, two of the bodyguards of President Alemán, Hugo and Arturo Izquierdo Hebrard, were expelled from the DFS after being implicated in the assassination of Mario Angulo Hernández, by that time Senator of Tlaxcala. The same brothers were later identified by the Attorney General’s Office as prominent players of the traffic of drugs. Another case was of Captain Rafael Chavarri, who was later linked to Jorge Moreno Chaubet, the kingpin of heroin traffic to the United States in the mid 1960s. (Astorga Almanza, 2003:242-243)

importantly, as long as police and local political authorities continued performing the mission of checking political opposition.

At lower levels, the agreement between the political principal and the security agent acquired complex ramifications of corruption that cut across social and political structures. The income from illegal activities was often channelled to reinforce the corporatist instruments of the ruling party at local and state level. This situation enhanced the social capital of local public officials as well as allowing those participating in criminal activities to mingle freely with the rest of society without being stigmatized as members of the underworld. Since illegal activities were not only tolerated, but even assisted by security agencies, their participants, and specifically drug traffickers, were not particularly seen as a threat to society by the political elite. On the contrary, they were often regarded as magnanimous characters who contributed to minimize the gap of social welfare the state was unable to fulfil. Not surprisingly, political campaigns funded by criminal organizations were also regular (Curzio 2000).

No doubt, international pressure could have pushed the regime to reinforce the supervision of military and security agencies as well as to denounce the illegal dealings of the DFS. However, it seems that the U.S. State Department was not willing to voice its disapproval on these two issues, as long as its southern neighbour remained stable and free from communist influence (Willoughby, 2003:129, Schulz, 1985:6). With the external and internal variables affecting the continuation of the post-revolutionary regime under reasonable control, attempts to transform the nature of the status quo could only come from the fragmentation of the ruling elite. As it occurred to General Juan A. Almazán in 1940, the political casualties left by the electoral defeat of General Henríquez Guzmán in 1952 diversified the enemies and so the regional scope of the policies of internal security. This part of the discussion leads us to the second element shaping the contradictions generated by involving the armed forces in political affairs.

5.3 The *henriquismo* and its casualties, 1952-1958

On the eve of 1952, the regime's candidate, Adolfo Ruíz Cortines, confronted the candidacy of Efraín González from the PAN (National Action Party), Vicente Lombardo Toledano from a coalition of the Popular and the Communist Parties, and General Miguel Henríquez Guzmán supported by The Federation of People's Parties

(FPPM). Undoubtedly, the candidacy of General Henríquez represented the highest threat to the regime, as it attracted many of the groups discontented with the neoconservative character of Alemán's policies. Within the armed forces, the resentment was still fresh for his arbitrary allocation of ranks.

Daniel Cosío Villegas' work on the Mexican Presidential Succession (Cosío Villegas 1975), argues that the regime feared that General Cárdenas could offer his preferences for Lombardo or Henríquez in 1952. Both were aligned to Cárdenas' leftist policies, and the so-called revolution heritage, so their alliance to the former president was expected. There were also bitter resentments due to Alemán's alleged intention to seek re-election (Taylor 1960; Medin 1990). In fact, Congressman Manuel Jiménez, President of the Chamber of Deputies, had already hinted at the possibility of amending the Constitution for such purposes¹⁹. Despite the rumours, Cárdenas maintained an uncompromised position that was understood more as an endorsement to Adolfo Ruíz Cortines than to a veiled support to General Henríquez or Lombardo. Brandenburg (1964) argues that Ruíz Cortines turned out to be the choice of Cárdenas over the preferences of Miguel Alemán who tried, but failed, to impose the candidacy of Fernando Casas Alemán, the appointed Mayor of Mexico City (Brandenburg 1964; Langston 2002).

In any case, the fragmentation of the large revolutionary family was of concern for the ruling elite. Even if Cárdenas was not openly supporting Henríquez, there were a number of well-known *cardenistas* who were indeed working in his campaign. This was a situation that definitely infuriated PRI loyalists working in the first circle of Alemán (Servin 2001). The FPPM had already been endorsed by the Party of the Revolution, headed by General Cándido Aguilar and The Constitutionalist Party that was controlled by another recognised *cardenista* and former governor of Veracruz, Heriberto Jara. Their allegiance to Henríquez was not only the result of twelve years of abandonment and lack of opportunities to intervene in the political arena, but also the chance to reshape the composition of the ruling elite. Not surprisingly, the FPPM was stronger in rural areas than in the great cities. Such affiliations resulted from the resentment to Alemán's regressive agrarian policies. That was the case of the Agrarian

¹⁹ See Gruson, Sydney. "Aleman Declines 2nd Term in Mexico". The New York Times. September 2, 1950, page 6.

and Labour Party of Morelos (PAOM)²⁰, created and headed by Rubén Jaramillo in 1945. Within the PAOM, there were also radical peasant groups that had received weapons and military training during the late 1930s as part of President Cárdenas' strategy to prevent the "*Guardias Blancas*"—small paramilitary units at the service of *Hacendados*— to retaking the expropriated lands. Heading these groups were Cesar Martino, Wenceslao Labra and Graciano Sánchez, all being well known *cardenistas* (Story 1985:155).

Within the armed forces, there were also groups that openly sympathised with Henríquez's candidacy. However, as under Almazán's presidential campaign in 1940, the Defence Minister personally made sure that none of the Henriquistas had command positions prior and during the presidential election. In fact, missions delegated to the armed forces in the political arena increased as the presidential election approached. On election day, the military placed troops all around the state of Morelos; ballot points were also secured by army personnel. In fact, ballot boxes were burned or stolen in the strongholds of Jaramillo's organisation and the PAOM was denied the chance to win in a single electoral district, not to mention the state governorship. Nationally, the results were not favourable to General Henríquez either. Despite the high expectations, The Federation of People's Parties could not pass the barrier of 20 percent of the preferences (Estrada Correa 1988). Still, it was the largest vote for a non PRI candidate since the end of the revolution. The PRI won once more with a more than a 50 percent margin.

As with Almazán's group after his electoral defeat in 1940, violence against the losing side after the election reached daunting levels in some regions of the country. According to T. Padilla (2008), the repression against the *jaramillistas* turned harsher when Governor Rodolfo López Nava — a well-known political enemy of Jaramillo— assumed the governorship and used his power to settle some debts with Jaramillo and his followers. The headquarters of PAOM were raided in Cuernavaca and Jojutla and a few peasant leaders linked to this party were killed, tortured or imprisoned. Working with the local state police, the military put in practice the "*carreterazos*" that consisted of dumping the dead bodies of *jaramillistas* along the roads with the intention of

²⁰ The PAOM was a political party based on a regional peasant movement that saw itself as the continuation of Zapata's revolution. It had a radical policy agenda that included the expropriation of all the sources of wealth in the country and extensive allocation of land to all landless peasants. After 1952, most of its operations went underground as a result of local and federal government repression.

spreading fear and pushing for the termination of the organisation (López -Limón 2000).

Outside Morelos, the level of mobilization resulting from the election was considerably lower, but not negligible. Armed peasant groups allied to the PFFM rose up in Michoacán, Querétaro , Veracruz, Guerrero, Hidalgo, Chihuahua, Sonora and Oaxaca. Apparently, these groups were moved by the expectation that General Henríquez would ask his followers to join him in the quest of overturning the regime by force. However, Henríquez did not do this²¹. In fact, he managed to deactivate a violent response towards the regime even when a large number of his followers had been massacred in the Alameda Central by members of the DFS and the army during a peaceful demonstration. There were also rumours of a possible military uprising, but the military remained loyal to the executive power as everyone expected.

In sum, General Henríquez' electoral defeat and resulting political surrender quickened the dissolution of the labour and urban ingredient of the PFFP, which in fact vanished in the months that followed. As with the moderate wing of the opposition headed by Lombardo's Partido Popular, the urban leaderships of the FPPM were easily co-opted by the government. In contrast, the more radical wing of the *henriquismo*, the agrarian leagues linked to Jaramillo, Celestino Gasca and other peasant leaders, preserved a higher level of independence. In the following years, repression was considerably reduced and the realm of national security shifted actors and protagonists. The Labour movement lost steam throughout Ruíz Cortines' presidency as a result of a policy of relatively constant raise of salaries. Moreover, high rates of economic growth helped the ruling elite to maintain a heavy corporate and clientelistic structure supporting a variety of benefits for labour and peasant organisations. Furthermore, it was also clear that President Alemán had already dismantled the most belligerent sections of the national trade unions.

It also appears that Ruíz Cortines was perhaps more inclined to tolerate, negotiate with, and consent to a certain degree of political dissent within labour, before sending the security agencies to take over the situation by force. In the light of his record on internal security, it seems he was not easily persuaded to choose violence over political

²¹ See Gruson, Sydney. "Defeated Mexican Hints at uprising" The New York Times. October 2, 1952. and Gruson, Sydney. "Henríquez fading in Mexico Politics" The New York Times. February 10, 1954

bargaining to solve grievances between the regime and the so-called political enemies. The contrast with his predecessor was very sharp. In fact, even when Jaramillo's group turned into a 100 armed men guerrilla during his *sexenio* (FEMOSPP 2006 V:31), President Ruíz Cortines did not focus entirely on a military solution to the problem. Military occupation of Morelos continued and in fact it escalated in 1954. However, the president also looked for reconciliation. Ruíz Cortines personally met with Jaramillo in 1956 and 1957 to negotiate an amnesty for his group and a viable solution to the agrarian discontent in the region. Because of these high profile meetings, Jaramillo also met with Mr. Adolfo López Mateos during his presidential campaign and Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, who was going to become the Interior Minister in the upcoming presidential term (1958-1964).

Apart from these indications of tolerance, the Ruíz Cortines' presidency slowed down the repression of political dissent by separating the newly created DFS from the presidential office in 1952. On many occasions, Ruíz Cortines declared he had no intention of being surrounded by "*pistoleros*," in a clear allusion to the DFS. It seems clear that the new president adopted a more relaxed approach than his predecessor when dealing with political dissent. However, the separation of the DFS from his inner circle of influence also suggests a different explanation. It is possible to argue that given the nature of missions delegated to this agency and the illicit activities some of its members had allegedly engaged in, Ruíz Cortines wanted to prevent any visible link between the presidency and the poor image of the Federal Directorate of Security. In other words, the eviction of the DFS from the presidential palace may have been more of a public relations strategy than a genuine desire to dismantle a key instrument to ensure public order.

Perhaps unintentionally, the separation of the DFS from the presidential office made the supervision of the armed forces by the executive more subtle, indirect and harder to track down. From 1953 up to 1982, there is evidence suggesting that the executive handled some delicate points in the relationship with the armed forces through the director of the DFS. The extensive interviews that Jorge Castañeda carried out with four former presidents of Mexico reveal some characteristics of this relationship (Castañeda 1999). In one of the fragments, J. Castañeda asked former president José López Portillo

(1976-1982), about the chances of Javier García Paniagua²², by that time Director of the DFS, becoming his successor in the presidential office. Instead of giving a direct answer, López Portillo replied that García Paniagua had the mission of representing the voice of the president “underneath the military” (Castañeda 1999:107). López Portillo did not specify what “underneath” meant. According to Enrique Aguilar Ortega, an acquaintance²³ and collaborator of García Paniagua in the late 1970s, the director of the DFS was in charge of conveying direct presidential orders to army zone chiefs on specific regional or local operations. (Interview: Mexico City, July 10th 2006).

In a different fragment of the same interview, Castañeda refers to an incident in which the Secretary of the Treasury, and future president of Mexico (1982-1988), Miguel de la Madrid, informed López Portillo that García Paniagua had requested some extra-budgetary resources that needed explicit presidential approval. According to Miguel de la Madrid, López Portillo replied: “no need for consultation, whatever Javier says, is like if I were saying it” (Castañeda 1999:133). Even when the former president failed to remember this particular incident as vividly as Miguel de la Madrid did, López Portillo said it could easily be possible because García Paniagua was managing funds that were meant to “fix certain things” he was not ready to reveal in that interview (Castañeda 1999:134). When Castañeda insisted and asked López Portillo what he meant by “fix certain things,” he simply replied that those were “control expenses” of the armed forces (Castañeda 1999:134). General Miguel Angel Godínez Bravo, who served as President’s Chief of Staff during the administration of José López Portillo, corroborated this version. General Godínez told this author that López-Portillo had a way of governing that allowed close collaborators to exercise their judgment on critical decisions, without having to consult him beforehand. He also affirmed that García Paniagua had plenty of economic resources to give away for a variety of issues. However, he did not want to delve on the nature of such issues. (Interview: Mexico City, May 8th 2005 and August 10th, 2008).

²² García Paniagua was the son of General Marcelino García Barragán who served as Defence Minister during the presidency of Gustavo Díaz Ordaz. According to DFS files, one of García Paniagua’s political assets was his close relationship with the army due to his father reputation and position. DFS 009-096-070

²³ It is important to note that there was a style of interpersonal communication among priistas that occupied important government positions in the 1970s to call each other “friends”, even if they had a distant or just merely a work relationship.

It seems clear that neither López Portillo nor his Interior Minister, Jesus Reyes Heróles, were particularly interested in getting involved with the dark alleys of the internal security policy. López Portillo did not have relevant experience on issues associated with internal security. However, he was quite aware that such matters were related to the urban counter guerrilla campaign the DFS and the Armed Forces carried out in the 1970s. “The system is the system” he replied to Castañeda as a veiled hint to stop talking about the subject. In the case of Reyes Heróles, it was common knowledge that he despised the DFS and most likely chose to put some distance between him and the agency (Aguayo 2001:93). Therefore, the internal security mission rested entirely on Javier García Paniagua, who in fact has been mentioned many times as the mastermind behind the extermination of the last traces of the urban guerrilla movement in the late 1970s²⁴. Despite the alleged unwillingness to know the details of internal security operations, it seems clear López Portillo understood well the role of the DFS in the political system as the civilian counterweight of the Military. In his memoirs, the former president wrote that he thought General Miguel Angel Godínez Bravo, by that time Chief of Staff to the President, was a good candidate to replace Javier García Paniagua in the DFS in 1978. However, he soon vetoed this possibility because he knew that the inclusion of an Army General in the leadership of the DFS would automatically detonate unnecessary rivalry with the Secretary of Defence (López Portillo 1988:1160). In an interview with the author, General Godínez said that the DFS was a black box of corruption and abuse and he and the army’s leadership would not have liked the idea of commanding the DFS.

Later in Castañeda’s book, Miguel de la Madrid, President of Mexico between 1982 and 1988, explained that he had no intention of maintaining a direct relationship with the DFS, whose bad reputation had reached untenable levels. Manuel Bartlett, Interior Minister during the President’s De la Madrid administration, had the intention of gradually disengaging the DFS from the regime as a whole. In an interview to Andrea Becerril, Bartlett said he suggested President De la Madrid to shut down the DFS due to

²⁴ The late 1970s was the time when the political influence of the DFS reached its peak. The agency had passed from a couple of hundred agents in 1965 to nearly 3,000 full time employees that controlled more than 10,000 informants in 1979. It is difficult to believe that the alleged threats to internal security in those years, meaning a diluted guerrilla movement, justified a security force of such dimensions. According to S. Aguayo (2001), the DFS often manufactured information and built conspiracy theories to invent powerful internal enemies that justified increasing budget allocations.

its links to drug lords and clear involvement in a variety of criminal activities²⁵. The revelations made by López Portillo and other high profile political actors may be insufficient evidence to argue that the DFS acted, since its separation from the Presidential office in 1953, as the main channel for civilian supervision of the armed forces on sensitive security issues. Moreover, direct statements of former presidents of Mexico concerning the role of the DFS and its relation to the armed forces are extremely scarce. Given the nature of missions delegated to the DFS, further revelations may also lead to criminal charges. Still, the close and rigid characteristics of the Mexican Armed forces suggest this relationship could not have been radically different during the presidencies of Luis Echeverría (1970-1976), Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (1964-1970) or Adolfo López Mateos (1958-1964). Fernando Gutiérrez Barrios, who served as Director of the DFS during the *sexenio* of Díaz-Ordaz, is mentioned in different parts of Castañeda's book and numerous journalistic and academic accounts, as the trusted broker who was able to communicate civilian preferences to military agencies. In fact, key actors of the security arena, such as Gutiérrez Barrios, developed a measure of political power of their own. Jorge Moreno Collado, former Federal Deputy and General Director of Government when Fernando Gutiérrez Barrios served as Interior Minister (1988-1992), explained to this author that student leaders in the mid 1960s were trying to gain the confidence of the DFS's Director as he had the power to allocate some seats in the Federal Congress. (Interview: Mexico City, February 12th 2005 and August 15th, 2008).

In retrospect, it seems that the success of the DFS at imposing some sort of civilian supervision on military missions was directly related to the need of President Miguel Alemán to reshape the relationship with the armed forces according to his policy preferences. After him, this informal agreement became an accepted mechanism of indirect communication between the executive and the armed forces. Therefore, even when the DFS was relocated in the Interior Ministry in 1953, its role did not change much. On civil-military relations, the presidency of Adolfo Ruíz Cortines did not interfere as much as Alemán did with the internal life of the armed forces. He even managed to restore some order concerning the anarchic system of promotions imposed by his predecessor.

²⁵ Becerril, Andrea "Fox prometió una comisión de la verdad sobre desaparecidos políticos y debe cumplir: Bartlett" *La Jornada*, November 28, 2001

5.4 Violence returns: the 1960s

Unfortunately for the regime, the honeymoon between labour and the president was not meant to last as it started to show signs of exhaustion by the end of 1957. The economy maintained sustained growth, but inflation was high too, and tight state control over salaries often resulted in real loss of earnings for workers. (Philip 1992:28). The good relationship with the trade unions broke down again in 1957, when the Railway Union complained about working conditions, hours and discrepancies between agreed salary raises and inflation rates (Stevens 1970:69). Having 70,000 affiliates, the strike of the Railroad workers posed a real problem to the newly elected president. Apart from this conflict, the regime was facing the strike of seven thousand telegraphers, fifteen thousand rural teachers of the Section 9 of SNTE, Oil workers from the Section 34 and 35, miners of Fresnillo, Electricians belonging to the National Union of Electricistas (SME), the strike by Mexicana de Aviación and an undetermined number of armed peasants' organisations that invaded almost 1,000,000.00 hectares in different parts of the country²⁶ (Moguel 1981; Ortega Aguirre 1982). In addition to the political activism of unions, the regime was also confronted by a revival of opposition parties, such as the PAN in Jalisco²⁷.

The internal situation of security was also complicated by the success of the Cuban Revolution in 1959. The second half of the 1950s opened some room for political dissent in the country. No doubt, Presidents Ruíz Cortines and Adolfo López Mateos wanted to be seen as progressive politicians who were willing to tolerate some degree of political opposition. Nevertheless, this room for manoeuvre became significantly reduced, especially towards the more moderate left, after Castro's clear alignment with the Soviet Union and the embracement of a Marxist-Leninist ideology in 1962. As a

²⁶ That was the case of peasant organizations that invaded the Hacienda of Cananea belonging to the Cananea Cattle Company and accounted for 500,000 hectares of land. A similar event took place in Culiacán and Guasave in Sinaloa and Manzanillo in Colima, just to mention some of the incidents. In all cases, the military intervened by violently expelling the invaders.

²⁷ Methods of addressing the institutionalised opposition were not radically different from their counterparts in the agrarian leagues or the trade unions. For instance, on January 30, the State leader of the PAN, Mr. Martín del Campo, demanded a full investigation of the death of Manuel Hernández Padilla, vice-president of the PAN in the town of Unión de San Antonio, Jalisco. Apparently, Mr. Hernández was shot dead by a municipal police officer for threatening the peace. The source of this information was the American Consul in Guadalajara who commented that this sort of incident represented a common occurrence and hardly attracted the interest of the press. However, the difference this time was that Mr. del Campo was accusing a local PRI congressman, Aurelio Pérez Muñoz, of being the mastermind behind the assassination. According to the report, local PRI officials were concerned by the popularity the PAN had acquired in the region, so police bodies and army officers joined in the task of intimidating opposition party leaders. This occasionally ended up in fatalities.

result, the ruling elite grew increasingly anxious, in part fuelled by increasing pressures from the United States, and turned more repressive and distrustful. This sense of national urgency was accurately reflected in intelligence appraisals released by the Secretary of National Defence. They underlined the existence of conflicting signs in international and domestic politics that were a matter of deep concern for the country on the eve of the 1960s (Piñeyro 1986:84). The Secretary of Defence reported a number of politically motivated conflicts in Guerrero, San Luis, Oaxaca, Chihuahua, Michoacán, Veracruz, Tamaulipas, Zacatecas, Jalisco, Hidalgo, Querétaro and Yucatán. Furthermore, frequent upsurges of violence in universities were also placed on the agenda of internal security.

Not surprisingly, the DFS returned to the first row of politics. In September 1961, the military and the Federal Directorate of Security acted against retired General Celestino Gasca and 200 members of his private army. Apparently, the old revolutionary general was planning to join forces with other agrarian leaders in the country to launch a multi-regional guerrilla uprising²⁸. If Gasca's participation in the revolt was frustrated by the regime, other cells of his organisation did carry out guerrilla operations in Puebla, Veracruz, Yucatán and Chiapas. In all cases, the armed forces managed to contain and destroy the rebel organisation²⁹. One year later, in 1962, the government started to change its approach by adopting a more pragmatic view to contain the spread of guerrilla actions. The strategy consisted of the elimination of its leadership, often through assassination, while maintaining high levels of harassment of their regional bases of support. This was the fate that confronted Rubén Jaramillo and his family when they were murdered by the elite body of Presidential Guards in spite of the fact that they had been given amnesty in 1960. According to the files of the DFS, the death squad had responded to direct orders of the president³⁰ in a military operation known as the "*Operación Xochicalco*"(Montemayor 2002; Castellanos 2007:83).

Jaramillo's assassination was a clear sign that the regime had decided to tighten the control of the countryside through a more extensive use of the armed forces. Purchases of light armament, machine guns and transportation vehicles from the United States were resumed by 1961. The newly acquired equipment was enough to provide at least

²⁸ "*Alborotadores detenidos ayer*". El Universal. Sep 11, 1961

²⁹ "*Incidentes en cuatro puntos del país*". El Universal. Sep 17, 1961.

³⁰ DFS 36-62-62,L-1,H-1

50 per cent of the troops with new automatic and assault weapons. Further investments were made in armoured all-terrain vehicles — 2,113 were bought from the United States, as well as 2,000 trucks that were converted into troop transportation.

In addition to these measures, the corporate interest of the military was not neglected. President López Mateos fostered the enactment of the Law of Social Welfare of the Armed Forces. All levels of the military structure received a 10 per cent salary increase. At the same time, housing compounds were built and specialised hospital facilities were added to the Army's health system. The regime also started to encourage graduates of the military college to attend military training and education in Europe and the United States. For instance, between 1950 and 1963, 18 Mexican soldiers on average received foreign military training every year. This number jumped to 76 between 1964 and 1968. According to the U.S. Army Attaché, many of the Military Zone Chiefs had attended U.S. Military schools and more than half had been in that country on official orientation visits³¹.

By mid-1963, the official instrument of communication of the army, "*La Revista del Ejército*," explained that the armed forces needed to improve their internal strategy and capabilities to address pressing issues on internal security. On this topic, General Angel López Padilla, Chief of the Plans Section of the Ministry of Defence, informed the U.S. Military Attaché in Mexico City that the main reason behind military modernisation was the anticipation of social, and perhaps insurgent, upheaval in the country. General Padilla stated that the Army was not going to be able to contain it, unless it were modernised along the lines proposed by the Secretary of Defence³². Not surprisingly, particular emphasis was placed on internal disturbances, internal control to avoid rebellion within military units, and greater supervision over independent unions and agrarian leagues.

To address those issues, the Secretary of Defence proposed the reorganisation of the Rural Defence Body to increase the capacity of the military to gather intelligence in the countryside. It also contemplated the improvement of weaponry for all units and the modernization of communication equipment to enable easier and faster contact between

³¹ AIRGRAM Secret- From the American Embassy in Mexico City to The State August 19, 1968. General Records of the Department of State, A-576 NARA

³² AIRGRAM Secret- From the American Embassy in Mexico City to The State Department. June 14, 1963. General Records of the Department of State, A-1645 NARA

troops and commanders. The strategy also included a more active rotation of personnel so that more officers could gain troop-command experience in conflictive military zones³³. It also pushed for the preparation of manuals to train soldiers to deal with insurgency and intensify the training and graduate education of officers in the United States under the Military Assistance Programme³⁴. (SEDENA 1958-1974:45).

With respect to public security, the military maintained its influence over the appointment of police chiefs in different states of the country. The link between state governors and the armed forces was General José Gómez Huerta, Chief of Staff of President López Mateos. Gómez Huerta was in charge of appointing army officials to state government positions. For instance, in the State of Nuevo León, the positions of Chief of the State police and Chief of the Judicial Police were held by Colonel Miguel Bravo Carpinteyro and Colonel Alfonso Echanove del Castillo respectively. According to a confidential Airgram sent by the American Consul in Monterrey to the US State Department, Governor Eduardo Livas Villarreal was considering the replacement of both officers to put his own men in charge, but he feared that such a decision would fracture the relationship with the centre³⁵.

The army's leadership of the main police bodies ensured that all security areas in the region, civilian and military, were controlled and addressed by army officers taking orders from Mexico City, presumably from the presidential office. According to internal sources consulted by the Legal Attaché at the American Consulate, Colonels Bravo and Echanove were in charge of gathering information on the political and security situation of the region and forwarded it to the Chief of Staff at the Presidential Office. Concurrently, the Zone Army Chief, General Trinidad Rodríguez, forwarded his side of the story to the Secretary of Defence. Given the security agenda in the early 1960s, it seems the issues of concern were subversive movements with communist inclinations, trade unions and student groups³⁶.

³³ AIRGRAM Secret- From the American Embassy in Mexico City to The State August 19, 1968. General Records of the Department of State, A-576 NARA

³⁴ AIRGRAM Secret- From the American Embassy in Mexico City to The State August 19, 1968. General Records of the Department of State, A-576 NARA

³⁵ AIRGRAM Confidential- From the American Consul in Monterrey to The State Department. April 15, 1963. General Records of the Department of State, A-131 NARA

³⁶ More than 40 years later, the appointment of State Police Chiefs has not changed its core procedures. In an interview with Governor Fidel Herrera of Veracruz on the way he selected his Secretary of Public Security, he responded that he consulted this decision first with Natividad González Paras, Governor of

It seems clear that expanding responsibilities on the field of internal security forced the military to develop even more policing and intelligence capacities —both the proper task of civilian police agencies— to comply with the policy preferences of the executive power. Under this logic, the Secretary of Defence inaugurated the school of Infantry, Artillery and “*Zapadores*” and the College of Motorised Cavalry that were mainly specialised in counter-guerrilla operations. The US Embassy in Mexico indicated that there was a growing interest of the Mexican Army to send individual officers to schools in the U.S. or those located in Panama to learn the skills and techniques of special forces engaged in anti-guerrilla warfare³⁷. The Airgram indicated that the US Embassy Service Attachés were openly promoting Mexican interest in Special Forces activities. As a result, counterinsurgency courses were instituted and emphasised at the Mexican War College, while the Ministry of Defence provided such instruction directly to troop units³⁸.

The new approach to military professionalism and modernization prepared the armed forces to confront rural guerrilla movements. It also improved their capacity to assist the DFS and local police bodies in combating urban guerrillas as well as tumultuous student demonstrations during the late 1960s. The way the armed forces intervened in both situations shows its enormous capacity to adjust to the roles and responsibilities ordered by the executive power. It also portrayed a differentiated structure of costs accepted by the military as a result of the nature of their missions. It seemed clear that the containment of the rural guerrilla had limited political costs as military actions were circumscribed to relatively small regions. Even when their operations were highly questionable from a Human Rights perspective, information filtered to the written press was scarce and centrally controlled. In fact, this part of Mexico’s history remained basically unknown until President Vicente Fox ordered the opening of intelligence and military archives of this period in 2001. In contrast, military actions against the student movement, specially the episode of Tlaltelolco, resulted in much more damage to the

Nuevo León. In turn, Governor Paras advised him to follow his experience on the matter and leave the decision to the Secretary of Defence. Nowadays, both states have a retired or on-leave Army General as Chief of the system of public security. It is clear that the agenda of security and even the nature of the political system have changed a lot since 1963. However, the way the military interacts with local and state political power remains almost unchanged.

³⁷ Telegram Confidential. From Mexico City to Secretary of State. No 34, July 24, 1963. NARA

³⁸ AIRGRAM Confidential, From the American Consul in Monterrey to The State Department. December 18, 1963. General Records of the Department of State, A-709 NARA

image, and therefore corporate interest, of the armed forces. I shall return to this issue in the final part of the chapter.

5.5 The rural guerrilla movement, 1965-1970

After the practical annihilation of Jaramillo's organisation, a new peasant movement appeared in the small town of Madera, Chihuahua, in 1965. It had a regional base of social support and the informal backup of the General Union of Peasants and Workers of Mexico (UGOCM). Their demands were no different from those that had inspired the Jaramillista, meaning the unfulfilled promises of the regime to carry out the agrarian reform (Valero Flores 2005), but the composition of its leadership was more heterogeneous, in the sense that it incorporated university students, rural teachers and individuals of different professions, such as physicians and engineers. Like Jaramillo, the leadership of this movement also met with President Adolfo López Mateos in 1963 to present their demands, which basically concerned the standstill of the agrarian reform in Chihuahua and the abuses committed by Governor Praxedes Giner Duran, —who was also a retired general of the army— to landless peasants in the region. Not particularly different to Jaramillo's experience, Arturo Gámiz, the leader of the group, was incarcerated, and his movement fiercely persecuted by the regime and the state government.

No doubt, high levels of state repression fuelled the radicalization of this group. By 1965, its name changed to *Grupo Popular Revolucionario* (Popular Revolutionary Group GPR). Their manifesto proposed a radical reorganisation and conceptualization of Mexico's left through the a National or Mexican version of Marxism (Gámiz -García 1965). By looking at Gámiz's documents, it is clear he portrayed the GPR as the peasant response to a political and economic reality they found terribly unequal and unable to provide them with fair opportunities for development. The GPR also despised the "institutionalised left" represented by the Mexican Communist Party and the Socialist Party. It accused them of becoming accustomed to survive under the complacent eye of the hegemonic party, knowing that they had no chance of modifying the socioeconomic conditions of the country. In many ways, the GPR inaugurated a new generation of social movements that were not willing to negotiate with the regime, but as Gámiz García expressed clearly in the movement's manifesto: "our mission is to talk to the powerful in the only language they understand; that is why our fearless people hold the

rifle because such is the only language they (the regime) respect...”(Gámiz -García 1965). The group also made it clear that it would only abandon the armed struggle once the regime agreed to allocate land and fulfil the promises of social justice proclaimed by the ideals of Emiliano Zapata and Francisco Villa.

The provocative rhetoric of Gámiz coincided with the arrival of Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, former Secretary of the Interior, to the presidency. His short temper and reputation as head the Interior Ministry was not an omen of peace. From the start, the new president appeared to be unwilling to reopen the channels of communication to discontented peasants. Despite the efforts that former president Lázaro Cárdenas made to persuade Díaz Ordaz to attend to the demands of these groups through a more open and lenient approach, the regime moved in the opposite direction. The policy of military modernization continued during his administration in a way that prepared them to confront the challenges posed by the guerrillas. In many ways, the regime’s approach to the GPR set the norm for future interventions. It started by denying them the label of and status of guerrillas, or of anything that could be interpreted as true representative of a social cause. In fact, the analyses developed by the DFS would not address the social or political demands of the GPR, but instead, were centred on deciphering their strategies, zones of influence and the identity of its personnel³⁹.

The first action of the GPR consisted of burning down a small timber bridge on the property of the Ibarra Family, who owned most of the lands of the municipality of Madera, in February 1964. As has been the case with other guerrillas, their first intervention took the regime by surprise, but the DFS and the Army learnt fast. According to confidential documents released by the Army and the DFS, the government knew beforehand that Gámiz and his group were going to attack the nearby military post of Madera. Apparently, the army had infiltrated the structure of the GPR down to the level that even its main instructor on warfare, former army captain Lorenzo Cárdenas Barajas, was an agent working for the regime (Lugo Hernández 2003:71; Contreras Orozco 2007:146). Based on such information, the army waited for the day they knew the GPR planned to attack its garrison. The battle ground was set up, they even cut down the nearby trees and planned to perfection the best way to end the

³⁹ Their leaders, Arturo Gámiz-García, Salomon García, Antonio Escobel, Margarito González and others were considered as delinquents who had fled from the police because they had killed or stolen cattle. DFS 100-5-3-65, H403,L2

guerrilla group right at the first encounter (FEMOSPP 2006 V:52). On September 23, 1965, the military's calculations worked as expected. Arturo Gámiz and thirty other members of the GRP were killed in a matter of hours⁴⁰. The survivors were incarcerated in military jails, tortured and then released. The overwhelming force the army put in place to confront a small pocket of resistance did not go unnoticed by local and national newspapers that reported the crudeness of the confrontation⁴¹. The regime's response in this particular case sent a clear message to other guerrilla groups in the country concerning the kind of treatment they would receive from the armed forces.

However, the fact that at least 23 guerrilla movements declared themselves after the Madera Bloodshed (Table 5.3) in the following five years suggests that the regime's strategy to deter the upsurge of armed peasant movements did not work as expected. In fact, the excessive use of force exerted against the GRP provided a powerful tool for other organisations to recruit combatants. The first repercussion was a guerrilla group that took its name from the massacre of Madera: the 23rd of September Movement. This guerrilla group was headed by Oscar González Eguiarte, co-founder of the GRP. Concurrently, other small guerrilla cells continued operating in the state on behalf of the Gámiz group. For instance, on July 20, 1967, the press reported that an army unit was searching for 12 men belonging to Gámiz's group, who had dynamited a sawmill in Tomochi, 200 Km NW of Chihuahua City. The newspapers stated that guerrilla members were spreading the rumour that Arturo Gámiz was not dead and was still gathering people in the highlands to assemble a full sized rebellion against the regime⁴².

⁴⁰ Exp 100-5-3-65, H239,L2

⁴¹ DFS 21-26-66, H60,L,L1; DFS 100-5-3-65,H-1,L3; Exp 100-5-3-65, H 7,L3

⁴² Telegram. Confidential- Mexico 6154. American Embassy to State Department. Jul 68. General Records of the Department of State, NARA

Table 5.3

Armed movements in Mexico 1963-1970

| Organisation | Regional Influence | Start | End | Participants (a) | Participants (b) | Outcome |
|---|---------------------------------|-------|------|------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Grupo Popular Guerrillero (GPR) | CHIH | 1963 | 1965 | 12 | 14 | Annihilation |
| 2. Movimiento 23 de mayo | MOR, MICH, CHIS, DF | 1963 | 1967 | | | Dissolution |
| 3. Movimiento Revolucionario del Pueblo | ZAC, DF | 1965 | 1966 | 2 | | Annihilation |
| 4. Movimiento 23 de Septiembre | CHIH | 1966 | 1973 | | 6 | Joined the LC23Sept. |
| 5. Movimiento de Acción Revolucionaria (MAR) | 11 States | 1966 | 1972 | 89 | 100 | Imprisonment |
| 6. Partido de los Pobres | GRO | 1967 | 1974 | 347 | 350 | Annihilation |
| 7. Asociación Cívica Nacional Revolucionaria | GRO, DF | 1968 | 1972 | 70 | 70 | Annihilation |
| 8. Union del Pueblo | OAX, DF, JAL | 1968 | | | | Joined PROCUP |
| 9. Ejército Insurgente Mexicano | CHIS, DF | 1968 | 1971 | | | EZLN |
| 10. Comando Urbano Lacandonces Patria Nueva | DF | 1968 | 1973 | 95 | 107 | Joined LC23Sept. |
| 11. Frente Estudiantil Revolucionario | JAL | 1969 | 1973 | 154 | 154 | F/LC23Sept. |
| 12. Fuerzas Revolucionarias Armadas del Pueblo | JAL, NAY | 1969 | 1977 | 31 | 31 | Annihilation |
| 13. Fuerzas de Liberación Nacional | NL, CHIS, VER, TAB, PUE, EDOMEX | 1969 | 1981 | 129 | 130 | EZLN |
| 14. Comité de Lucha Revolucionaria | DF | 1968 | 1969 | 17 | | |
| 15. Frente Urbano Zapatista | DF | 1969 | 1972 | 17 | 17 | Annihilation |
| 16. Grupo Comunista de Chihuahua | CHIH | 1970 | 1972 | | 94 | Imprisonment |
| 17. Liga Leninista Espartaco | DF, TAMPS, NL | 1970 | 1973 | 15 | | Annihilation |
| 18. Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria | DF | 1970 | | | | Annihilation |
| 19. Frente Campesino del Norte | DF | 1970 | | | | |
| 20. Liga de Comunistas Armados | COAH, NL | 1970 | | | | |
| 21. Fuerzas Armadas de la Nueva Revolución | SON | 1970 | 1973 | 9 | 28 | Joined LC23Sept. |
| 22. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias Socialistas | AGS | 1970 | | | | Unknown |
| 23. Comando Urbano de Expropiaciones | DF | 1970 | | 17 | | unknown |

(a) According to General Mario Arturo Acosta Chaparro, *Movimiento Subversivo en México*, Enero de 1990, Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional. (b) Centro de Investigaciones Históricas de Los Movimientos Armados. Source: (Sierra Guzmán 2003:108); (Aguayo 2001:312). (FEMOSPP 2006). An original version of this table can be found in José Luis Sierra (Sierra Guzmán 2003)

On August 9, 1968, another guerrilla attack stormed the army zone in Chihuahua. An army helicopter was shot down by members of an unknown guerrilla group near the town of Tomochi. Once more, the army denied any connection with a guerrilla encounter and blamed the accident on a technical fault. However, Jaime Cavero, Chief of the Economic Department of Chihuahua Government confirmed that the helicopter had been shot down⁴³. He also stated that various fire fights had taken place in recent months, leaving an indeterminate number of fatalities of military men and guerrilla combatants. It was clear that the military was trying to conceal the existence of one or more guerrilla groups in Chihuahua. In fact, the deployment of soldiers in La Sierra was in small numbers with the intention of not alerting small villages that were presumably assisting the guerrillas with food and supplies. Furthermore, given the size of the state—similar to the area of France—and the relatively small number of guerrilla hardcore

⁴³ AIRGRAM From the American Consulate in Ciudad Juárez to the State Department. August 13, 1968. General Records of the Department of State, A-11 NARA

combatants, estimated between 15 and 20, a massive deployment of soldiers was not even feasible. So the approach adopted by the army had to be somehow flexible as the Consulate Principal Officer, A. F. Thoms, described: “General Trinidad Rodríguez, Chief of the Fifth Military Zone, had delivered a short list with names of men who were to be shot and killed when found, with no questions asked⁴⁴.”

Still, the army’s strategy to combat the guerrillas in Chihuahua remained uncertain. For instance, General Trinidad Rodríguez visited the Sierra several times with the idea of meeting personally with the guerrilla leaders in an attempt to find a negotiated end to the conflict, but none of his efforts succeeded. Frustrated by his failure to contact his enemies, Rodríguez claimed he would welcome an increase in the size of the guerrilla corps, so his men could wipe out a larger force, i.e. 200 men, in a set battle. With a touch of irony, the American Consul in Ciudad Juárez indicated that it seemed the good General was not too familiar with guerrilla hit and run tactics⁴⁵. In any case, the search continued in Chihuahua until the leaders of the guerrillas were killed by the end of 1968. The Fifth Military Zone informed to the local press that a group of armed men had been killed in combat with the army. It also explained that one of the bodies was identified as Oscar González Eguiarte, the alleged leader of the Guerrilla movement, who had participated along with Arturo Gámiz in the assault to Madera on September 23, 1965⁴⁶.

Down in the state of Guerrero, the guerrilla movement increased its intensity. The Party of the Poor declared itself in 1967. It was headed by Lucio Cabañas, a rural school teacher and former member of the Communist Party who had already confronted state and federal authorities for abuses against peasant communities⁴⁷. This group had extensive social support in the highlands of Guerrero and was probably influenced by the success of the Cuban Revolution (Campos Gómez, Cabañas et al. 1987). Two years later, another group emerged in Guerrero under the leadership of Genaro Vázquez, another primary school teacher. It was known as the National Revolutionary Civic Association (ACNR). Both organisations represented the radicalization of peasant demands for land reform.

⁴⁴ Ibidem

⁴⁵ AIRGRAM From the American Consulate in Ciudad Juárez to the State Department. August 30, 1968. General Records of the Department of State, A-12 NARA

⁴⁶ AIRGRAM From the American Consulate in Ciudad Juárez to the State Department. October 7, 1968. General Records of the Department of State, A-25 NARA.

⁴⁷ DFS 100-10-3 L25

5.6 Student disturbances

If the handling of the rural guerrilla was mainly in the hands of the armed forces, the repression against student movements was a function assigned to the DFS and local police bodies. Early in the 1960s the US Embassy in Mexico reported the existence of a number of university student organisations with an ambiguous communist agenda. The over-riding issue of Cuba provided a pretext for turning almost any student protest into an anti-American demonstration. However, the anti-American feeling faded away after 1963, to focus on local issues that were easily distinguished by the internal and external drive of the demonstrations. On the one hand, the internal matters included the imposition of university officials, complaints about the precarious conditions of university facilities and low faculty wages, competition among student groups for power, rivalry among universities or colleges, alleged violations to university autonomy by local or federal government agencies. On the other hand, the external drive of demonstrations was often centred on hostility against state authorities. It included broader political issues such as the character of economic policies, objections concerning investment in education and, ultimately, a severe criticism and rejection of the authoritarian nature of the political system. As the student agenda expanded, their demonstrations were often joined by local trade unions, peasant leagues and occasionally, the communist and the socialist party. Not surprisingly, every time student demonstrations were endorsed by other social groups, the likelihood of military intervention to restore public order increased⁴⁸.

For instance, prior to the bloody incident of Tlatelolco in October 2, 1968, the army had intervened in small scale repressions of the student movement on a number of occasions. According to the report of the American Embassy on student movements, there were 43 student revolts since 1942. The army intervened to impose order on eight occasions. In all cases, repression took place when the students widened their agenda of pleas to include broader national issues, or harshly criticised the non-democratic nature of the political system. Another aspect of military intervention on student disturbances was that they became costly for local authorities. On four occasions, the use of the armed forces to contain student revolts was followed by serious adjustments in regional politics (FEMOSPP 2006 I:4). These included the dismissal of state governors. Such

⁴⁸ AIRGRAM Secret- From the American Embassy in Mexico City to The State August 19, 1968. General Records of the Department of State, A-576 NARA

was the case of Governor Caballero Aburto, who was also a retired General from the Army, in Guerrero in 1960. A similar situation occurred in Puebla in 1968.

However, the army's intervention during the student disturbances of 1968 in Mexico City was a different story. The analysis of causes that triggered the student movement is beyond the scope of this chapter. Still, it seems that the student demonstrations during the summer of 1968 captured the social imagination of the young urban middle class that felt increasingly detached from the revolutionary heritage as well as ideologically unable to fit into the scheme of hegemonic domination by the ruling party. It was perhaps their harsh criticism of the political status quo that triggered the regime's violent response in 1968 and again in 1971. Furthermore, the imminence of the inauguration of the Olympic Games, scheduled to open in Mexico on October 12, placed additional pressure on the government to find a quick end to the student movement. Not entirely surprising and according to President Díaz Ordaz's past performance on repression, the regime opted for a violent solution and the army played a definite role in the strategy.

Intelligence reports provided by the DFS indicated that students were well armed, and were likely driven by foreign interests, almost certainly of communist origin, with the sole objective of creating chaos and instability in the country. The ultimate goal, as General Luis Gutiérrez Oropeza, -Chief of the President's Staff, put it, was to establish a communist-like regime in the country (Gutiérrez -Oropeza 1986). According to Sergio Aguayo, who has extensively researched the 1968 Student Movement, there was not a single document in the archives of the DFS that clearly assessed the context, political demands, or real mobilization capacity of the students prior to the events in Tlatelolco (Aguayo 2001:134). Once more, there was the impression that the DFS had consciously exaggerated the capabilities of the student movement and presented it as a real risk to political stability. According to R. Camp (2005), General Marcelino García Barragán's memoirs indicate that the request of the Interior Ministry to intervene was based on false and exaggerated information that suggested the Preventive Police of Mexico City was unable to control the demonstration and, therefore, unable to maintain order in the Capital. (Camp 2005:28). R. Camp also noted that García Barragán's subtle criticism of civilian performance on intelligence gathering and analysis provides a strong antecedent of the kind of arguments the armed forces have frequently used to justify their intervention in crime fighting and anti-drug missions. In any case, it seems that based

on such defective intelligence, President Díaz Ordaz was indeed convinced the students had an arsenal and were ready to take over the regime by force⁴⁹ (Krauze 1997:232).

On October 2, 1968, such fears resulted in direct orders passed to the Secretary of Defence, General Marcelino García Barragán, to take direct measures against the student movement. The infamous Olympia Battalion ended the student movement in less than 18 hours. The encounter left an estimated 350 students and military men dead, and around 1,100 imprisoned students⁵⁰ in different jails around Mexico City, including Military Camps, and hundreds wounded (Zermeño 1978:13).

President Díaz Ordaz assumed full responsibility for the events and the loyal political allies of the regime applauded the president's decision. For instance, Fidel Velázquez affirmed that any measure adopted by the federal government was justified and would be approved by the people. His declaration was as follows: "I think the time to adopt such a decision [meaning the repression of students] has arrived...It is my belief that the Mexican People will fully endorse such a decision"⁵¹. A similar situation occurred with the speaker of the Lower Chamber of congress, Mr. Luis M. Farías, who justified the occupation of the National University by tanks and troops. The leader of the Senate stressed that the military was acting to protect the rule of law.⁵²

Despite the attempts of the ruling elite to relieve the military of the full responsibility for the many fatalities of Tlatelolco, it was impossible to exculpate the armed forces and save them from social opprobrium. Not surprisingly, the armed forces demanded compensation from the president that acquired qualitative and quantitative characteristics. It all started with the creation of a new military zone command and three new battalions as well as a new company of combat engineers in the body of presidential guards. Half of the troops received new weapons and the air force purchased 37 new planes from the United States. (Camp 2005:33). Concurrently, the military became increasingly reluctant to disrupt large civilian demonstrations, especially in urban areas. This attitude did not end their mission of looking out for

⁴⁹ This vision is also partially shared by former president Luis Echeverría, who served as Interior Minister of Díaz Ordaz. Echeverría argues that if President Díaz Ordaz had not taken direct measures to repress the demonstration in October 2, 1968, the students could have invaded *Palacio Nacional* and killed the president (Cárdenas Estandia 2008:81)

⁵⁰ DFS 11-4/L.44/F.250-254

⁵¹ Domínguez, Horacio. "Cualquier medida que se tome para reprimir la actual situación, está justificada". CTM. *El Universal* p1-12 29-08-68

⁵² *El Sol de Mexico*. Oct 5, Page 249

political enemies of the regime, but it served the Generalship to impose limits and conditions to this sort of assignment (Wager 1994:20). The armed forces reinforced their capacities to carry out intelligence. In general, their relationship with Díaz Ordaz's successor turned occasionally worrying and confrontational. It also promoted the creation of Special Forces and paramilitary units to take on the dirty work of repression. The most infamous group of this kind was known as *Los Halcones* —The hawks— which managed to end the last attempts of re-launching the student movement in the early 1970s.

5.7 Conclusion

A large number of military missions was used to control different expressions of political dissent during the administrations of Miguel Alemán (1946-1952), Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (1964-1970) and Luis Echeverría (1970-1976). Their previous experience in the Interior Ministry or *Gobernación* suggests that this set of presidents really knew in detail the regime's policy of dealing with political enemies. Some of them, as it was presumably the case of Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, developed a strange "fascination with security issues,"⁵³ with some apparent paranoid twists (Piñeyro 1985; Scherer García 1986; Aguilar Camín 1989). In contrast, missions delegated to the armed forces on internal security during the administration of Adolfo Ruíz Cortines (1952-1958) were considerably less violent. Ruíz Cortines even made public his distrust regarding the way security agencies functioned, specially the Federal Directorate of Security. The *sexenio* of Adolfo López Mateos (1958-1964) is somehow trapped in the transition from a relatively soft approach to internal security embraced by his predecessor, to the implementation of a more violent and preventive strategy to counteract student demonstrations and guerrilla movements in the second half of the 1960s. In turn, José López Portillo (1976-1982) simply over-delegated the mission of internal security to military and civilian agencies that eventually led to the biggest state-sponsored bloodshed of the 20th Century in Mexico, which is also known as the dirty war. In all cases, the Executive power took care of protecting the corporate interest of the armed forces by concealing their internal security missions as much as possible. When things went out of control, as in 1968, the military were handsomely compensated, either by protecting their moral capital at all cost or through approving bigger yearly budgets.

⁵³ Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) "SINE 81-67: Security Conditions in Mexico", October 12, 1967. National Security File (NSF), Country File Mexico LB Johnson Library (Austin) Box 62

Two main conclusions come to light on this chapter. It seems that this process of change in civil-military relations did not lead automatically to the penetration and subordination of civilian police agencies to military authorities as it visibly occurred after 1989. Quite the opposite, the creation of the Federal Directorate of Security in 1946 provided an effective instrument the executive power utilized to decentralise some of its control over the armed forces. Therefore, the DFS managed to contain the advancement of the armed forces in other areas of the system of public security. However, its dissolution during the administration of Miguel de la Madrid in 1985 ended up reinforcing even more the military's autonomy and independence from other civilian agencies. In other words, the closer the military gets to the president, the larger the room of manoeuvre for officer corps to carry out its internal security missions. It seems clear that after the disappearance of the DFS, the executive power in Mexico has failed to impose a subsidiary civilian channel of interlocution and intermediation with the armed forces.

This lack of interaction between civilians and military officials remains in place and it is delaying the process of democratic consolidation in Mexico. In other words, the termination of the DFS in 1985 ended up reinforcing another deeply embedded authoritarian characteristic of the political system: the exclusive subordination of the armed forces to the executive power. In the following chapter, I will explain how the armed forces managed to comply with the difficult task of protecting the regime from its alleged enemies while safeguarding its moral capital and corporate interest.

Chapter 6. Armed Forces and Guerrilla Activity: the Primacy of Partisan Politics in the Definition of Mexico's Policy of National Security 1970-1982

Introduction

As explained in the last chapter, the students and the political regime collided violently on the night of October 2nd, 1968. The characteristics of the aggressive government response to suppress social discontent were an alarming sign of exhaustion of the post-revolutionary political agreement and marked the onset of a gloomy political mood not seen in Mexico since the downfall of Porfirio Díaz's presidency in 1911. It seemed obvious that the regime had run out of ideas and resources to peacefully control urban demonstrations of a considerable size. Not surprisingly, the state-promoted bloodbath that followed deeply shaped the tone of international public opinion¹. It exposed the inability of the presidency and the political system to deal peacefully with popular demands (Shapira 1977:558).

On top of that, the proximity of presidential elections and the designation of the regime's presidential candidate made things more difficult for President Díaz Ordaz in his final year in office. As the political apparatus was under severe pressure, the economy was also under strain. Growing unemployment and weak agricultural production were particularly acute in rural areas surrounding Mexico City and nearby states, such as Oaxaca and Guerrero. Both would soon turn into the main locations of rural guerrilla activity. In the urban arena, continuing inflationary pressure battered wages in the industrial sector. Scarce access to public services in a society that was

¹ The scale of repression against the students gave the international media a chance to enrich their reports on the inauguration of the Olympic Games Mexico City was hosting that year, with acute political conflict surrounding the presidency of Mexico. For instance, the New York Times reported a few days before October the 2nd how thousands of students marched in the streets of Mexico City chanting: "We want Revolution, not Olympic Games." Ginigers, Henry "Mexico keeps up a calm exterior; Regime Seeks to Avert Open Clashes With Students. The New York Times. August 15, 1968

rapidly becoming more urban was an unfavourable signal for political stability in the long term (Middlebrook 1981:58).

Despite the scale of repression and the resulting political setback this meant to the president and his legitimacy, the regime did not run out of internal allies. The corporate branches of the ruling party, still representative of the primary political faction in Mexico, proved resilient and managed to unite behind the executive power. The CTM, CNC, the organised federal bureaucracy, the Federal Congress as well as every state governor supported and even applauded Díaz Ordaz' "hard hand" in addressing the student riots. However, restraint measures carried out by major political "representatives" did not prove very useful in containing the emergence and radicalization of a multitude of groups and organisations that, even before 1968, were no longer contemplating state institutions as legitimate means for political participation. Radicalised armed rural and urban organisations, some of them inspired by communist ideas, were undoubtedly fostered by the events of 1968.

I will argue in this chapter that the incapacity, and often, the unwillingness of the regime to reach these belligerent groups by peaceful means, led to a partial transfer of responsibility for internal political affairs to the armed forces and other civilian based intelligence and police agencies. This policy embraced an underground and cautious scheme where the military and the federal directorate of security (DFS) gained entire freedom of manoeuvre to halt any group that challenged or disputed the regime's legitimacy. On the public side of the strategy, the regime tried to work out some kind of agreement to temper the relationship with the students. A discourse of reconciliation and democratisation was put forward on every occasion president Díaz Ordaz and his successor talked about the student movement. President Echeverría went as far as promoting a "democratic opening" as a key element to achieve reconciliation². Yet, there was no connection between words and actions³. The repression against student demonstrations continued, and a silent but ruthless approach to implacably annihilate remnants of urban and rural guerrillas was put in motion. Not surprisingly, such a

² Rincón Gallardo, Gilberto. "*La estrategia de la muerte*". *Reforma*. December 01, 2001

³ US Department of State. Bureau of Research and Intelligence. "Mexico: Government Repression of Students Causes Crisis. June 18, 1971. NARA

policy of internal security reinforced budget allocations and personnel growth for both civilian security agencies and the armed forces⁴.

A second issue I will address in this chapter is the evolution of the political role of the military during this period and its impact on the overall system of civil-military relations. To illustrate this process, I will examine the role of the armed forces during three major internal security events that took place in the 1970s under the presidency of Luis Echeverría and José López Portillo. First, I will address the creation of a paramilitary group known as “*Los Halcones*” and the massacre of June 10th, 1971, known as Corpus Thursday. Second, I will look at the counterinsurgency policy employed by the armed forces in Guerrero to crush the armed groups of Genaro Vázquez and Lucio Cabañas. And third, I will look at the participation of the armed forces in the campaign against urban guerrillas’ especially the role they had in the persecution of the Communist League 23 of September.

The analysis of these three events suggests that the army turned more cautious when dealing with the so-called “enemies of the state,” especially in urban areas. It seems the military evolved in the direction of improving their capacity to comply with the commands of the Executive power while protecting their interests and moral capital from the kind of episodes that had damaged their public image. This was particularly clear in the attitude of the army after the bitter experience of 1968.

6.1 The policy of national security in the 1970s

When Luis Echeverría came to power, Mexico enjoyed a fairly stable economy, although it was clear the so-called Mexican Economic Miracle that had maintained high rates of sustained economic growth for decades was showing signs of exhaustion. The political arena was difficult for the reasons explained above; and his personal relationship with the armed forces had gone through hard times since the years as Interior Minister and Presidential Candidate. It is well known that the Secretary of Defence, General Marcelino García Barragán, had differences of opinion with Echeverría while he had acted as Secretary of the Interior, particularly during the peak

⁴ After 1968, the number of enlisted soldiers grew by 60 per cent. The army created two new battalions of parachutists, 15 of infantry and one more of military police, three regiments of cavalry and one of heavy transport. Cf. Reveles, José. “*Al Ejército lo han alejado del pueblo: Ramiro Bautista. “De sostén de la Constitución a puntal del sistema”*”. *Proceso*. No. 0111-05. December 18, 1978.

of the student crisis in 1968. It was also known that President Díaz Ordaz disciplined Echeverría⁵, on the request of General García Barragán, for his remarks against the armed forces during a campaign rally in the Universidad Nicolaita of Michoacán⁶.

With those antecedents, during the first year of his administration, Echeverría had to cope with a possible revival of the student movement and the increasing guerrilla activity in the highlands of Guerrero. The armed forces had gained experience in counterinsurgency, but no doubt the Lucio Cabañas and Genaro Vázquez's guerrillas represented a bigger challenge than their predecessors in Chihuahua or Morelos. To begin with, they were more numerous, had strong bases of social support and confronted the regime in a less naïve way than Arturo Gámiz or Jaramillo's organisations. At the same time, radicalized student organisations, disenchanted with the authoritarian character of the political system and encouraged by socialist precepts, became part or evolved into armed organisations in different parts of the country, and eventually attacked police and military posts.

As mentioned in the last chapter, many of these groups were Marxist-Leninist in ideology. In fact, some of their members got university education in the Soviet Union. There were even a handful of students who had received specialised military training in North Korea (Oikion Solano 2006). The general context of the Cold War and the Doctrine of National Security cultivated by US foreign policy since the 1950s cannot be removed from the general picture of Mexico's counterinsurgency strategy in the 1970s (Piñeyro 2007:73). This is also reflected in the language used to describe the nature of the discontented groups by intelligence officers of the DFS. Labels such as communists, Trotskyites, Marxists often accompanied the descriptions of these groups, which were also portrayed in derogatory terms. In fact, the expression "the enemies of the regime" was often used to refer to them⁷. However, internal factors seem to have played a greater role. According to intelligence dossiers of the armed forces and the DFS, the appeal of guerrillas was embedded in objective conditions of poverty, bitter disputes for

⁵ To consult Luis Echeverría's own recollection of this incident see Cárdenas Estandia (2008:95)

⁶ Cano, Arturo. "Crímenes de estado: La verdad sospechosa". *Reforma*. April 17, 2004.

⁷ "The frictions among groups of Tecpan de Galeana and the existence of Communists in Atoyac de Alvarez, has been used advantageously by the enemies of the regime to create a situation of unrest prior to the visit of the PRI presidential candidate. It has been assured that these groups are preparing a "surprise" during the visit of Mr. Luis Echeverría Alvarez to the region." This confidential memorandum is signed by the Director of the DFS, Mr. Fernando Gutiérrez Barrios. Dated March 4, 1970 DFS 10-26 L.17

ownership of land, and government abandonment in rural areas; whereas in the urban centres, they documented the unwillingness of the ruling class to open up the system towards more tolerant, democratic and participatory practices, while encouraging harsh, violent repression to opposition groups or individuals, specially among disenfranchised groups of society. In other words, the regime acknowledged that the causes behind the proliferation of guerrilla cells in the country were multivariate and mostly related to the incapability of federal and regional ruling elites to address specific economic and political demands of poorer and less developed groups of society.

Still, President Luis Echeverría and his successor, José López Portillo, chose to address a possible revival of the student movement in 1971 and the emergence of rural and urban guerrillas from the viewpoint of a policy of national security. In that sense, political conditions set off by the cold war were important as they helped both presidents justify the repression against those displaying open opposition to the political status quo. This was a point implicitly accepted by General Ramón Mota Sánchez, chief of staff of the Secretary of Defence during the Presidency of José López Portillo and President of the Defence Commission of the Senate (2000-2006). Mota Sánchez told this author that guerrillas in Mexico, specially the urban kind, were determined to take over political power. He added that it was urgently required to put the State in charge of stopping the progress of these radical groups and making them pay for their criminal behaviour. He also regretted the fact that this period of Mexican history had been named as the dirty war. For General Mota Sánchez, this term was incorrect, since Mexico had never experienced a military regime, and those who attacked legitimate political institutions should not be called freedom fighters, but ordinary criminals. (Mexico City, August 23rd 2005)

No doubt, the spread of guerrilla movements in the 1970s produced uncertainty and ambiguity towards the legitimacy of the regime, the legacy of the revolution, and the stable but undemocratic political order constructed by the ruling party after 40 years in office. Members of the PRI were the first to publicly label those involved in guerrilla actions as “traitors to the motherland”. They did so by spreading around a set of billboards that revealed the image of a woman dressed in national colours (red, white and green), apparently being threatened with death by a group of guerrilla men who were carrying knives and rifles (Castañeda 1992:57-59). This characterisation was

symptomatic of how uncomfortable the ruling elite felt with the emergence of subversion. It is also interesting to observe how this mood among the civilian ruling elite was rapidly absorbed by the high ranks of the armed forces, at least in their public discourse. Up to 1974, the secretary of defence, General Cuenca Díaz, kept denying the existence of armed movements in the country⁸. For him, guerrillas were in reality a group of bandits terrorizing the population for economic gain. In March, 1972, General Cuenca affirmed: “Lucio Cabañas does not have 75 guerrilleros under his command, as some rumours have stated. He is alone, and he is just a common delinquent running away from police forces. We don’t know where he actually is, but we are certain that some political group is trying to make him a hero. If he really had 75 men supporting him, he wouldn’t be free. I repeat, he is just running away”⁹. His statements to the press were rapidly reproduced by a multitude of regional and local newspapers and incorporated into the content of articles and editorials that bought the official story at face value (Mendoza-García 2006:150).

However, it is at this point when the inconsistencies between the public discourse of the president and the secretary of defence and their policy to address the issue of guerrillas started to show sharp contrasts. In spite of the fact that the army denied the existence of guerrillas in the country, it launched an ambitious program of modernization meant to develop counterinsurgency capabilities. From December 1970, the army renewed part of its light weaponry through the purchase of 7,150 machineguns from Belgium. The Air Force acquired 100 new aeroplanes and 34 helicopters armed with anti insurgency capability. It also refurbished 30 aeroplanes. According to the magazine of the Army and the Air Force, edited by the Ministry of Defence, this purchase of armament and equipment represented the highest investment of its kind since WWII¹⁰. Furthermore, soldiers’ salaries were raised by 15 percent at all levels of the army hierarchy and retirement plans for high rank officers were also promoted. More funding was poured in the army, especially into housing. New military hospitals and sports facilities were built and the infrastructure of the army was considerably improved¹¹. Special emphasis was placed on specialised training through cooperation with the US armed forces: 29

⁸ AIRGRAM Confidential Mexico 2882. US Embassy in Mexico City. “Defense Secretary Denies Existence of Guerillas in Mexico”. May, 1971. NARA

⁹ Excelsior March 24, 1972

¹⁰ Revista del Ejército y la Fuerza Aérea, Septiembre, 1974. Page 88.

¹¹ Revista del Ejército y la Fuerza Aérea, Septiembre, 1973. Page 43-44.

officers were sent to the School of the Americas in 1971, where they received counterinsurgency training¹² (Castellanos 2007:125).

Judging by the character of the equipment acquired by the armed forces and despite President Echeverría's rhetoric of democratic openness and dialogue or General Cuenca Díaz' denial on the existence of guerrillas, there are indications that his regime was preparing to wage a war against political dissidents, and that the planned response of the Mexican state to the incipient proliferation of rural and urban guerrilla groups was out of proportion to their strength or real threat to national security. According to estimations made by one of the masterminds of the counterinsurgency policy in Mexico in the 1970s, General Arturo Acosta Chaparro (once in a military prison accused of engaging in drug trafficking and genocide), at its peak in the 1970s, the membership of guerrilla groups in Mexico reached nearly 2,000 combatants. The largest group was the Communist League 23 of September with 392, followed by the Party of The Poor (PDLP) with 347 members¹³. If we compare this number with other guerrilla organisations in South America, like the Tupamaros in Uruguay (estimations vary from 4 to 6 thousand members), or Los Montoneros in Argentina (about 8,000 members), it is possible to see that the Mexican guerrilla was relatively small. This observation is also reinforced by the size of Mexico's population during this period, nearly 60 million in 1975¹⁴, while Argentina was 26 million¹⁵ and Uruguay 2.8 million¹⁶. We also have to recognise that the PDLP and the LC23SEPT rarely worked together and an alliance between the two groups, even when they tried, was never achieved¹⁷. Furthermore, their radius of action as well as social basis of support were different (Ramírez Salas 2006). In fact, urban guerrillas were never able to construct a solid base of popular support. They also had deep ideological differences¹⁸ and their short term goals did not allow them to merge into a single national organisation. The remaining combatants,

¹² Reveles, José. "Al Ejército lo han alejado del pueblo: Ramiro Bautista. De sostén de la Constitución a puntal del sistema" *Proceso*. December 18, 1978

¹³ According to the files extracted from the archives of the Federal Directorate of Security, it seems the relationships between Lucio Cabañas' group and urban guerrilla groups were often conflictive, specially with the Communist League 23 of September (LC23S) DFS 11-235-73 H-10 L1; DFS 11-235-74 H-237 L-7

¹⁴ CELADE, Boletín Demográfico, Año 26, N° 51, Santiago de Chile, 1993

¹⁵ CELADE, Boletín Demográfico, Año 23, N° 46, Santiago de Chile, 1990

¹⁶ CELADE, Boletín Demográfico, Año 23, N° 45, Santiago de Chile, 1990

¹⁷ DFS 11-235-73 H-277 L-2

¹⁸ DFS- 100-10-15-4 L8

that is nearly 1,200, were disseminated in 27 organisations that hardly knew each other or had worked together.

In any case and despite its weak numbers, the Mexican state directed the full strength of the armed forces and the DFS to combat the guerrillas. As his predecessors, President Echeverría opted to maintain the stability of the regime by force. This attitude suggests that the policy of security was basically defined by the civilian ruling elite on partisan grounds rather than through a professional appraisal of the possible danger dissident groups represented to the country's security.

The system assigned certain advantages to local and federal civilian agencies of security that justified their existence and budgets in relation to their efficiency in identifying and defusing political opposition. However, for the armed forces, the situation was not as clear as it was for their civilian counterparts. After 1968, the military remained reluctant to repress public demonstrations, especially in urban centres; as such actions deeply affected their corporate interest and moral capital. No doubt, this internal decision of the armed forces entered in conflict with the President's internal security policy. In the following section, it will be observed how the army solved this problem and the way it redefined its political role within the prevailing system of civil-military relations.

6.2 *Los Halcones* and the Corpus Thursday massacre

The primacy of partisan politics over the policy of internal security turned the DFS and the armed forces into the building blocks of an authoritarian dike against popular demonstrations and subversive movements. The military maintained the task of controlling rural guerrillas but it certainly lost some leverage on the urban arena. The urban centres were the natural field of civilian agencies of security, and this place was occupied by the Federal Directorate of Security. Still, the armed forces engaged in a considerable level of intervention through the formation of paramilitary organisations¹⁹. That was the idea that gave birth to *los halcones*, a paramilitary group whose mission

¹⁹ U.S. State Department. Intelligence Note. "Mexico: an emerging internal security problem?" 23 September, 1971. NARA

consisted of confronting by force left wing groups and demonstrations led by leaders linked to the 1968 movement²⁰.

In essence, this group was formed after 1968 by deserters from the armed forces²¹, federal police officers and general employees of the government of Mexico City. They were all formally enrolled in the Department for the Preservation of Parks, Gardens and Green Areas of the city council²². Not surprisingly, the architect of its formation was a member of the armed forces, Colonel Manuel Díaz Escobar, known as “*El Maestro*” (The Master), who was also the under-director of this local and apparently harmless government agency²³. According to released documents of the U.S. State Department, Díaz Escobar travelled to the U.S. to arrange its cooperation to instruct police officers on counterinsurgency tactics, criminal investigation, security, traffic control, communications, weapons and intelligence. Many of those who travelled abroad later became the chief instructors of *los halcones*²⁴. According to Tirado (1997), Rogelio Flores Berrones, Javier Castellanos, Moises Cuauhtémoc, José Lamberto Ponce Lara Francisco Villaseñor and Francisco Peres Moreles, all army officers, were among those in charge of supplying specialized training to the group (Tirado 1997:104-105)²⁵. In fact, there was a concern of the State Department that the US government would not like to be publicly implicated in the training of death squads the Mexican government was using to control dissidents²⁶.

In many ways, the creation of *Los halcones* mimicked the early years of the Federal Directorate of Security as it soon turned into a parallel agency in charge of monitoring and, if needed, repressing those considered as enemies to the regime²⁷. Even when the leadership of this group was headed by a public servant occupying a junior position in the local government of Mexico City, it was well known that his orders came directly

²⁰ DFS 15-1-71 H-274 L-11

²¹ DFS 35-24-72 H-1 L-1

²² DFS 21-438-71 H-1 L-1; DFS 21-438-71 H-2 L-1

²³ DFS 10-I-72 35-24 L-1 and DFS 13-I-72 35-24

²⁴ “Díaz Escobar met with DCM this afternoon and once again expressed appreciation for consideration shown him and his group during their visit to Washington last week. He said he was most impressed with the program arranged for him and with police training facilities available through cooperation with USG. Airgram. Police Training, January 1971. NARA

²⁵ Tirado’s information coincides with that found in intelligence dossiers retrieved from the files of the extinct Federal Directorate of Security. DFS 11-4-71 H-236 L.143

²⁶ Exdis. Us Training of Mexican Police as related to disturbances. Mexico 40B Mexico 232 Ci Mexico 227. NARA, June 23, 1971.

²⁷ DFS 11-4-71 H-234 L-143

from the Presidential Office. In fact, when President Luis Echeverría appointed Alfonso Martínez Domínguez as mayor of Mexico City, Colonel Díaz Escobar kept his job. This was confirmed in recent years when González Aleu (Director of General Services during the 1970's) explicitly revealed Echeverría's instruction to keep Díaz Escobar in charge of that department.

According to archives of the General Direction of Political and Social Investigations of the Interior Ministry (IPyS), the first mission given to *los halcones* took place in 1969 when they were sent to confront and disband a student demonstration headed to the Zocalo of Mexico City. The closeness between the student movement and some urban guerrillas helped the regime to define their mission. According to General Félix Galvan López, who was Secretary of Defence under the presidency of José López Portillo, *los halcones* were a paramilitary group, trained by army officers, specially created to combat the urban guerrilla, specifically the League 23 of September (Scherer García 1986:62). However, their span of operations went beyond such a mission. Following the archives compiled by the FEMOSPP, *los halcones* intervened violently on at least 11 occasions before the famous massacre of June 10th, 1971, also known as the Thursday of Corpus. Based on the testimony of Efraín Ponce Sibaja, a former member of *los halcones*, Colonel Díaz Escobar clearly indicated that the student demonstration scheduled on June 10th, 1971, should be disbanded at any cost²⁸. The central concern in regard to this demonstration was that it represented, in the eyes of the DFS, the most important attempt of the student leadership to revive its former strength.

The importance of this demonstration is also evidenced by the communication of the Secretary of Defense to Mexico's Highway Police Director on June 9th, 1971, requesting information on a possible arrival of students from different cities of the country in order to participate in the demonstration²⁹. The same day, General Cuenca Díaz requested the presence of extra medical personnel at the Hospital Militar as they were expecting wounded soldiers and police officers as a result of the student demonstration scheduled for the following day.

²⁸ DFS 13-I-72 35-24

²⁹ Sedena Box 54. DFS 170/ 57.

On June the 10th, *los halcones* set up a strategy to disperse the demonstration. The plan consisted on infiltrating numerous troop members into the protest to try to start brawls among the students to disrupt the cohesion of the group. Intending to ignite a 5,000 person march implied a bigger challenge and required a high level of coordination. But the paramilitary group did not excel that day. To begin with, the number of *halcones* participating in this event was so high that it became difficult, even for themselves, to distinguish each other from the students³⁰. The narratives of this event describe how at different points during the demonstration, brutal fights took place between *halcones* themselves. As the level of violence escalated, it forced the intervention of other police agencies, such as the secret service and agents from the DFS that were meant to play a secondary role. The cost of the commotion reached more that 100 casualties, 25 fatalities³¹ and more that 160 arrests. (Doyle 2004:2).

Based on the book of Julio Scherer —*Los Patriotas*— President Echeverría gave crucial orders during the operation, which suggests he was the one making the big decisions during the confrontation (Scherer García and Monsivais 2004). For instance, Echeverría ordered the transfer of captured students to military facilities for medical treatment and further interrogation. He also maintained control over the inflows of information to the press. Still, the high number of casualties and fatalities triggered a political scandal of national dimensions, forcing President Echeverría to take direct action. His first move to address the ensuing political crisis included the dismissal of Alfonso Martínez Domínguez, Mayor of Mexico City³². Echeverría also asked the Attorney General to carry out a special investigation of groups involved in the aggression. At all times, the regime affirmed that the mayhem was the result of brawls between students of different colleges and universities that were fighting for the leadership of the student movement³³.

The Governor of Mexico City stoically accepted his fate and kept in secret the details of his dismissal up until 1984, when Heberto Castillo, a journalist and historical leader of the Mexican Left, made public a conversation he had with Martínez Domínguez after

³⁰ DFS 11-4 L 132 271

³¹ US Department of State. Bureau of Research and Intelligence. "Mexico: Government Repression of Students Causes Crisis. June 18, 1971. NARA. According to the DFS, there were at least 30 fatalities. DFS 11-4-71 H-236 L-143

³² TELEGRAM AMCONSUL Chihuahua. Confidential 086. "June 10 and the resignation of Martínez Domínguez". Ref A) Mexico 3306 B1 Mexico 3371. June, 1971 NARA

³³ DFS 44-21 L-1 90

the violent events of June 10, 1971³⁴. According to Martínez Domínguez, Luis Echeverría was in fact the mastermind behind the massacre of June 10th, 1971. He explained how Echeverría had asked him to resign in order to defuse the political scandal and to save the image of the presidency. According to Martínez Domínguez, President Echeverría wanted to emphatically prove to left-wing students and groups that his government was not willing to play games with dissidents. Even when some sections of the armed forces were involved and certainly many of the *halcones* were former or on-leave army officers, the scandal of repression did not have an impact on the military as an institution. In fact, the idea of training paramilitary squads to repress the discontent in urban areas did work as expected. This time the corporate interest of the armed forces was not damaged and the President succeeded in preventing the student movement to have any further effect.

The group of *los halcones* was dissolved after the incidents of June, 1971. Some of its members joined the Federal Directorate of Security and the Federal Police, and those with a military background were reinstated in the armed forces. Colonel Díaz Escobar remained on the payroll of Mexico City's local government until he was appointed Military Attaché in the Embassy in Chile in 1973, right before General Augusto Pinochet's coup to unseat President Salvador Allende. Six years later, President López Portillo approved his promotion to Brigade General and his successor, Miguel de la Madrid, made Díaz Escobar Division General, the highest rank in the Mexican Army.

6.3 Guerrero's rural guerrilla

During the 1970s, the armed forces had a clear presence in rural regions as they fought against local guerrillas, primarily in the highlands of Guerrero. As mentioned above, rural guerrillas were far less ideologically known in comparison to the urban counterpart or the student movement. Their demands were more pragmatic and remained deeply rooted in the resentment of peasant and indigenous groups due to unresolved land disputes, endemic poverty and abandonment by local, state and federal institutions. There was also the idea that the corporatist peasant organisation, (The National Peasant Confederations) was an illegitimate channel for conveying their demands due to its allegiance to the ruling party and the president (Canabal Cristiani 1983:249). That was

³⁴ Castillo, Heberto. "La Matanza fue preparada por Luis Echeverría". *Proceso* February 18, 1984. This article was retrieved from DFS 21-100 009

the general position of the groups headed by Genaro Vázquez and Lucio Cabañas. Both had become a headache to President Echeverría since the years he had served as the interior minister of President Díaz Ordaz.

The guerrilla of Genaro Vasquez was located in the south east part of the state of Guerrero and its bases of support were in the towns of Atoyac de Alvarez, San Jerónimo, Tecpan, Coyuca de Benítez, Ilatenco and Tierra Colorada. Their political structure was known as the National Revolutionary Civic Association (ACNR). This organisation had three armed squads (CAL) named after Mexican heroes of the Independence War and the Mexican Revolution, such as Juan Alvarez, Vicente Guerrero and Emiliano Zapata. Their mission consisted of defending the movement from the armed forces, who represented an imminent threat; acquiring armament and economic resources for the guerrilla's survival as well as to punish (kill, rob or kidnap) those considered responsible for oppressing the peasants in the region under their control.

On the other hand, Lucio Cabañas created the Party of the Poor (PDLP)³⁵, whose armed branch was the Peasant Brigade of Justice, created in 1967³⁶. The party of the poor had a vast network of clandestine committees with direct links to peasant communities in the high lands of Guerrero. Cabañas and his followers took advantage of this organisation to teach and inform their social base of support about their values, ideals, and political objectives³⁷. According to documents of the DFS, the Peasant Committees of Fight (PCF)³⁸ aligned with Lucio Cabañas became very popular as there was at least one PCF in every town of Guerrero³⁹. The proliferation of guerrilla committees, even in small communities, reinstates the idea that Lucio's and Genaro's movements enjoyed a considerable amount of local support⁴⁰. They became the main source of food supply, information, and human resources to the guerrilla.

³⁵ DFS 180-10-16 4

³⁶ Exp- 11-235-73 H-10 L-1; DFS 13-XI-68 189 L-32

³⁷ Ramírez, Ignacio "Cuando el gobierno se inclinó por la represión y el autoritarismo surgió la lucha armada, dice Fierro Loza" *Proceso*. January 16, 1984

³⁸ DFS 10-16-4 L-5 313; DFS 100-10-10/4 L-8

³⁹ DFS 100-10-16-4-72 6 H 189

⁴⁰ DFS L38 233 30/Enero/71

The leaders of the two guerrillas had a similar background. Genaro Vázquez and Lucio Cabañas were elementary school teachers who had been involved for years in the representation of peasant interests in Guerrero at a grass roots level. Both leaders had been close to the Communist Party (PCM)⁴¹ and benefited from the formal and semiformal organisational structures created by this party in the rural areas of Guerrero⁴² (Trevizo 2002:286-287). The case of Vázquez was somehow different because the early years of his political life took place within the PRI, a situation that was often used by the regime and even the Mexican Left wing to undermine his authority as a guerrilla leader. Even when both groups evolved in the state of Guerrero, their organisations kept a high degree of independence from each other, at least organisationally speaking.

The way the armed forces addressed both movements similarly. It was clear that the military knew they had little room to manoeuvre as most of the local population shared their resentment of the regime with the guerrilla gunmen. It was natural for these communities to identify the armed forces as being the long arm of the executive power to impose its will in the country, even at the expense of the legitimate demands of peasants. According to Carlos Montemayor (1991;1997), widespread poverty and inequality as well as the abandonment of the federal and local governments of rural communities in Guerrero had caused a deep resentment over the years against the regime (Montemayor 1991; Montemayor 1997). This feeling was often manifested through local support of guerrilla movements. Montemayor concludes that as long as these conditions remain, the emergence of new guerrillas will be a common occurrence in Mexico's political life. This idea has points of coincidence with the way the armed forces understood the social dimension of the guerrilla.

According to a secret dossier written by Lieutenant Colonel Luis Mario Vargas Amezcua, the army identified two main elements harbouring the guerrilla movement in Guerrero. First, the Military acknowledged that the civil population was in great discontent with the federal government, due to poor living conditions and the abandonment by local and federal authorities. Second, the army was aware that the groups attacking military posts and kidnapping large land owners and businessmen in the region were being supported by the local population. Consequently, it was difficult

⁴¹ DFS 10-XI-67 100-10-1 379 L-28

⁴² DFS 8-XIII-67 100-10-1 L29 233

to acquire information on their whereabouts. In the face of this problem, Lieutenant Colonel Vargas proposed that the federal government should promote and assist local economic development as a way of diminishing the high levels of discontent and above all, to undermine the social base of the local guerrillas⁴³. Lieutenant Colonel Amezcua went so far as to propose that the Secretary of Defence should “talk to the President about the convenience of engaging into a far-reaching program of economic development in the region, with the idea of diminishing the discontent of the local population and, above all, the assistance of villagers to those that oppose the regime by illicit means”⁴⁴. This was definitely an unusual document, given that most of the material generated by the regime during this period was strictly concerned with finding the best way to combat these social movements as opposed to understanding their causes or demands.

Despite the professional opinion of the armed forces concerning the social and economic fundamentals and the possibility of a political solution to the conflict, the ruling elite ordered a military solution. Under such circumstances, the first two years of the 1970s presented a difficult scenario for the armed forces. First, they had to adapt their operation and infrastructure, as well as human resources, to combat the guerrillas on their own ground. This process of learning took time and numerous lives of soldiers with poor counterinsurgency training⁴⁵. In fact, the soldiers’ death toll went up sharply between 1970 and 1972⁴⁶. According to the FEMOSPP, army squads were easily ambushed by the guerrillas in hit and run confrontations. A. Bartra argues that between June, 1971 and September, 1974, the guerrilla killed 150 soldiers in combat (Bartra 1996:140). Former Lieutenant Roberto Ruíz Illescas, an airborne pilot whose mission consisted of flying the wounded out of Guerrero to military hospitals, explained to this author how the army was stunned by the number of soldiers killed and hurt as a result of hit and run confrontations with the guerrillas. He acknowledged that his chief commander explained that the Mexican army was not fighting against a handful of armed men hidden in the jungle. Instead, the war was against every small and medium

⁴³ Sedena Box 98 Exp 0292. August 24, 1972.

⁴⁴ Sedena Box 98 Exp 0292. August 24, 1972. Page 3

⁴⁵ In a confidential report signed by Lieutenant Colonel Luis Vargas Amezcua, to the Secretary of Defence, the Army recognised that it was necessary to reorganise its structure and deployment of troops in Guerrero, given the fighting capabilities of the guerrilla of Lucio Cabañas and Genaro Vásquez and the high number of soldiers and officers killed by the guerrillas. Sedena Box 98 Exp 0292. August 21, 1972. EMND S-3 OPS

⁴⁶ DFS 100-10-16/4 L-5 233

sized community that appeared to be offering food and shelter to the insurgents. (Xalapa, Ver. April 4th 2007)

Taking these elements into consideration, it seems the military realized that implementing a low intensity conflict strategy aimed at winning the hearts and minds of the population as a way to undermine the basis of social guerrilla support was not a feasible option given the urgency of the ruling elite to see concrete results of the counterinsurgency campaign. An intelligence report made by the US Embassy in Mexico City indicates that President Echeverría had privately expressed his dissatisfaction with the army's efforts to track down Genaro Vázquez and his group. The report even suggest that General Cuenca Díaz's days as Secretary of Defence were perhaps about to end⁴⁷. Under these conditions, the military implemented a full occupation of the state of Guerrero. In real terms, the military transferred one third of its total force, nearly 24,000 soldiers, to the region in conflict. With such a military power, it quickly overwhelmed entire communities and towns in search of guerrilla gunmen, and terrorised villagers while searching for suspects. The violation of rights that took place during this period is still a matter of research, and former president Echeverría has been indicted for genocide charges.

In many ways, the instrumentation of operation *Telaraña*, as it was named by the army, affected the two guerrilla groups differently. On the one hand, it pushed Genaro Vázquez's guerrilla away from areas where he enjoyed popular support. Vázquez's group moved to Tianguistango, Hidalgo and later to Mexico City, where they carried out some kidnappings and robberies to secure funds, and chances to negotiate with the regime. At the onset of the 1970s, Genaro Vázquez kidnapped Donaciano Luna Radilla, who was the president of the Bank of the South⁴⁸. The ransom for his release was set at half million pesos, which the family paid. On April 11, 1971, the Emiliano Zapata squad kidnapped Agustín Bautista, who was the son of a wealthy businessman of *El Paraiso*, Guerrero. The ransom requested by Vázquez was considered too high for the Bautista Family. Days later the guerrilla squad killed the victim. After this attempt, the urban cell of Vazquez's guerrilla moved towards bank robberies with little success. In fact, in July 1971, Mexico City police captured seven members of Vázquez's organisation during a failed attempt to assault the *Distribuidora Comercial Azteca's*

⁴⁷ Confidential Intelligence Report. Pol 22.8 Mex U.S. State Department. NARA

⁴⁸ DFS L38-236

vaults. Despite the setback, Genaro Vázquez kidnapped Jaime Castrejón Diez, who was not only a prosperous businessman, but also the Dean of the University of Guerrero.

The disappearance of an important member of Guerrero's society did not go unnoticed. It rapidly attracted the interest of the mass media that, quite successfully conveyed the idea that a well grown insurgency group was developing in the highlands of Guerrero and presented a difficult challenge to the armed forces and the political project of Luis Echeverría. At first, the guerrilla found this type of publicity quite helpful, as it allowed them to insert their social movement into the political agenda. However, it was soon exploited by the regime to portray Vázquez's guerrilla as a vulgar group of bandits using social and revolutionary banners to engage in criminal activities. In exchange for Castrejón Diez, Vázquez requested a sum of money and the release of a handful of guerrilla prisoners as well as a guarantee of their transfer to Cuba. President Echeverría agreed to Vasquez's demands and some days later Castrejón Diez was freed⁴⁹.

It is also interesting to note that despite the obvious confrontation between the guerrilla and the Federal Government, the secretary of Defense, General Hermenegildo Cuenca Díaz, denied at all times the existence of belligerent armed groups in the country. His statement came at a moment when thousands of soldiers were engaged in the task of torturing and killing peasants who were possibly linked to guerrilla activity in the region. In the light of the character of the military occupation in Guerrero, it seems possible to argue that President Echeverría's discourse of justice, economic development and democratisation was a tremendous contradiction with reality⁵⁰ (Cox 1985; Handelman 1997). In fact, it is possible to suggest that his discourse of reconciliation was more of a smoke curtain to conceal the brutal policy of national security he had put in motion.

By the end of 1972, the military strategy started to pay off. The setbacks already suffered by Genaro Vázquez' organisation in a number of frustrated kidnapping

⁴⁹ According to a reports generated by the DFS and the Armed Forces, President Luis Echeverría was kept informed about the progress of the counterinsurgency campaign in Guerrero. For instance, on May 8, 1971, General Cuenca Díaz informed the president that they had captured Sixto Flores, who was a close associate of Genaro Vázquez (DFS 100-10 16L 3H 133). Having stayed in different military prisons for months, Sixto Flores was freed as a part of the bargain Genaro Vázquez obtained for the liberation of Jaime Castrejón Diez.

⁵⁰ This policy included the release of student prisoners from the 1968 movement; lowering the voting age to eighteen; the recognition of non-official trade unions and even a moderate electoral reform that guaranteed a limited representation to leftist organisations in Congress.

attempts and bank robberies left them in disarray. Away from the centres of rural support, his organisation had little possibility of success. Vázquez died in car accident near the port of Acapulco, while trying to escape from a police and military chase⁵¹. After his death, the leftovers of the ACNR disbanded. Some of its members joined Cabañas' guerrilla and other militant organisations (Bellingeri 2003:158). In fact, it was after the death of Vázquez that the Cabañas' movement reached the headlines of regional and national newspapers, although his guerrilla had been present since 1967. Not surprisingly, Cabañas became the most wanted man in the country and the Federal Directorate of Security joined the armed forces in the manhunt.

Different from Vázquez's guerrilla organisation, the group of Lucio Cabañas decided to maintain their locus of operations within the highlands of Guerrero. Their survival remained depended on their local knowledge and the willingness of the local peasants to provide food to his group and to hide their whereabouts from the armed forces. His long experience and detailed knowledge of the region helped him elude the armed forces for a while, but his movement turned defensive and centred on survival. According to Cabañas' own recollection, the military had changed its strategy by centring its actions on harassing the population and building military positions along the paths and roads of the highlands of Guerrero, expecting that some day, the guerrilla would need to go through those paths⁵². According to Castellanos (2007), the army opened seventy paths that allowed the penetration of troops to the highlands of Guerrero (Castellanos 2007:124). They reinforced the policy of terror, and forced disappearances became a normal procedure of the army to undermine the guerrilla's base of social support⁵³. Such actions included incarceration and even random assassination of villagers, even entire families that had nothing to do with the guerrilla movement. For instance, the father of Genaro Vázquez, a well-known priista (member of the ruling party), was made prisoner along with 50 peasants in the region of Atoyac. They were all taken to a military camp in Mexico City for interrogation. Another case

⁵¹ DFS 100-10-16/4 L-4

⁵² This observation coincides with information from confidential dossiers of the Secretary of Defense, which it clearly explains to the Interior Minister, Mr, Mario Moya Palencia, the army's policy of surveillance of routes and paths that connect Atoyac and nearby regions in order to speed up the capture of Lucio Cabañas. Sedena Exp a/041/27 -1/041/27 On November 30, 1974. There is another official communication, this time to President Echeverría, from General Cuenca Díaz, where the Secretary of Defense informs the president on the hunt for Lucio, and the militarization policy in Guerrero. Sedena Exp A/041/27 November 30, 1974.

⁵³ Turati, Marcela. "Las rutas de la muerte". *Reforma*. December 10, 2001.

was the continuous harassment to all those with the family name Cabañas or Vázquez⁵⁴. Tita Radilla told this author that even those who were not necessarily related or even knew about Lucio and Genaro but bore the last name Cabañas or Vázquez were incarcerated London, March 30th, 2005). This information is consistent with the documentation found in the DFS files⁵⁵

It was during this phase of military occupation that the military accompanied the strategy of terror with humanitarian actions. In fact, a few months before the final days of Lucio Cabañas, he recognized that the armed forces had once more adapted the counterinsurgency strategy. Knowing that the guerrilla was weak and surrounded, the army enhanced social action in towns and villages under occupation. They often delivered food and provided medical attention to villagers in exchange for information. (Suarez 1976:3, Piñeyro 1978: Montemayor 1991). Conasupo⁵⁶ stores were also installed in the region of conflict as a way of providing cheap and subsidised products to communities. The regime was now aiming at winning the hearts and minds of the local villagers. In other words, by the end of 1973, the military had completed the mission of weakening the social support of the guerrilla, but this achievement did not make the counterinsurgency strategy less violent. Those detained by the armed forces under the suspicion of insurgency were not longer handed to civilian authorities, but imprisoned in army bases and later executed. (FEMOSPP 2006: V 70). In cases where the civilian authority detained some people presumably linked to the guerrilla, they were handed over to the armed forces after a day of interrogation⁵⁷. A former colleague of Lucio Cabañas, Simón Hipolito, described how he witnessed an army commander jokingly explain that those who had been detained were about to become sailors, which meant they would be drowned alive in the ocean. Others would become miners, meaning that they would be buried alive. According to José González González, who was chief assistant to General Renato Vega in the 1970s, he witnessed the execution of 180 people under the suspicion of belonging to Lucio's Guerrilla⁵⁸. Airplane pilot Captain Ruíz Illescas confirmed that such actions were a common occurrence during the counterinsurgency in Guerrero during the 1970s. The idea was to discourage others from joining the guerrilla. (Xalapa, Ver. April 4th 2007).

⁵⁴ Gerrero, Jesús. "Exigen castigo contra Acosta Chaparro". *Reforma*. October 2, 2000

⁵⁵ Exp- 1000-10-1 L32

⁵⁶ Company for Popular Subsistence (*Compañía Nacional de Subsistencias Populares*)

⁵⁷ DFS 100-10-16 L 9 H 26 y 44

⁵⁸ Ramírez, Ignacio. "No voy a Huir del país, dice José González González". *Proceso*. January 21, 1984.

The end of Lucio's guerrilla came with the kidnap of Senator Rubén Figueroa, candidate to the governorship of Guerrero, in May 30, 1974⁵⁹. The manhunt the military unleashed to rescue Figueroa did not match Lucio's calculations or capacity to replace those who died in confrontations with the armed forces. In fact, the temporary military withdrawal Lucio was expecting from the region as a way to negotiate the release of Figueroa never took place. On the contrary, the regime increased its military presence even more⁶⁰ and reinforced the civic actions of the armed forces in the nearby regions where guerrilla activity was not apparent (Piñeyro 1985:107). In the end, a military force of nearly 25,000 soldiers confronting a guerrilla movement of 40 men⁶¹ looked amazingly unequal. Figueroa escaped from his captors in the last days of October, 1974 during a confrontation between them and a special military squad⁶². Few days later, Lucio was finally ambushed by the armed forces and killed on December 2, 1974⁶³. The death of Cabañas only temporarily ended, the guerrilla in Guerrero.

In the following months, the military reduced their numbers, but their presence became permanent by the creation of new military posts and regiments in the region. In the eyes of the regime, the operation was a complete success and the army chief of the region during the campaign, General Eliseo Jiménez Morales Ruíz, was made Senator of the Republic by direct intervention of President Echeverría. The campaign to hunt down the remnants of Lucio's group continued until the end of the presidency of José López Portillo, this time under the command of General Jorge Grajales. Large numbers of military personnel remained in the region as way to prevent other guerrilla movements from emerging⁶⁴. The army also gained some leverage in local agencies of security through the inclusion of its personnel in key positions at local police bodies. For instance, once Rubén Figueroa won the governorship, he appointed Major Arturo Acosta Chaparro, who had participated in his liberation, as chief of all police corporations. One year later, the weekly magazine *Proceso* published an article

⁵⁹ DFS 80-85 L-1

⁶⁰ DFS 80-85-77 L-1

⁶¹ DFS 100-10-16 4 L-9

⁶² Ramírez, Ignacio. "No ofrecí financiar la guerrilla; preferí subsidiar al Partido de los Pobres" Ahorita hay detonantes en la sierra guerrerense. *Proceso*. January 23, 1984

⁶³ DFS 100-10-16/4 L-10 213

⁶⁴ Guerrero *¿Estado de Guerra?* *Proceso* 0005-03. December 6, 1976.

explaining how 400 people apparently related to Cabañas' organisation had been captured and never seen again in the region⁶⁵.

6.4 The urban guerrilla

In any case, the federal government failed to reach the kind of peace it expected after the final stand of Lucio Cabañas. As had occurred previous occasions, the excessive display of force against the rural guerrilla in Guerrero inspired the activities of other armed groups in the country. Still, the urban expression of guerrillas had different fundamentals from their rural counterpart. At the urban level, it seems the high degree of violence practiced by the military and the Federal Directorate of Security during the Student revolt of 1968 represented the breaking point in the way the urban guerrilla evolved in the following years. Most of the intelligence reports produced by the Federal Directorate of Security in the early 1970s highlighted how the discourse of student leaders had turned more radical and violent after the massacre of 1968⁶⁶. D. Treviso (2002:289) found that while repression discouraged collective action of the student movement and other radical groups in Mexico in the short term, it also stimulated contentious collective action by other social actors attuned with the student demands. These findings coincide with Goldstein's observations (1983), who explained in his comparative study on repression in nineteenth-century Europe that the use of excessive state-sponsored violence multiplied the number of clandestine groups of resistance. He showed that most repressive states appeared to have bred opposition that was just as rigid, brutal and obstinate (Goldstein 1983:340). This scholarship is also consistent with the findings of M. Loveman (1998) study on the emergence of human rights organizations in Chile, Uruguay and Argentina during the 1970s and 80s. Loveman argues that repression may induce certain types of collective action. (Loveman 1998:485)

In Mexico's case, the violent means President Díaz Ordaz employed to handle the conflict with the students was easily portrayed by the surviving leadership as the ultimate proof that political change could only be achieved through an armed revolution. This was also the vision of Sergio Hilares, one of the founders of the most important urban guerrilla group in the 1970s, known as The Communist League

⁶⁵ Moreno, Daniel. "Acosta Chaparro: un historial de impunidad" *Reforma*. September 25, 2000.

⁶⁶ Exp- 11-235-73-H-266 L21; DFS 11-235-73 H-3 L-2

September 23rd. Hilares explained in an interview published in 1977 that it was the harsh government repression against the students and other social organisations that pushed many young people to abandon a civilised way to confront the regime⁶⁷ (Reveles 1978). By 1972, the inflammatory discourse of student organisations and peasant leaders in Guerrero acquired clear dimensions of violence⁶⁸. These groups began to execute bank robberies, kidnappings of politicians and business people, especially in Guadalajara, Monterrey and Mexico City⁶⁹. These “expropriations”, as urban and rural guerrillas called them, represented their principal source of funding⁷⁰. The DFS always kept a tight control over these organisations. Even a superficial reading of its archives would clearly reveal the intention of its intelligence agents to accentuate the challenging discourse of the guerrilleros towards the political status quo, perhaps in order to overrate the DFS own capacity and scope.

Urban guerrillas mainly consisted of university students who were no longer trying to revive a movement of national dimensions, but confronting the regime in the streets through armed violence. That was the case of the Revolutionary Actions Movement (MAR)⁷¹, the League 23 of September, *Los Guajiros*, *Los Enfermos de Sinaloa*⁷², The Student revolutionary Front of Guadalajara, *Los Procesos*, *Los Lacandones*, the Red Brigade of Mexico City, The Arturo Gámiz Political and Military Committee, The Genaro Vazquez Brigade⁷³, among others that came together in 1973 to form the Communist League, 23 of September (LC23S)⁷⁴.

The LC23S became the most important urban guerrilla organisation in the country in the 1970s. It was particularly active in Guadalajara, Mexico City, Morelia and some parts of Veracruz. This group was organised in cells or squads with few links between each other to avoid being discovered by the regime’s forces. Their objective consisted of increasing the levels of political instability through direct confrontation with security forces and kidnapping of high profile politicians and businessmen. Among those

⁶⁷ Reveles, J. “*La historia de la Liga. La Guerrilla, en la derrota y la descomposición*”. Proceso. December 2, 1978

⁶⁸ DFS 11-235-74 H-134 L-11; 11-235-74 H-76 L-19

⁶⁹ DFS 11-235-73 H-2 L-2

⁷⁰ DFS 11-235-74 H-195 L-6; DFS 11-235-74 H-265 L-11; DFS 11-235-74 H-274 L-11

⁷¹ DFS 80-80-74 H-10 L1; DFS 11-201-73 L-11

⁷² DFS 11-235-74 H-51 L-6

⁷³ DFS 11-235-74 H-168 L-20

⁷⁴ DFS 11-235-74 H66 L19; DFS 11-235-74 H-257 L-11;

kidnapped were the businessmen Eugenio Garza Sada and Fernando Aranguren⁷⁵, and The British Consul in Guadalajara, Anthony Duncan Williams⁷⁶; in 1973⁷⁷, the father-in-law of President Echeverría, José Guadalupe Zuno in 1975. In the same year they failed to kidnap Margarita López Portillo, the sister of the PRI Presidential Candidate. These incidents generated extensive media coverage and elevated the level of concern of the federal government concerning these groups. As expected, concerns of the ruling elite were directly translated into more funds and power to the intelligence apparatus, the armed forces included.

The central government tackled the urban guerrilla according to pretty much the same recipe as previous interventions. However, this time the disproportionate use of force was combined with a careful management of intelligence. Their operations were better planned, but equally violent and merciless against the LC23S. Specialised military squads and the remnants of Mexico's City Secret Service joined the DFS with the objective of infiltrating the guerrilla movement. The sophistication of the intelligence apparatus contrasted sharply with the operative capabilities of the guerrilla. In fact, the regime's strategy was so effective that they even managed to infiltrate the highest echelons of the League.⁷⁸ Some of them were even involved in the selection of prominent citizens or business men susceptible of being kidnapped⁷⁹. According to Samuel Raza and Francisco Tejeda (*el paco*), both former agents of the DFS imprisoned in the Penitentiary of Santa Martha Acatitla, the level of infiltration the DFS reached into these movements was so high that detailed reports on plans and strategies of the LC23S were known by the agency in matter of days (Mexico City, November 10th, 2006).

No doubt, the Federal Directorate of Security represented the main government agency to address the urban guerrilla, while the army occupied a supporting position. According to Stephen Wager, former US military Attaché in Mexico City, the Mexican Army was indirectly involved in the hunting of urban guerrilla movements, such as the MAR, the Zapatista Urban Front and the LC23S (Wager 1992). They mainly helped through the exchange of intelligence with civilian police agencies.

⁷⁵ DFS 11-235-74 H-301 L-7

⁷⁶ DFS 11-235-73 H-91 L-4

⁷⁷ DFS 11-235-73 H78 L-2

⁷⁸ DFS file from 74/02/02

⁷⁹ Exp 11-235-74, H-36, L-6

As it occurred with the rural guerrilla, the security apparatus of the state succeeded in crushing the urban kind. By 1977, many of their members had been killed or incarcerated. The regime celebrated its great success against this kind of movement. As the urban guerrilla was clearly hit by the DFS, the regime's usual secrecy started to lose ground. For instance, the newly appointed secretary of Defence, Félix Galvan López, described the LC23S as a group of ordinary delinquents. He added that the armed forces were expecting a call from their civilian counterparts in order to exterminate the last traces of this criminal organisation. "For that purpose, the armed forces have specialised personnel. It won't take long for them to end this (the LC23S) extremist force"⁸⁰. One year later, Félix Galvan confirmed during the launching of a major antidrug trafficking operation in Sinaloa, Durango and Chihuahua (Condor I) that the LC23S was a "thing of the past," it no longer exists⁸¹.

Despite the regime's success in the combat against the urban guerrilla, it maintained the schizophrenic character of its policies. The newly elected president, José López Portillo, proposed to grant amnesty to those with a guerrilla record. The bill passed in congress and 244 former guerrilla members sought the protection of the law according to the President's offer between 1978 and 1982 (Esteve 1996:81). However, it is also true that civilian agencies of security took advantage of this initiative to locate those guerrilla leaders the regime had not been able to find⁸². In fact, 20 out of 244 were later assassinated by the intelligence apparatus. (Esteve 1996:82). This version has also been confirmed by Sergio Espino Verdin, an inmate in the federal penitentiary of Santa Martha, in Mexico City. Sergio Espino had been chief commander of the DFS during the 1970s and now faces charges for participating in the assassination and torture of Enrique Camarena Salazar. Espino told this author that he got the verbal order to identify all those requesting amnesty and then to have them killed. He regretted that the order came a bit late, in the sense that many had already returned to their homes, which made the elimination much more complicated. (Mexico City, November 10th, 2006)

By the time the structure and organisation of the urban guerrilla was coming to an end, the regime created another security agency, whose mission consisted of erasing all

⁸⁰ "El Ejército contra la 23". *La Prensa*, April 23, 1977.

⁸¹ "Veinte Mujeres y un General". *Proceso*, February 14, 1977.

⁸² Reveles, José. "Doble sentido de una amnistía, El gobierno olvida los delitos, el pueblo olvida los atropellos". *Proceso*. August 28, 1978

traces of subversive movements in urban areas. This agency is known as the White Brigade. Different from other secret agencies, the White Brigade had its headquarters within military premises in *El Campo Militar No 1*⁸³, and their operations were no less brutal and illegal than those practiced by *El Batallón Olimpia* or *Los Halcones*. President Luis Echeverría created the White Brigade during his last year in office. His successor, José López Portillo, maintained the character of the agency and appointed Javier García Paniagua, the son of General and Former Secretary of Defence, Marcelino García Barragán, as Director of the Federal Directorate of Security and one of the visible heads of the organisation.

The White Brigade was made up of the “best” agents from the DFS and the armed forces; however it was headed by two senior army officers: Luis Montiel López and Guillermo Alvarez Nahara. Additionally, its “board of directors” included the top leaders of civilian and military agencies of the country: Miguel Nazar Haro⁸⁴, second in command in the DFS, was appointed chief of ground operations; Lieutenant Colonel Francisco Quiroz Herмосillo, Chief of the Federal Military Police; Florentino Ventura, Chief of the Federal Judicial Police; Jesus Miyazawa, Chief of the Judicial Police of Mexico City; General Arturo Durazo Moreno, Transit Police Chief of Mexico City⁸⁵; Lieutenant Colonel Francisco Sahagún Baca, Chief of the Division of Investigations for crime prevention of Mexico City⁸⁶.

Despite the number of agencies involved and the mixture of civilian and military membership, the level of coordination they kept was noteworthy. To begin with, they all maintained the thesis in the press that the LC23S was not a guerrilla movement, but a bunch of delinquents taking advantage of respectable social banners to commit their crimes⁸⁷. Some of them went as far as declaring they would follow the *guerrilleros* as dogs follow prey⁸⁸. The carelessness in the use of language of some of the visible

⁸³ “*La Brigada Blanca contra una familia*” Proceso 055-28, November 21, 1977

⁸⁴ DFS 009-0LL-014. 10-08-1979

⁸⁵ All of these men, except for Florentino Ventura who committed suicide in 1984, ended up being prosecuted by federal and military courts for felonies connected to drug trafficking (General Francisco Quiroz Herмосillo), illegal enrichment (Arturo Durazo Moreno), genocide (Miguel Nassar Haro) and kidnapping (Jesus Miyazawa).

⁸⁶ See Ramírez, Ignacio. “*No voy a Huir del país, dice José González González*.” Proceso. January 21, 1984.

⁸⁷ Arturo Durazo Moreno, the Chief of Mexico City Transit Police, declared the LC23S was a group of delinquents that called themselves *guerrilleros* to rob banks and businesses as well as to kidnap wealthy and respectable citizens. “*8 millones en 4 asaltos*” Proceso. February 21, 1977.

⁸⁸ “*Durazo seguirá como perros a los Guerrilleros*”. Proceso. April, 25 1977.

leaders of the White Brigade indicates the level of freedom and impunity it enjoyed to comply with its mission. It was clear the agency had no limits in their range of operations and it was known that those captured by the White Brigade were likely not to be seen alive again. According to a study made by the CNDH and released in 2001, there was enough information to indicate that the White Brigade was responsible of 24 forced disappearances during the second half of the 1970s and early 80s⁸⁹. It was common to find the dead bodies lying in the streets in some of the neighbourhoods where the regime suspected the presence of guerrilla activity (Sierra Guzmán 2003). On many occasions, the police announced that they had found the bodies of alleged members of the LC23S, who had apparently committed collective suicide. Still, the press announced that they all had “*el tiro de gracia*” (shot in the forehead)⁹⁰. In Mexico City, local police kept declaring they’d found dead the presumed leader of the urban Guerrilla, known as *El Piojo Blanco*. However, the security agencies never showed pictures of the body and often requested those who could have witnessed the shootings, neighbours or bystanders, to keep silent on the issue⁹¹. It was a macabre tactic from the White Brigade to prevent others to continue or join the urban guerrilla (Sierra Guzmán 2003: 105).

By 1978, when the LC23S was in complete disarray, two of its former members, José Dominguez and Hector Torres, declared that their movement had disappeared completely. Still, the regime, and Miguel Nazar Haro, also known as “the master of torture”⁹² and by that time Director of the DFS, kept fuelling the myth of the Communist League as a way to combat other social organisations⁹³. Despite the high number of abuses committed by the White Brigade and the armed forces in their crusade against the guerrilla, there were few international voices that denounced the blatant violation of human rights in Mexico. One of these voices that managed to put some pressure over the Mexican government was Amnesty International. Through its interventions, it achieved the release of some prisoners from the Military Camp. Still, the US Government proved to be an accessory by keeping silent about the operations of

⁸⁹ Turati, Marcela; Taniguchi, Hanaco and Jiménez, Gerardo. “*Acaparan DFS y Ejército casos de desapariciones*”. Reforma. November 29, 2001.

⁹⁰ “*Descabezan otra vez a la liga*”. Proceso 0036-20. July 11, 1977

⁹¹ “*Guerrilleros mueren varias veces*”. Proceso 0035-16 July 4, 1977

⁹² Marín, Carlos “*Un maestro de la tortura, dueño y señor de la Brigada Blanca, al amparo del gobierno*”. Proceso. April 10, 1982

⁹³ Reveles, José. “*Dos prófugos acosados afirman: La liga espantajo para la rebelión*” Proceso. November 27, 1978.

the White Brigade and other security agencies throughout this period. This position was particularly contradictory given President Carter's foreign policy in terms of the promotion of democracy and the protection of human rights. Years later it became known that Miguel Nazar Haro, the civilian leader of the White Brigade and Director of the DFS, was also a key informant of the CIA and the FBI⁹⁴. In fact, he was protected by both intelligence agencies when a US federal prosecutor, James Kennedy, tried to bring Nazar Haro to trial for his suspected participation in a criminal organisation involved in car theft in California⁹⁵.

6.5 Conclusion

President Echeverría, as well as President López Portillo, opted to deal with some extreme forms of political dissent by treating them as matters of national security. Echeverría did it deliberately, knowing that neither the urban nor the rural guerrilla had the capacity to overturn the regime by force. There is not enough evidence to say that those groups represented a real threat to national security. In contrast, López Portillo just let the inherited policy of internal security continue under the command of the experts, meaning the Director of the DFS and the Secretary of Defence. It seems he did not have the nerve to go into the details of the counterinsurgency policy. This is not to say that he was unaware of the kind of operations the DFS and the armed forces were performing. In his memories, López Portillo wrote "the LC23S is losing blood. Almost everyday some of its members fall. The brigade created to address them and Durazo are doing a good job" (López Portillo 1988:594). I suggest both Echeverría and López Portillo managed to make political dissent a national security issue, because Mexico had an authoritarian regime and the system of civil-military relations, as it was designed after the revolution, allowed the president to send the armed groups to combat those he considered as enemies. This power of the executive led to a policy of national security that did not need to be explained to the population or be endorsed by it. On the contrary, most of its operations, such as the entire military occupation of the state of Guerrero in the 1970s to crush Lucio Cabañas' and Genaro Vázquez's guerrillas and their social

⁹⁴ "Nassar, Protegido por una ley de EU, como agente encubierto de la CIA; Kennedy, su acusador, saldrá" Proceso No. 0283-06. April 15, 1982 and Marín, Carlos. "Los cargos en su contra en Estados Unidos, aún vigentes". Proceso, December 24, 1988

⁹⁵ Marín, Carlos. "Los cargos en su contra en Estados Unidos, aún vigentes". Proceso, December 24, 1988

bases of support, were explained by the regime to the population in terms of combating criminals, drug traffickers and kidnappers.

Therefore, military operations in rural and urban areas were not aimed at containing or controlling the guerrilla. Rather, they were sent with the mission of annihilation or erasing any trace of such a social movement, using whatever means available, without any respect for constitutional guarantees. Merciless as this process was, the armed forces proved loyal to the president, following orders even at the expense of risking their corporate interest and moral capital. They also proved to be an institution capable of adjusting to the circumstances and able to understand the political needs of the president. In that sense, the violent episodes of the 1970s also show the capacity of the armed forces to adapt to new political conditions. This sensibility gave a key to the executive power, as it allowed the incumbent president to keep on delegating governing responsibilities to the armed forces without having to confront great internal opposition from political parties, the public opinion or the civil society as it still occurs now.

Chapter 7. From Insurgency to Terrorism: Chiapas, the EPR and the Shortcomings of Mexico's new Democracy.

Introduction

The decade that followed the annihilation of the urban and rural guerrilla movements witnessed a drastic change in the agenda of national security. General Mario Acosta-Chaparro, one of the masterminds of the extermination, wrote in 1990: "Up to 1981, intelligence and security agencies in charge of maintaining control over insurgency performed an effective neutralization. Their results were noteworthy and admirable, as nearly all guerrilla groups that represented a serious problem since 1973 up to 1977 were exterminated..."(Acosta-Chaparro 1990:3). Thus, the risk of insurgency had been erased, but organised crime, particularly in the form of drug trafficking, replaced it with vigour in the following years. For the armed forces, their counterinsurgency mission remained uneventful for nearly two decades, until the Chiapas uprising in 1994 and the appearance of the Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR) in 1996 stormed once more into the political realm.

Concurrently, the political institutions of the country experienced serious transformations as a result of a slow but consistent process of democratic transition. Along with this process came the deinstitutionalisation of many of the authoritarian practices that had characterised the PRI regime for decades, especially in the field of intelligence and public security. Since the onset of the Presidency of Miguel de la Madrid in 1982, it was clear that the ruling class no longer trusted civilian police bodies to contain the growth of organised crime, while the task of combating political enemies was no longer seen as a priority. Therefore, as the process of democratic transition dismantled the civilian apparatus of political repression, the military took over, gradually but consistently, the mission of policing the new menace: drug trafficking.

In that sense, the national and international urgency given to the war on drugs rendered the armed forces resistant to the changing force of democratisation. This was basically the rule until a political party different to the PRI won the presidency in July 2000. The arrival of Vicente Fox to the presidential office set up, arguably, the biggest challenge to the military's corporate interest since the expropriation of the oil industry in 1938. It revived the clamour of individuals, human rights organisations and intellectuals to dig deep into the record of abuses and harsh violations of human rights that different agencies of security, including the armed forces, committed against those that once were considered enemies of the regime and its institutions, particularly during the 1970s or the so-called dirty war.

This chapter tackles two different but connected issues that shape the system of civil-military relations in Mexico and are of great help in understanding the counterinsurgency policy and the current political role of the armed forces. First, I will address the way the army in Mexico modified its internal structure of promotions, deployment and training of troops as a way to improve the containment of insurgency, particularly in the south east region. After 1994, it was clear that the strategy of annihilation to control incipient guerrilla organisations could no longer be applied. This change of mentality seems to be the result of democratisation, increasing activism of human rights organisations and the intense international media coverage of Mexico's politics.

Second, I will look at the informal mechanisms the army has at its disposal to defuse any institutional attempt to review its past record of abuses and violations to human rights that could represent a direct damage to their corporate interest. On this issue, I analyse the dossiers presented by the National Commission of Human Rights (CNDH) in 2001 and the Special Prosecutor of Social and Political Movements of the Past (FEMOSPP) in 2006 concerning the violations of human rights perpetrated by state agencies during the dirty war.

In the light of the results of both studies and the fact that they have had little impact, I will argue that the Mexican military is an institution with the capability to protect its corporate interest, even in the midst of adverse or changing political conditions. It does so by adding to its current tasks new policy responsibilities assigned by the ruling elite, assuring to itself the support and protection of the executive power in return for these

services. In consequence, I suggest democratisation in Mexico strengthened the political leverage of the armed forces at different levels of the structure of political power. Evidence indicating this is the way the military managed to force the ruling elite, the executive power included, to keep their record on human rights away from public scrutiny. This situation is consistent with the type of exclusive subordination of the armed forces, and poses serious questions regarding the possibilities of Mexico's democracy to consolidate in the upcoming years.

7.1 The new era of guerrilla activity in Mexico

With the annihilation of the rural and urban guerrilla, the armed forces entered a period of relative calm during the 1980s. This situation was reflected in terms of minimum personnel growth and modernization of equipment. Furthermore, the military shifted gradually their counterinsurgency role to concentrate on combating drug trafficking organisations as requested by President De la Madrid and later reinforced by his successors. In fact, the declaration of war on drug trafficking in 1980, by US President Ronald Reagan, in what is known as the "War on drugs," dominated the dynamics of the bilateral relationship between the two countries until the global war on terror took the limelight away from drug trafficking.

At the same time, the majority of survivors of insurgency groups of the 1970s were either absorbed by the regime or by opposition parties. That was the case of many of the members of the Party of The Poor (PDLP), who joined the PRI or the PRD (Ramírez Sevilla 2006). Tita Radilla, a Human Rights activist, told this author that some of those who had accompanied Lucio and Genaro in their social struggles were currently engaged in party politics, particularly within the PRD. The few guerrilla cells that remained active entered into a period of latency and preparation throughout the 1980s. That was the case of the National Liberation Forces (FLN), an armed militia founded in Monterrey by students of the University of Nuevo León. This was the group that years later became the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN).

Like many other contemporary guerrillas, the FLN sought to command a revolutionary struggle that, in their own words, was meant to finish off the reign of the bourgeoisie; unchain the nation from "foreign" domination; set up the dictatorship of the proletariat and start the construction of socialism in Mexico (La Grange and Rico 1998:226). The

FLN was inspired by two key political events of the 1960s: the triumph of Castro's Cuban Revolution and the repression unleashed by President Díaz Ordaz against the students in 1968. Not surprisingly, it faced the fierce repression of the regime commanded by the DFS and the armed forces in the 1970s. In fact, the FLN came to the verge of extinction in 1974, when the army captured Napoleón Glockner, who was one of its founders. Once in captivity and under torture, Glockner revealed FLN positions in Chiapas and Oaxaca that were later raided by the armed forces, killing many of its members, including the leader and founder of the movement, Cesar Yañez.

Those who were not discovered or managed to escape moved to Veracruz and Tabasco, where they found refuge and the chance to regroup. The remnants of this organisation eventually returned to Chiapas in the early 1980s. This time, the FLN established alliances with indigenous communities and some sectors of the Catholic Church that sympathised with Liberation Theology (Wager 1994; Tello Díaz 1995:55-97). It seems the combination of covert guerrilla activity, a receptive community and the protection of the Church made the FLN less likely to become the target of the security apparatus.

For the FLN in Chiapas, the end of the 1980s and the early 1990s represented a period of preparation, where they effectively managed to gain a solid base of social support among the poor and forgotten indigenous communities of Chiapas. Throughout those years, the FLN constituted the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) and in January 1994 they broke into the national scene by taking under control four municipalities, including the city of San Cristóbal de las Casas, the third largest of the state. In their initial press release, the EZLN denounced the illegitimate and authoritarian character of the political system. It also declared war to the Mexican government and the armed forces.

The military response to the EZLN was fast and effective. By putting into practice the DN2 Plan, the army rapidly retook the region under control of the Zapatistas and forced them to retreat to deep regions of the tropical rainforest in Chiapas. The initial mobilization included 12,000 soldiers. It was the largest of its kind since the times of Lucio Cabañas and Genaro Vázquez. Still, the country and its institutions had changed a lot since the last stand of Lucio Cabañas in 1974 and it was clear the guerrilla and the political elite were well aware of this transformation. The political system had started to democratize, if slowly. The ruling party had accepted electoral defeats in two

governorships and an increasing number of seats in congress were being occupied by opposition parties. A similar trend occurred at local level. Key municipalities, especially in the northern part of the country, fell under the control of the right-wing National Action Party. That was the case in Tijuana, Ciudad Juárez, and Piedras Negras. In other words, the country was no longer dominated by a single political voice. Concurrently, the regime had also dissociated itself from the organisation of elections, leaving this responsibility to a citizen led electoral institution. The security apparatus of the state had also suffered drastic transformations. The Federal Directorate of Security was no longer in place, having been dissolved by President De la Madrid in 1985 after a series of corruption scandals and international pressure.

The former strength of the intelligence apparatus and its close coordination with the armed forces were also a thing of the past. The faulty Mexican record in the war on drugs had exhibited the shortcomings of national police corporations as well as their close links with the criminal organisations they were supposed to combat. The literature on the link of the criminal underworld and the Mexican public sector is quite extensive (Kitchens 1967; Nacif Mina 1986; Vanderwood 1986; Toro 1995; Builta 1997; Rochlin 1997; Schulz 1997; IMECO 1998; McRae 1998; Chepesiuk 1999; Jordan 1999; Montaña 1999; Rochlin 1999; Eskridge 2001; Piccato 2001; Shelley 2001; Marin Marin 2002; Willoughby 2003). They appeared in the eyes of the population as very efficient in repression, torture and intimidation of political dissidents, but unable to counteract the growing power of drug cartels. It seems clear that by the time the Zapatistas entered the national stage, the regime was undergoing a process of deinstitutionalization of its authoritarian political structures that affected electoral institutions, the informal powers of the executive power, and the efficiency of civilian agencies of security.

On a different front, the regime had also lost its hegemony over the mass media. The privatization of Imevisión, the national TV network during the first years of Carlos Salinas' Administration left the regime without its former channels of propaganda, control and censorship. Even if some local and national media were still compliant, the international mass media remained impartial towards certain issues, such as those related to the Zapatistas. In fact, CNN was one of the first networks that managed to reveal the excess use of force practiced by the armed forces during the initial days of their confrontation with the EZLN. In addition to the independent media, the violence

was vigorously denounced by national and international NGOs. Mexico's civil society had emerged vigorously since the earthquakes that devastated Mexico City in September 1985. (Fox 1994:165; Hallin 2000).

Not surprisingly, the impact of the news and the press narratives that showed the carnage in Chiapas deeply affected public opinion. The image of a modern and economically vigorous Mexico that Carlos Salinas had meticulously and patiently constructed during five years in the presidency broke down abruptly with the emergence of the EZLN. For the corporate interest and moral capital of the armed forces, this scenario set some key questions to their role in an era of global communications, and the transition to democracy. The immediate result was obvious. The popularity and acceptance of the cause and objectives of the EZLN went up in the public opinion, while the image of the armed forces significantly dropped¹. In the face of international pressure and the positive image of the EZLN in the public eye, President Salinas ordered the army to cease fire and retreat as a sign of good faith to the Zapatistas. According to Sierra-Guzmán (2004), the presidential order to stop the attack to the EZLN was seen by the citizenry and by a large sector of the armed forces as the acceptance that the Mexican government had gone too far in the use of violence against defenceless indigenous people, most of them armed with fake guns and rifles made of wood and plastic.

It has also been suggested that the military understood the unilateral decision of the president to cease fire as a clear political intention to divert some of the damage caused to his image towards the armed forces. This was not the first time that institutions or individuals had to admit their fault for manifest policy failures to save the executive power from opprobrium. Within the armed forces, there was the idea that they were being used by President Salinas as scapegoats for the mistakes and incapacity of the civilian ruling elite to address the abandonment and endemic poverty Chiapas had suffered for generations. This was the impression of General Ramón Mota Sánchez, former federal deputy and senator. He explained that politicians are usually unable to address situations of crisis. In those circumstances, they often call the armed forces to solve a particular problem and when things do not run as they expected, they blame the military for such mistakes. Congressman and on-leave army general Jesús Esquinca

¹ Sanjuana, Martínez. "Antes que preocuparnos por la imagen de Mexico, hay que hacer correcciones de fondo: Embajador Pichardo. Proceso. February 21, 1994

went yet further. He accepted during a session at congress that sending the military to solve the conflict in Chiapas was a political error of former president Salinas. He added that in the past, the army had been irresponsibly used to counteract the insurgency, when political solutions should have come first.²

It is documented that the military was aware of the incipient guerrilla action in Chiapas and had informed President Salinas of this issue in time (Wager 1994; Doyle 2004). In fact, less than nine months before the seizure of San Cristóbal by the Zapatistas, the army discovered a training camp of the guerrilla in a place called Las Calabazas where there was even an exchange of fire with the EZLN (Tello Díaz 1995:221-235). This information was corroborated by Minister David Paredes, who actually talked with General Miguel Leyva, who at the time served as Chief of the Military Zone of Rancho Nuevo, located just a few miles away from one of the strongholds of *El Zapatismo*. According to Minister Paredes, General Leyva explained to him how he was amazed and in deep disbelief when he got the order from the Secretary of Defence to retreat from the zone when it was clear a well armed and organised guerrilla was active. (Xalapa Ver, May 14th, 2008). General Leyva was not an ordinary officer; he was one of the 15 high ranked army officers who had received specialised counterinsurgency training at the US-managed “School of the Americas” in Panama³. On top of that, it was known that the Armed Forces of Guatemala sent President Salinas an intelligence dossier of the EZLN that included a detailed analysis of its structure, social bases of support and objectives (Sierra Guzmán 2003:123-124).

Despite the evidence, the government chose not to address the guerrilla in Chiapas with the old recipe of overwhelming military force. It seems plausible to argue that President Salinas was trying not to contaminate the political environment with the issue of guerrillas prior to the inclusion of Mexico in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). He also did not want to take the limelight away from the presidential campaign of Luis Donaldo Colosio, who was actually experiencing a slow start. On President Salinas’ own admission, he was aware of the existence of a guerrilla-like organisation that could have been involved in training peasants and indigenous people

² Sierra, José Luis. “*Fuerzas Armadas “La crítica lealtad”*”. *Reforma*. December 17, 1995.

³ Mexico is now the country which sends the greatest number of forces to United States military schools. *La Jornada*. August 16, 2008. (Newspaper note translated by NUEVO AMANECER PRESS and available at http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/usa/greatest_num_aug98.html)

in the region. However, he did not know the size of the movement, its intentions, or its supporters (Salinas 2000:809-822). Still, making full use of the available information, he reinforced the investment in infrastructure as well as the provision of public services in the region. The idea behind the presidential strategy was to undermine the appeal of the guerrilla by gaining the hearts and minds of the population. Therefore, addressing the social and economic needs became a must for Carlos Salinas.

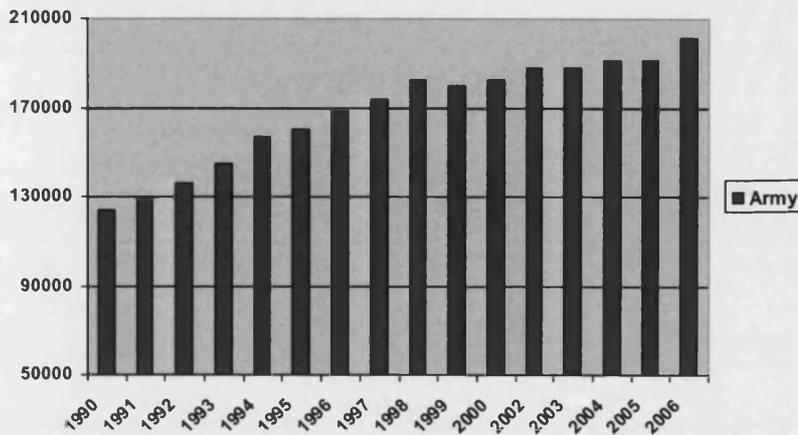
In many ways, President Salinas' decision to address the guerrilla in Chiapas through peaceful means was an indication that the armed forces in Mexico would once more need to upgrade their capability to comply with the orders of the executive power. Under such conditions, the transformation experienced by the armed forces in the 1990s regarding counterinsurgency can be traced by looking at two different spheres. First, the armed forces, and specially the army, increased the size of its force as well as the manner it has been deployed throughout the Mexican territory. This reorganisation has had repercussions on their record on human rights and their political stance towards this issue. Second, the army shifted its internal structure of promotions and specialised training to privilege their counterinsurgency role. In other words, it made it easier for officers with experience in counter-guerrilla activities to move up the ranks of the army hierarchy.

7.2 Human rights and the national distribution of army force

Since 1994, the army chose to concentrate its force in states where they believe the emergence of guerrilla movements were more likely. For instance, six years before the emergence of the EZLN, there were 1,055 soldiers stationed in the entire state of Chiapas. By 1994, this number climbed to 4,000 regular troops in that state and nearly 15,000 more in special operations, nearly 20 percent of the army's operative force (Piñeyro 2002). A similar case occurred in the state of Guerrero. The army had 3,000 soldiers deployed in that state in 1998, but by 2006 that number trebled. The next case that confirms this trend is Oaxaca, where the Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR) has one of its main centres of activity. In 1997, Oaxaca had nearly 1,500 soldiers deployed in the state. By 2006 the number reached 5,700. Furthermore, as the army increased its size throughout the 1990s (Table 7.1), it also increased its infrastructure in the regions where guerrilla activity was present.

Figure 7.1

Army personnel 1990 -2006



Source: Secretary of Defence. IFAI, petition 0000700021805

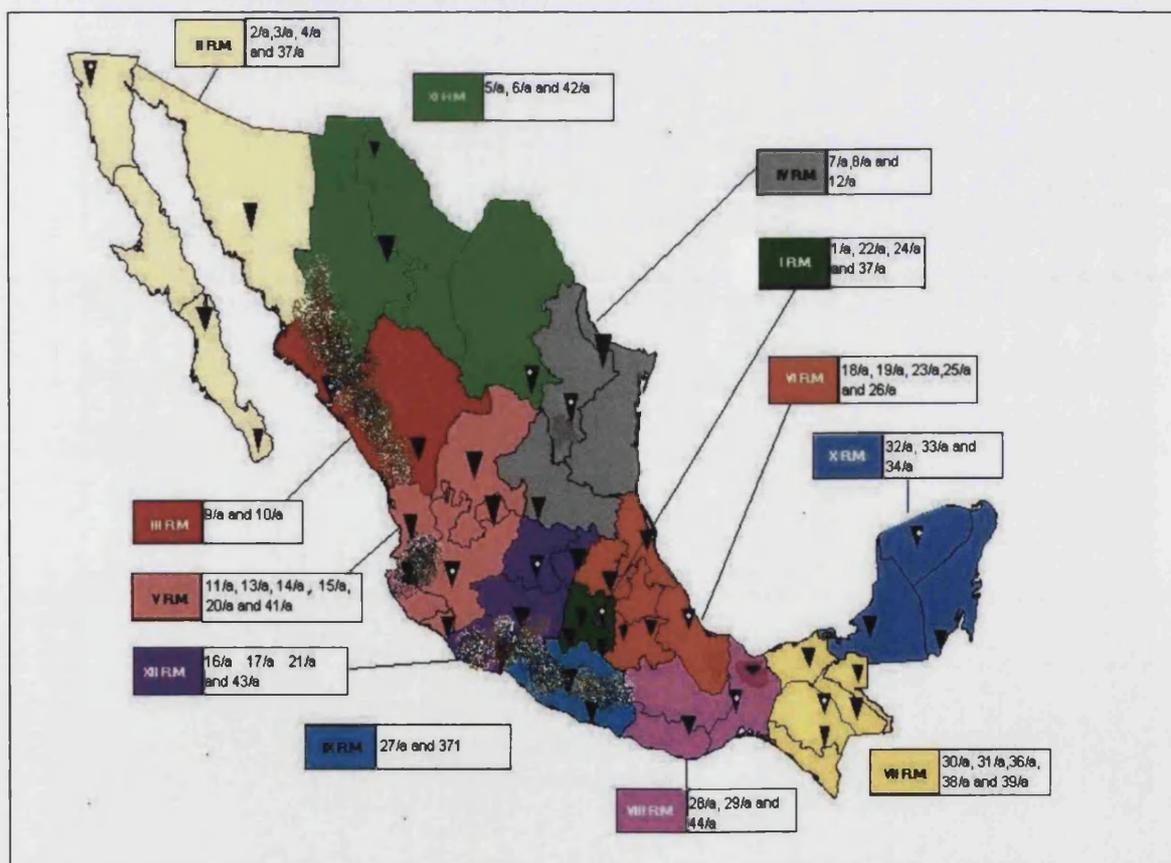
For purposes of territorial organisation, the army has divided the Mexican Territory into Military Zones and Military Regions. Until the early 1990s, most of the states of the Mexican Federation had a single military zone. However, as the agenda of risks on national security acquired more relevance, the army decided to create more zones to improve its control over Mexican territory. By 1991, there were 34 army zones; that number increased to 44 in 2004. At the next level of territorial organisation, the army split up into twelve Military regions, which basically consist of 2 to 7 military zones under a single command. The following map shows how the concentration of army regions and zones is quite noticeable around Mexico City and the surrounding states. Between the Estado de Mexico and Mexico City, the military has more than one hundred thousand troops under the direct supervision of the Secretary of Defense and the army general responsible for Region number 1. This region also concentrates the administrative structure, the intelligence apparatus and the largest part of their educational system. However, it is also noticeable that in Guerrero, Chiapas and Oaxaca, the concentration of military personnel is higher than in other states. For instance, the 7th Military Region includes the states of Chiapas and Tabasco. Both states together contain five military zones, three in Chiapas and two in Tabasco. This is the

military region with the highest number of military zones; two of them were created after the Zapatista uprising in 1994⁴.

Taking into consideration the way the armed forces allocate their force throughout the territory, it is possible to identify three focal points of concern. According to the army's own statement, the states that contain the highest guerrilla activity are: Chiapas, Estado de Mexico, Guerrero, Oaxaca and Puebla. Altogether, they hold 25 percent of the army's manpower. The second priority is given to states that host the headquarters, so to speak, of the so called drug cartels. These states are Baja California, Baja California Sur, Sonora, Chihuahua, Nuevo León, Tamaulipas, Sinaloa and Michoacán. Altogether, they account for 19 percent of the army's total force.

Figure 7.2

Map of the distribution of army regions and zones in Mexico 2008



Source: Map constructed using information retrieved from the website of the Secretary of Defense (www.sedena.gob.mx) and The National Drug Control Plan from the Attorney-General's Office (PGR 2002).

⁴ Furthermore, in 1997 the army substituted the Task Force *Arcoiris* with a new group named Task Force Rapid Intervention, consisting of 10,000 soldiers highly trained in counterinsurgency operations. Aranda, Jesús. "Se intensifica en el Ejército la creación de grupos de elite" *La Jornada*. October 16, 2000

The third priority corresponds to states where the production and processing of illegal drugs is concentrated. On this issue, the army identifies six states: Chihuahua, Sonora, Sinaloa, Jalisco, Nayarit, Michoacán, Oaxaca, Guerrero and Colima. Nearly 15 percent of the army's manpower has a permanent post in this set of states. By looking at the numbers, it seems clear that the strategy of the armed forces to contain the expansion and progress of the guerrilla consists in increasing its physical presence. The idea is to erect a military fence to stop any possible advance of such organisations to other parts of the country. This strategy is also useful for maintaining close supervision of the activities of these groups. For instance, it is known that the army occasionally enters territories with high Zapatista ascendancy under the argument of searching for illegal crops, such as Marihuana or Amapola, to destroy them. The most recent episode of this nature occurred in May 2005, when the army declared it had destroyed marihuana crops near villages under the control of the EZLN. According to Montemayor (2006), this sort of military operation is part of a wider strategy of counterinsurgency based on intimidation. About this subject, General Juan Morales Fuentes, former army chief in Rancho Nuevo, declared that high military presence in Chiapas responds to the need of controlling illegal immigration, combating drug trafficking and protecting the natural resources of the region from "*talamontes*" (people who cut trees illegally). However, it seems clear that the 111 military positions that keep both the army and the navy in Chiapas is due to forecasts of possible activities of the EZLN within this region⁵. In spite of the fact that the EZLN has not fired a single bullet since 1995, every year the army devotes more personnel to the state of Chiapas. According to CAPISE⁶ (Center of Political Analysis and Economic and Social Research), high army density in Chiapas responds to a strategy of encircling the positions of the EZLN in the same way a professional army would surround an enemy in a regular war. The EZLN's gradual diminution of importance in national politics in the last decade is partly the result of this aggressive strategy of containment implemented by the armed forces in Chiapas.

⁵ These bases have very adverse effects, especially in indigenous communities, particularly for women. It is widely known in Mexico and Central America that army settlements generate in the surrounding area an industry of prostitution and unregulated businesses where alcohol is sold to soldiers. These activities often disrupt the local communities and bring abuses and degradation to local women. It can also be argued that these operations are highly valuable for the regime to weaken the bases of support of guerrillas.

⁶ For information on CAPISE research and aims, see www.enliea.capise.org.mx

In pragmatic terms, the counterinsurgency strategy in Chiapas has been effective, as it contained the growth of the EZLN without having to use massive violations of human rights as it certainly occurred in the 1970s. However, by no means have violations of human rights disappeared or even diminished. On the contrary, the armed forces, and in particular the army, remain as the state agency with the highest number of complaints for presumed cases of torture, as well as the second in ordinary violations to human rights in the country⁷. It seems that low scale and selective violations to human rights represent a valuable asset for the military to maintain a certain degree of control over the regions they occupy.

Here it is possible to find the case of Ernestina Ascencio, an elderly indigenous woman of a community named Tetlacinga in the highlands of Zongolica, Veracruz, who died, presumably as a result of a sexual assault committed by soldiers on 26 February 2007. According to INEGI's statistics, Zongolica is one of the poorest and least developed regions of the country and has been for decades a focal point of concern to the army due to the presence of guerrillas as well as drug trafficking related activities⁸. In fact, the army reinforced its presence in the region in 1999, when government intelligence sources considered the EZLN was intending to expand its radius of influence to Veracruz⁹. The case of Mrs. Ascencio is not an isolated event. It is one of at least four documented cases of sexual assaults committed by soldiers against indigenous women in different regions of the country, three in Guerrero and one more in Coahuila where 13 women were sexually assaulted and raped by 20 soldiers¹⁰. However, this case deserves special attention because it detonated a quick response of rage in the local community that rapidly attracted the interest of local and national newspapers. Concurrently, human rights organisations lost no time to portray Mrs. Ascencio's case as the typical kind of abuse the army performs in rural zones, mostly indigenous communities, while combating drug trafficking or searching for guerrilla activity.

⁷ "Encabeza IMSS y Sedena quejas ante Derechos Humanos. *El Informador*. July 28, 2008. <http://www2.informador.com.mx/mexico/2008/28199/1/encabezan-imss-y-sedena-quejas-ante-derechos-humanos.htm>

⁸ "Demandan una nueva necropsia". *Reforma*. April 5, 2007

⁹ "Polémica por presencia militar en Veracruz". *El Universal*. December 28, 1999

¹⁰ "MEXICO : Family of Ernestina Ascencio Rosario and inhabitants of Tetlazinga community and Soledad Atzompa municipality. Amnesty International . March 6, 2007. <http://www.amnestyinternational.be/doc/article10195.html>

The way the investigations of Mrs. Ascencio's death evolved in the course of the following months, is a clear proof of the constant contradictions and mistakes in which local and federal agencies tend to fall. The army initially admitted in a press release the possibility of misbehaviour of some of the soldiers deployed in the highlands of Zongolica. However, as the case acquired a national dimension, the defence secretary denied the involvement of any soldiers in the incident. At the state level, the Governor of Veracruz, Mr. Fidel Herrera, ordered a full investigation. The first official study conducted by Veracruz's Attorney General, Mr. Emeterio López-Marquez, indicated that according to forensic studies performed on Mrs. Ascencio's body, she had died as a result of injuries caused during rape. The report also said that there were a number of eye witnesses who had identified the presence of soldiers near her home at the time she was found lying on the floor, bleeding and barely conscious.

Two weeks later, the National Commission of Human Rights (CNDH) took over the case given that this independent but state-funded agency has jurisdiction over presumed violations of Human Rights by members or agencies of the Federal Government. Contrary to the results delivered by Mr. López-Marquez, the CNDH found no evidence of rape and determined that Mrs. Ascencio had died due to anaemia and a chronic condition of gastritis¹¹. As a result of the conflicting conclusions of Veracruz's Attorney-General's Office and the CNDH, Mr. López-Márquez and Governor Herrera had to accept that there was no crime to prosecute in the case Mrs. Ascencio's death and accepted the veracity of the investigation by the CNDH. A high officer working in Veracruz's state government said to this author –under the condition of anonymity– that Mr. López-Márquez was asked to retreat and accept that he made a mistake as a result of the confrontation his report had caused between Governor Fidel Herrera and the armed forces (Xalapa Ver, January 27, 2009).

In support of this version, it is interesting to observe how President Felipe Calderón rushed to mitigate any responsibility of the armed forces on this case, days before the conclusion of the CNDH investigations. On 13th March, 2006, President Calderón affirmed that Mrs. Ascencio had died due to a chronic case of gastritis. His statement came six days before de CNDH completed the report and naturally raised profound suspicions concerning the supposed autonomy of the CNDH in the case. Leftist

¹¹ “*Lamentan fallo sobre Ascencio*”. Reforma. Septiembre 04, 2007.

congressmen, among them the leader of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) in congress, Javier González Garza, affirmed that the CNDH had lost credibility and implied this agency was joining forces with the president to protect the army from criticism¹². His view was similar to that of Ana Luisa Nerio, Principal of the Centre of Human Rights Fray Francisco de Victoria¹³. Mrs. Nerio declared that it was likely the CNDH was acting in complicity with the Federal Government to protect the armed forces. She added that President Carderón is particularly protective of the army due to their responsibility in the war on drugs¹⁴. The other major opposition party represented in congress, the PRI, did not want to enter into the discussion because it considered “harsh remarks had been made by the PRD to the Army”¹⁵. Furthermore, the President’s statement to the press was widely criticised by national and international NGOs as well as the public opinion¹⁶.

President Calderón’s attitude in this case is coherent with the way the armed forces have been defended by the executive power when they come under attack from civil society. This attitude has been historically shared by the executive power and probably reached its highest expression during the administration of President Vicente Fox when there was the will, formal but hardly political, to clarify the participation and the possible responsibilities of the armed forces, the DFS, and other agencies of security that were involved in the dirty war. The first professional assessment based on information from the archives of the DFS and the armed forces was presented by Mexico’s Ombudsman, José Luis Soberanes. The CNDH studied 532 cases of alleged forced disappearances that took place during the dirty war, that is, the 1970s and early 80s (See Table 7.1). After almost 12 years of research, the CNDH found evidence of torture practices in almost all cases under study. It also reveals that four out of ten victims of torture were taken out of their homes by force during the night, most of them being peasants from Guerrero. Moreover, it made clear that the Army had actively participated by providing

¹² “Exigen a CNDH aclarar reporte”. *Reforma*. April 05, 2007.

¹³ <http://www.derechoshumanos.org.mx/index.php>

¹⁴ “Dudan de CNDH en caso de anciana”. *Reforma*, March 31, 2007

¹⁵ This remark was made by Emilio Gamboa Patron, who is the leader of the PRI in Congress.

¹⁶ There was even a formal request for information made by a citizen and channelled through the Federal Institute of Information Access (IFAI), concerning the source President Calderón utilised to declare that Mrs. Ascencio had died as a result of gastritis. Since the presidential office could not provide a positive answer to the information request, the IFAI concluded that President Calderón had no evidence to support his statement. See: “Critica IFAI premura de Calderón”. *Reforma*. July 05, 2007)

its premises to perform the interrogations and torture the detainees¹⁷. The report also stated that the army was directly responsible for 1 in every 4 cases investigated regarding forced disappearances¹⁸.

Table 7.1

Institution responsible for the forced disappearance during the dirty war according to the CNDH

| Institution Responsible | Number of documented forced disappearances |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Mexican Army | 132 |
| Federal Direction of Security (DFS) | 106 |
| Federal Judicial Police (PGR) | 56 |
| Judicial Police of Guerrero | 30 |
| The White Brigade | 19 |
| Total | 532 |

Source: (CNDH 2001)

In sum, the Ombudsman confirmed during a press conference the State's guilt for such crimes and violations of individual guarantees,¹⁹ which, ultimately, obliged President Fox to proceed in an official and proper manner and, therefore, to legally condemn those who participated in the dirty war²⁰. Among those with possible responsibilities were Luis de la Barrera Moreno(†), Javier García Paniagua (†), Miguel Nazar Haro, José Antonio Zorrilla Pérez, Jesús Miyazawa, Arturo Durazo Moreno (†), Francisco Sahagún Baca(†), Fernando Gutiérrez Barrios (†), Pedro Ojeda Paullada and Oscar Flores Sánchez, who at some point occupied directive positions in the civilian and judiciary apparatus of security during the 1970s. Within the jurisdiction of the armed forces, the names of General Arturo Acosta Chaparro and Humberto Quiroz Hermosillo (†) came up frequently²¹.

As expected, the same day the Ombudsman presented the outcome of his investigation, President Fox immediately declared that sentencing wrongdoers in the dirty war case by no means discredited the Army, as this institution belongs to the people and works for the people²². He also admitted that it was necessary to clarify what occurred during

¹⁷ Turati, Marcela, "La decepción de los Cabañas". *Reforma*. November 21, 2001

¹⁸ Turati, Marcela; Taniguchi, Hanako and Jiménez, Gerardo. "Acaparan DFS y Ejército casos de desapariciones". *Reforma*. November 29, 2001

¹⁹ "Las Denuncias" *Reforma*. November 26, 2001

²⁰ "Darán 'lista negra' sobre desapariciones". *Reforma*. October 02, 2001

²¹ DFS 100-10.16 L9

²² Torre, Wilbert. "Piden evitar juicios contra instituciones". *Reforma*. November 28, 2001

the 1970s as a way to heal a ‘historic wound’ of Mexican society. Having said that, the president authorised open access to the archives of the DFS and intelligence dossiers of the Secretary of Defence containing information of this period. Also approved was the creation of the position of a special prosecutor within the domain of the Attorney-General’s Office, to investigate the demands of those who had lost a relative or suffered abuses during this period, and convict those who were guilty of such crimes.

There is no doubt that this action taken during the Presidency of Vicente Fox posed a set of difficult questions to the armed forces concerning their role during the long rule of the PRI, particularly for the harsh violations to human rights committed by this institution during the 1970s. It seems that by seeking reconciliation with society and restitution to the victims, President Fox pushed the political system, at least in this aspect, in the direction of democratic consolidation.

The obscure side of this process was the way the investigation was in fact carried out in the following years and the defiant position the military kept towards the possibility of digging too much into the past due to the harm this could cause to the status of the armed forces. Former President Echeverría joined the discussion during a press conference in Ciudad Victoria, when he affirmed that he had no responsibility for any forced disappearance carried out during the 1970s. He alleged that the armed forces were not to be blamed either, as they were simply fulfilling their obligation. The former president explained that the “dirty war” was one of the maladies of the Cold War, as it induced many young people to defy the state and the army²³. However, he conceded the possibility that some police agencies could have indeed committed excesses against peasants and students²⁴. Not particularly different from Echeverría’s position, José López Portillo defended the performance of the armed forces during his administration. However, he said he was unaware of the meaning of the dirty war and the violations of

²³ Klérigan, Efraín. “*Justifica Echeverría: fue por la Guerra Fría*” Reforma November 30, 2001

²⁴ Klérigan, Efraín. “*Rechaza Echeverría tener culpa*” Reforma November 29, 2001

human rights during his administration²⁵ as he was the President of Mexico, not a policeman²⁶.

On the same topic, the Attorney General, Rafael Macedo de la Concha, who was in fact an on-leave army general, declared that it was painful for him to know that some leads suggested misbehaviour of some army officers during the dirty war, but he asserted that his responsibility and commitment was with the rule of law²⁷. On the side of the armed forces, particularly the army, the reactions were more hostile concerning the possibility of bringing army officers to trial for their actions during the dirty war. Miguel Angel Godínez, a retired general who acted as Chief of Military Staff of President López Portillo, said the “dirty war was an illusion, as it never took place.” According to General Godínez, the army confronted in the 1970s a set of armed groups endangering the security and survival of the State. He also added that the army, as an institution, does not violate human rights, on the contrary, it is the institution that respects them the most²⁸. Another top general, Enrique Salgado Cordero, affirmed the information that suggested some wrongdoing of the army during the 1970s was false, as the armed forces do not act autonomously but always follow orders²⁹. The unusual activism of generals in the press continued in the days that followed and it finally ended when President Fox declared, during the celebration of the Day of the Army on February 19, 2002, that the armed forces have always been respectful of legality and have also been supportive of decisions taken by civilian authorities, so it was unfair to adopt unilateral interpretations of history where the army has been involved³⁰. It was clear President Fox had come out in defence of the army as a response to the results of the CNDH dossier on the dirty war.

In the following months, the topic vanished from the political agenda. It returned in March 2004, when some of the findings of the newly created agency to prosecute the crimes of the past were leaked to the press. This time, it was known that the army had

²⁵ This vision is at odds with a document of the General Direction of Social and Political Research (IPyS) that specifies that a group of women demanded General Miguel Angel Godínez Bravo, to attend the verbal order of President López Portillo to investigate the whereabouts of a number of people (their sons and daughters) that were missing in the state of Sinaloa during 1976, 1977 and 1978, presumably for their political ideas. June 15, 1979. *Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales* 76/26839

²⁶ Irizar, Guadalupe. “No reprimí, afirma LEA... y yo no supe, dice JLP” *Reforma*. November 30, 2001

²⁷ Torre, Wilbert. “Causan ‘dolor’ al ejército hechos pasados.- Macedo” *Reforma*. November 30, 2001.

²⁸ Irizar, Guadalupe. “Fue guerra, no sucia, asegura Godínez”. *Reforma*. November 30, 2001

²⁹ Barajas, Abel. “Investiga justicia militar casos de desapariciones”. *Reforma*. December 20, 2001.

³⁰ López, Fernando Mayolo. “Deslinda Fox al Ejército de “episodios históricos”. *Reforma*. February 20, 2002

cooperated with the White Brigade by offering its main premises to conduct interrogations and eventually, to torture detainees presumably linked to guerrilla organisations in the 1970s. Since this information came from an official source, it forced the Secretary of Defence, General Ricardo Clemente Vega García, to declare that such leaks were false and denied that the Military camp No. 1 served as a torture centre of the White Brigade during the dirty war³¹. Such remarks are at odds with the final version of the dossier presented in December 2006 by the Special Prosecutor of Social and Political Movements of the Past that documented several cases of torture practiced in military premises (FEMOSPP 2006:VIII). It is also contradicted by the information provided by Commander Sergio Espino, who along to Miguel Nazar Haro, was allowed to enter freely to the Military Camp no 1 to interrogate the detainees belonging to the LC23S and a number of intelligence dossiers made by the extinct Federal Directorate of Security that are available to the public at Mexico's National Archives³². (Mexico City, November 10th, 2006).

There is no doubt that the avalanche of testimonies, intelligence files and official documents gathered by the special prosecutor, Mr. Carillo Prieto, set the alarm once more in the highest echelons of the army due to the potential damage that such findings could cause to their reputation. The political timing of such leaks was particularly difficult for the Presidency of Vicente Fox. It coincided with the resignation of his private secretary, Alfonso Durazo, who revealed in an extensive letter the presumed plan of the first lady, Martha Sahagún de Fox, to succeed his husband as President³³. Concurrently, the political agenda was dominated by the alleged intention of the executive power to impeach the mayor of Mexico City and most likely presidential candidate of the PRD, Andres Manuel López Obrador. It was within this realm of political turbulence that General Vega García made an unusual statement. The Secretary of Defence said the armed forces were all over the country and were perfectly aware of what was going on. However, it was not its responsibility to intervene in politics. "I affirmed that the armed forces have the weapons that are needed to defend the motherland and should never be used to protect the political power, "never to protect the

³¹ "Rechaza Sedena base de detención en campo militar". Reforma. February 25, 2004

³² Exp-11-235-74 H-300 L-7

³³ Vargas, Rosa Elvira "Renuncia Durazo, inconforme con pretensiones dinásticas de Los Pinos". La Jornada. July 6, 2004

political power!” To conclude, General Vega García recalled that the obedience of the military was to the President and the time had come to forgive³⁴.

The cryptic speech of General Vega was not deciphered or clarified by him in further declarations or interviews, but key political figures and political analysts rushed to offer their interpretations. According to Lorenzo Meyer, General Vega responded with this speech on behalf of the numerous voices within the armed forces asking to stop the investigations or, at least, to ease the tone of accusations made against the army regarding the dirty war³⁵. For the Deputy Attorney General, José Luis Santiago Vasconcelos, the words of General Vega suggested the need of the nation to close and forgive what occurred during the painful chapter of the dirty war³⁶. On the same topic, Andrés Manuel López Obrador affirmed that he agreed with General Vega on the issue that the military should not be used to compensate for the inefficiencies of civilian authorities. However, he also concluded that the crimes committed during the dirty war should not go unpunished³⁷. On the more conservative side of the equation, the former national leader of the PRI, María no Palacios Alcocer, considered that it was inadequate to mess with the armed forces as it was certainly inconvenient for President Fox to confront a “real factor of power,” in direct allusion to the armed forces. Roberto Madrazo, the principal figure within the PRI at the time, pointed out that the President should not hurt an institution as important as the armed forces³⁸.

Judging for what occurred in the months that followed General Vega’s famous statement, it is possible to argue that president Fox listened and attended carefully to his demands as the topic of the army’s responsibility in the case of the dirty war did not return to the public agenda during the remainder of his administration. In fact, in June 2006, General Arturo Acosta Chaparro, one of the names that came up more frequently in the investigations made by the CNDH and the FEMOSPP, was found innocent by a military court for his alleged participation in the killing of 22 peasants of Guerrero in 1974³⁹. The absolution of General Acosta came as a precursor of what occurred a few

³⁴ Ballinas, Víctor and Garduño, Roberto. “Llama Vega García a conciliar para que la nación no se nos vaya de las manos” *La Jornada*, July 01, 2004

³⁵ Meyer, Lorenzo. “El general en nuestro laberinto”. *Reforma*, July 08, 2004.

³⁶ “Propuso Vega punto final sobre la guerra sucia: Santiago Vasconcelos”. *La Jornada*, July 02, 2004

³⁷ Bolaños Sánchez Ángel “Condena López Obrador crímenes de la guerra sucia”. *La Jornada*, July 02, 2004

³⁸ Appendini, Manuel “Madrazo defiende a Echeverría”. *Reforma*, July 09, 2004

³⁹ Barajas, Abel. “Dejan en libertad a Acosta Chaparro” *Reforma*, June 30, 2007

months later when the FEMOSPP presented the final results of its investigation. Not particularly different to CNDH's seminal work on the dirty war, Mr. Carrillo Prieto concluded that the Mexican Army participated in at least 12 massacres, 120 extrajudicial executions, 800 forced disappearances and more than 2,000 acts of torture along with an unquantifiable number of violations of human rights between 1965 and 1982. The special prosecutor found the armed forces and the federal government responsible for crimes against humanity, terrorism and genocide. Despite the strength of the accusations, the Secretary of Defence did not offer a statement to counteract the findings of the special prosecutor and the impact of such findings were soon lost by the upcoming handover of presidential power from Vicente Fox to Felipe Calderón in December 1, 2006.

It seems the military successfully managed the formal and informal consequences of the investigations concerning their role and responsibility for the violations of human rights committed by their members in the 1970s. The critical juncture within this process was the speech of General Vega García on July 1, 2004. It is clear that after that day, the initial presidential determination to dig deep into the role of the armed forces during the rule of the PRI was deactivated. There was a clear contradiction between the initial intention of the president to uncover this period of Mexico's history and the authoritarian character of the system of civil-military relations. With his speech, General Vega reminded the president that the armed forces are extremely sensitive to issues or actions of civilian authorities that may affect their corporate interest. Consequently, they were expecting for the executive power to come to their rescue, and they were successful in this.

7.3 The army structure of promotions

The second element that explains the capacity of the army to adapt to new political circumstances is the way it changed its structure of promotions to train and eventually reward officers with direct experience in regions that face guerrilla activity. According to the revision of the resume of all army officers that were promoted to the rank of Brigade General since 1976 up to 2004, it is interesting to note the significant ways in which the structure of promotion has varied. In order to show the way this transformation works, I divided the 27-year period from 1976 to 2003 into two sections. I took as criteria for this division the beginning of the presidential term of Carlos

Salinas, since it was during his administration that the military started to perform a wide variety of missions beyond those traditionally identified with internal security and disaster relief. The information on the resume of army generals was delivered to this author by the Secretary of Defence, in response to a request for information through the IFAI (Petition 0000700043003). The first list included the names of those officers who commanded each of the 12 military regions in the country since 1976 to 2004. A similar list was delivered for the case of each of the 44 military zones. Having both lists, I was able to calculate the number of months each officer remained in charge of each military zone and region for the two periods under study. Once I had this comparison ready, I requested the Secretary of Defence to name those military zones that are known to be characterised by guerrilla activities and illegal traffic or cultivation of drugs.

For the guerrilla case, it was interesting to note that after the eradication of the rural guerrilla in Guerrero in 1975, the permanence of military chiefs in zones historically identified with the emergence of insurgency was considerably longer than in the second period under analysis. In other words, army chiefs were rotated more often after 1989. This information suggests that the strategy of the armed forces to train and give more officers the chance to acquire experience in regions under the strain of guerrillas became quite significant after 1989. This was particularly clear in Guerrero and Oaxaca, where the presence of the EPR is considered as a problem of national security.

Table 7.2

Average of months in post of chiefs of military zones between 1976-1989 and 1989-2003

| Guerrilla | 1976-1989 | 1989-2003 |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Oaxaca | 19 | 13 |
| Guerrero | 27 | 15 |
| Chiapas | 16 | 14 |
| Puebla | 20 | 14 |
| Estado de Mexico | 26 | 9 |
| Average | 21.6 | 13 |

Source: own elaboration with data provided by the Secretary of Defence IFAI petition number 0000700043003 and 0000700039604.

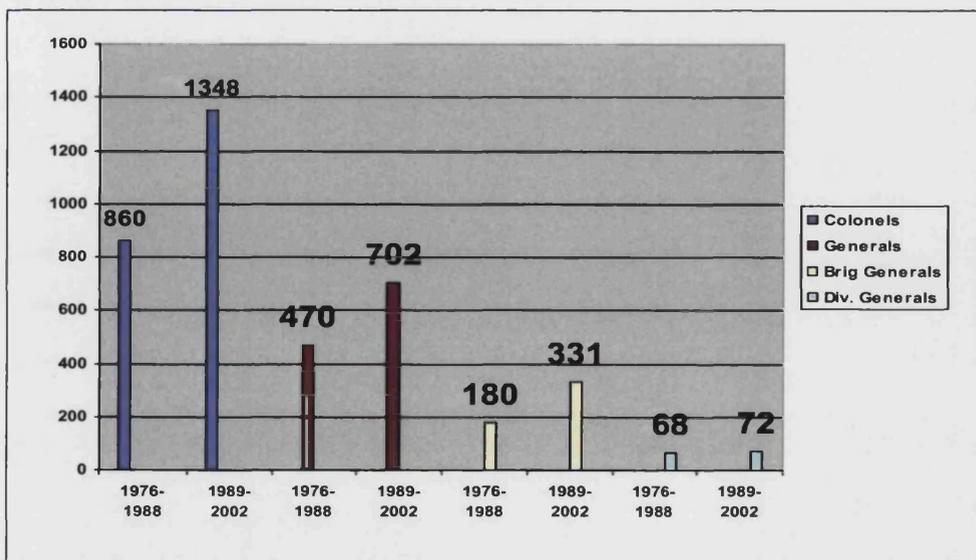
A further indication of this variation is the importance the army is increasingly giving to officers with experience in military zones with guerrilla activity. According to the revision of their resumes, it can be concluded that up to 1989, Brigadier Generals with experience in army zones with guerrilla activity had 16 percent more chance to be

promoted to the next level (Brigade General). After 1989, this percentage climbed to 27.5. This information is consistent with the way the military enlarged the size of its first tier of leadership as it can be clearly appreciated in Graph 7.3. It shows how the army raised the number of promotions to the ranks of Colonel, Brigadier General and Brigade General. These promotions are proposed by the Secretary of defence to the President and then turned to the Senate to its final approval. Once this procedure is fulfilled, the promotions are announced by the army after the commemoration of the Mexican Revolution, on the 20th of November. According to the records, there is only one case of refusal of a proposed promotion by the Senate.

Another case that proves yet again the type of parameters taken into consideration in the armed forces is the figure of the Secretary of Defence. For instance, former minister of defence in the administration of Ernesto Zedillo, Enrique Cervantes Aguirre, was trained in South America on counterinsurgency tactics. He was also active during the counterinsurgent campaign in Guerrero that ended up annihilating Lucio Cabañas' guerrilla. A further analysis of the background of the first three positions in the secretary of defence (Secretary, Undersecretary and the First Officer) shows that after 1989, these positions have had privileged officers with direct experience in counterinsurgency and the control of drug trafficking.

Figure 7.3

Number of officers promoted to the ranks of division general, brigade general, brigadier general and colonel for the period 1976-1988 and 1989-2002



Source: Information provided by the Secretary of Defence to this author. IFAI Petition0000700039604

It seems clear that the army understood that the strategy of containment needed both a bigger military presence, and a more professional and experienced one. It is also noticeable that the means the army found to foster the specialization of its personnel on counterinsurgency was to facilitate the promotion of officers with experience in those areas. This trend is even clearer when it comes to army zones known to contain the so-called drug cartels or on the border with the United States. I will return to this issue in the final chapter.

Special Forces

Since 1990, an increasing number of Mexican recruits have been trained on American soil under the International Military Education and Training Programme of the United States (IMET). According to The Centre for Public Integrity, the US Army trained in Mexico and abroad more than 4,000 Mexican soldiers from 1996 to 2003, an average of 800 a year⁴⁰. Concurrently, two new schools of Special Forces were added to the educational system to address issues like counter-terrorism, anti-narcotics tactics, kidnapping rescue or guerrilla combat. Such missions are mainly carried out by elite units called GAFES (Air-Mobile Special Forces Groups) and GANFES (Amphibious Special Forces Groups). These groups combine intelligence gathering and analysis with operational actions⁴¹. In fact, these groups were responsible for the highly publicised arrests of renowned leaders of drug trafficking organisations during the administrations of Ernesto Zedillo and Vicente Fox⁴². In 1996, there was one GAFE group in each of the 12 military regions in the country, each group comprising between 100 and 150 men, with functions similar to commando units in the United States Army (Camp 1999). By 1997, GAFE units were added to each army zone, with Chiapas having 4, Guerrero 3, Oaxaca, Puebla, Tabasco and Veracruz with 2 each (SEDENA 1997:19-24).

These groups also perform direct public security functions, as they represent the operative arm of the Specialised Unit Against Organised Crime (UEDO),⁴³ which was later incorporated to the Deputy Attorney General's Office for Special Investigation into

⁴⁰ The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists. Special Report: U.S.-Trained Forces Linked to Human Rights Abuses. May 14, 2003. www.public-i.org

⁴¹ Medellín, Jorge Alejandro. "Usan Fuerzas de elite en lucha anticrimen" *El Universal*. February 254, 2003

⁴² Benjamin Arrellano Félix, Oziel Cárdenas Guillén, Adán Amezcua and Gilberto García Mena whose pictures were also present in the FBI most wanted list, side by side to figures as Osama Bin Laden.

⁴³ Medellín, Jorge Alejandro. "Usan Fuerzas de elite en lucha anticrimen" *El Universal*. February 254, 2003

Organised Crime (SIEDO). The growth of these elite units within the army is a clear example of the irreversible process of modernization and it aims directly at improving their capacity to address organised crime and insurgency. It also points out the changing nature of the institution, since presently 1 in 8 soldiers involved in operations of any sort belong to a GAFE of GANFE group.

7.4 New guerrilla tactics and the new politics of the EPR

The growth and the increasing specialization of the army does not necessarily mean that it is better prepared to contain all expressions of guerrilla activity. In this area, their performance tends to be varied. It is clear the armed forces in general have successfully contained the advance of the guerrilla and in some cases, have managed to eradicate its presence. As we observed in the case of the EZLN, the army succeeded on confining this social movement to a number of communities within the state of Chiapas where both the EZLN and the Army seem to be content with each other's positions. However, there is one version of the Mexican guerrilla that has mutated towards a more terrorist-like organisation, assaulting positions of the Mexican army and performing acts of sabotage against PEMEX's infrastructure. The Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR) enters into this category.

The EPR appeared on the Mexican scene on the 1st of July, 1996. This is one year after the infamous killing of peasants in Aguas Blancas, Guerrero. This guerrilla movement recognises itself as the continuation of the Party of the Poor (PDLP) and vindicates the social struggles of Lucio Cabañas and Genaro Vázquez. In fact, many of the regions where the army believes the EPR has a strong presence are the highlands of Atoyac and Coyuca de Benítez, two communities dominated by Lucio Cabañas' guerrilla in the 1970s (Wrighte 2002). Additionally, the EPR has managed to build urban cells of operation by making alliances with strong popular movements such as the Popular Front Francisco Villa in Mexico City and the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca (APPO). According to the magazine *Proceso*, one month after its public emergence in Guerrero, the EPR had already killed 13 soldiers and wounded 46 more. By 1999, the death toll reached 68 between army soldiers (53) and police agents (15)⁴⁴.

⁴⁴ "Suman 68 las bajas castrenses". *El Universal*. October 29, 1999

Based on information released by the army in 1999, the EPR,⁴⁵ along with other 16 armed-groups, had plans to perform a series of sabotage attacks against primary infrastructure of the country with the purpose of igniting political instability during the presidential election of July 2000⁴⁶. The army alleged the possible formation of a wide national alliance of guerrillas, named Treble Alliance of National Indigenous Guerrilla (TAGIN), integrated by the EZLN, the EPR and ERPI. This report recommended the reinforcement of surveillance to key PEMEX infrastructure as well as telecommunications and electricity. Although none of the army's predictions occurred that year, it was a clear sign of the level of tension and alert the armed forces maintained when it came to potential actions of guerrillas in the country. In another classified document, the army recognised that the multiplication of guerrilla movements in the country is partly explained by the acute economic crisis and the galloping poverty that persists in many regions, particularly in the south east. "Poor people in the countryside have nothing or too little to lose, so they are easily attracted by guerrilla's ideals of economic progress, political and social vindication"⁴⁷. It recognises that given such conditions of poverty, the armed forces have been pushed to increase their presence in Oaxaca and Guerrero as a way of deterring the expansion of subversion to nearby states.

From these intelligence documents, often leaked to the press, it is easier to understand why the Mexican government maintained and even increased the budget of the military during years of great financial restraint, such as 1995, when President Ernesto Zedillo cut government expenditure in virtually all areas, except for national defence. It is also evident that the strategy of counterinsurgency follows fairly pragmatic objectives. Room for protection of human rights remains scarce and terror is a key part of the strategy of containment and deterrence. This vision has also been assimilated by the civilian counterpart. In a talk, María de la Luz Lima Malvido, Deputy Attorney General from January 2001 to October 2004, affirmed that when national security is at stake, the State should have no limits to its action, particularly when there is a chance to bring criminals to justice (London UK. November 17th, 2004). At the level of public opinion, a series of polls performed by the top intelligence agency of the Mexican State,

⁴⁵ It is important to notice that since its foundation in 1996, the EPR has experienced several fragmentations due to internal disagreements concerning the way the guerrilla should be conducted. Such divisions resulted in the creation of other guerrilla groups, with the ERPI (People's Insurgent Revolutionary Army) and the FARP (People's Revolutionary Armed Forces) being the most important.

⁴⁶ "Reforzará SDN zonas estratégicas" El Universal. November 29, 1999.

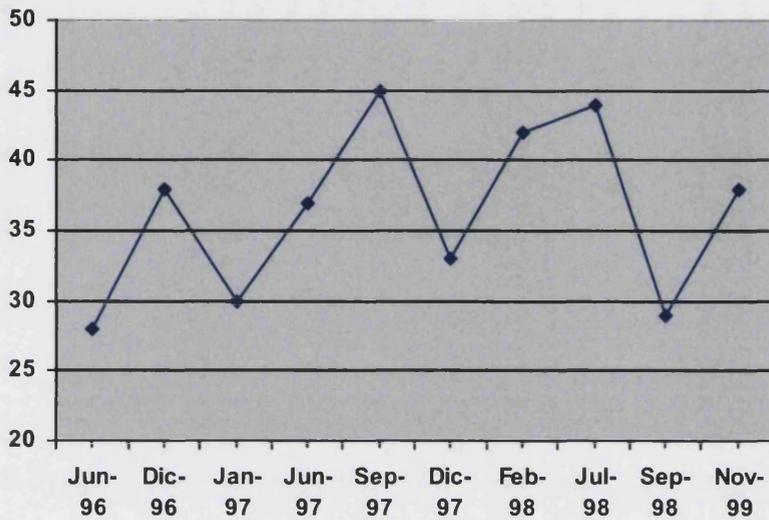
⁴⁷ 'Crecio gasto militar después de 1994' El Universal. August 19, 2001

The Centre of Investigation and National Security (CISEN), between June 1996 and October 2000, found that the population generally maintains a low opinion concerning the federal policy of containing the advance of guerrillas as it can be clearly appreciated in Graph 7.3. However, every time the army or the PGR (The Attorney-General's Office) captures an insurgent leader or the guerrilla performs an act of sabotage, public opinion is inclined to pay much more attention than usual.

For instance, two months after the emergence of the EPR, 53 per cent of the population had a negative view concerning the way the Mexican government and President Ernesto Zedillo were dealing with guerrillas in the country. In the following December, the approval rate improved 10 points, presumably as the result of the detention of Benigno Guzmán, one of the top leaders of this guerrilla. After that point, the acceptance of the counterinsurgency strategy fell steadily until the armed forces struck the EPR again, with the detention of a handful of its members in Mexico City in June 1997. Three months later, the affirmative opinion of the population increased again with the imprisonment of Alvaro Sebastian Ramirez, who, according to the armed forces, was in charge of managing the finances of the EPR. At this point, the acceptance of President Zedillo reached 45 percent, the highest of his administration. By December 1997, the popularity of the counterinsurgency campaign went down to 33 percent. Curiously, it increased again in February 1998 as a result of a successful operation of the EPR against a police facility in Guerrero during the last days of January, which enjoyed wide media coverage.

Figure 7.4

Citizen's approval rate of the counterinsurgency strategy 1996-2000



Source. Own construction with information taken from the article: *Ineficaz, el combate de Zedillo al EPR: opinión pública* El Universal September 4, 2001

From this brief account, it seems clear that citizens' opinions are strongly influenced by spectacular apprehensions of EPR leaders. In the next chapter, we will see that this tendency is also noticeable when it comes to the capture of top drug traffickers. However, popularity also increases when the guerrilla makes an extraordinary display of strength, such as an assault against police facilities or the execution of terrorist acts. This movement suggests an underlying fear of the population concerning the capability of insurgents to create chaos in the country. It is also clear that when there is limited or no information on a particular subject, people tend to assume a negative view regarding the government's performance. As can be observed in the graph, between February 1999 and November 2000 the negative perception concerning the performance of the counterinsurgency strategy remained stable at 38 percent⁴⁸. However, this is likely to apply to other areas of public security and not just the containment of guerrilla activity.

These fluctuations in public opinion suggest the armed forces have little room to manoeuvre regarding the effects of its missions on people's perception. On the one hand, they have to control the advance of the guerrilla and confine it to certain regions or try to breakdown its organisation, as seems to be happening with the EPR. On the other hand, they also have to inform the media of the progress achieved on this area,

⁴⁸ *"Ineficaz, el combate de Zedillo al EPR: opinión pública"* El Universal September 4, 2001.

either by capturing guerrilla leaders or by destroying its structure, because such results improve the President's image and their own corporate interest.

The problem with this logic is that these actions are often incompatible with a basic criterion of democracy. As we observed in the case of Mrs. Ascencio, the methods the army employs to maintain regions under guerrilla threat preserve many similarities with those of the past. Differences may be more a matter of the level of intensity and scale. Massive violations of human rights or genocide are no longer an option, but constant and selective action against leaders or vulnerable members of communities where the guerrilla has presence still occur. For instance, within one year of the first public appearance of the EPR in Guerrero, the Centre of Human Rights, Montaña Tlachinollan⁴⁹, documented 45 complaints of human rights violations against indigenous communities in "La Montaña" region of Guerrero. The complaints mainly accused members of the armed forces and the local police⁵⁰. In the same vein, Miguel Alvarez, representative of the Human Rights Centre Miguel Agustín Pro⁵¹, stated that they had documented 38 forced disappearances executed in Guerrero between 1996 and 1998⁵².

On 7th June, 1998 occurred the alleged mass murder of peasants by the army in the community of Ayutla de los Libres. This event is also known as the massacre of *El Charco*. According to Erika Zamora, an eye witness of the killing, the army carefully surrounded the community and then opened fire against a group of peasants who were presumably linked to the EPR⁵³. However, the army portrayed the event as a confrontation between guerrilla cells and soldiers of the 27th Military zone. Two months after this event, Senator Félix Salgado Macedonio of the leftist party PRD for the state of Guerrero, accused the army of killing three PRD followers because of an assumption of their presumed links to the EPR. Such accusations rapidly activated one of the mechanisms of defence the armed forces have in Congress. To begin with, the parliamentary groups of the PRI, the ruling party at that time, issued a statement defending the armed forces and accusing Senator Salgado of trying to degrade its image. Later, on-leave Generals who held a seat in congress as members of the PRI,

⁴⁹ <http://www.tlachinollan.org/inicio.htm>

⁵⁰ Guerrero, Jesús. "Destacan Violaciones a Derechos Humanos" *Reforma*. December 29, 1997

⁵¹ <http://www.centroprodh.org.mx/2008/>

⁵² Reyes, Carlos. "Asesinato y tortura, crímenes de Acosta" *Reforma*. September 4th, 2000

⁵³ "Exigen esclarecer la matanza de El Charco" *El Universal*. May 26, 2002

General Alvaro Vallarta and José Antonio Valdivia, declared that the army was a clean institution and it was about time for some people to stop trying to defame the armed forces⁵⁴.

Denunciations of this kind kept coming. In November 1999, 21 community leaders of the municipality of Ayutla de los Libres sent a letter to the governor of Guerrero, René Juárez Cisneros, requesting his assistance to end a multitude of practices of intimidation performed by the army while searching for EPR and ERPI members. Complaints included, specifically, sexual harassment of indigenous women, theft and destruction of property as well as random shootings from helicopters of towns and indigenous people for no particular reason⁵⁵. In August 2001, eight months after Vicente Fox assumed the presidency of the country, the EPR accused him of re-editing the worst days of the dirty war in Guerrero. They accused the armed forces of hunting relatives of those who joined their organisation and torturing them⁵⁶.

Still, the EPR and other guerrilla movements in the country entered into a period of relative inaction during the first half of the presidency of Vicente Fox. Miguel Angel Torre, leader of the task force on terrorism and counterinsurgency of the Federal Preventive Police, known as the Alamo Group, stated that the apparent tranquillity of the EPR could have been the result of a successful counterinsurgency strategy, or just the decision of this organisation to regroup⁵⁷, but José Luis Sierra, a well known scholar on the issue of armed forces in Mexico, has a different view. He affirms that Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, former chief of staff of the Presidency on National Security issues, managed to establish communication with the leaders of the EPR and offered a truce on behalf of the federal government. According to Sierra Guzmán, Adolfo Aguilar Zinser convinced the EPR to stop their activities due to the risk of having the United States more involved in Mexico under the umbrella of the global war on terror⁵⁸. That was a possibility that neither the EPR nor the Mexican government were willing to accept. This truce was partially broken in 2004, when the EPR set off a bag of explosives in a branch of the largest bank in Mexico, Banamex, in Jiutepec, Morelos, causing

⁵⁴ Teherán Jorge, Claudia Ramo and Jesús Guerrero. *Acusan a Ejército de asesinatos*. Reforma. November 19, 1997

⁵⁵ “Cercos Policiaco-militar en las zonas eperristas” El Universal. February 6, 2000

⁵⁶ “Miente grupo armado” El Universal. August 21, 2001

⁵⁷ Jorge Ramos. “En calma, los grupos guerrilleros”. El Universal. March 13, 2003

⁵⁸ José Luis Sierra. “Fallas de la inteligencia militar”. El Universal, July 20, 2007

considerable damage to the building, but causing no casualties or human fatalities. The detonation of this bomb by the EPR was an alarming sign of alert to the intelligence bodies of the State, including the armed forces, as it took them all by surprise.

Even though this was an isolated incident in the midst of an apparent truce, it showed how poorly prepared the intelligence agencies were, the military included, to deal with this sort of enemy. For the army, it became clear that the old strategy of intimidation, militarisation and social assistance to communities under the threat of subversion was an effective way to weaken the guerrilla's bases of support and keep them confined to a certain area. However, it was not going to prevent the sort of attacks terrorist organisations often carry out. In any case, there is no information concerning a confrontation between the army or a police agency and the EPR in the second half of Vicente Fox's administration. In fact, the mood of previous years continued. The EPR kept denouncing the growing militarisation of the country under the argument of going after organised crime. For instance, in November 2006, the EPR released an official communication condemning the growing militarisation of the state of Michoacán. The guerrilla group claimed that militarisation was not an answer to the growth of criminality. It argued that it has been continuously seen that security agencies always end up being bought by the drug cartels. For the EPR, this policy of militarisation was part of a fascist strategy of President Vicente Fox and now Felipe Calderón, used to impose the objectives of the far right in Mexico⁵⁹.

Up to that point, the war between the Mexican state and the EPR was not a matter of main concern to the public opinion. After the 10th of June, 2007 the story became different. The EPR denounced the detention of two of their members: Gabriel Alberto Cruz Sánchez and Edmundo Reyes Amaya. According to the EPR, both had been captured by the federal government in Oaxaca and were being victims of torture in a detention centre in the City of Oaxaca. The press release argued that the Mexican government was once more putting in motion the dirty war and made clear that retaliations would occur if those individuals were not presented alive to the press. Local and federal police agencies denied the version of the EPR and claimed that there were no records of any detention of those named by the guerrilla. This was not the first time the EPR denounced the forced disappearance of one of its combatants. Back in

⁵⁹ Jaime Márquez, "Michoacán: EPR critica petición de ayuda militar." *El Universal*, November 30, 2006

October 1997, they accused the Federal Government of apprehending and torturing commander “Gustavo”. In fact, the EPR was forced to release Gustavo’s real name—Rogelio Cuevas Fuentes—to facilitate the mission of a human rights organisation that offered assistance to find his whereabouts⁶⁰. The EPR also accused the federal judicial police of the disappearances of Fabián, Andres Tzompaxtle, Rafael, Jorge Salas, Domingo Ayala and Elsa. Despite the efforts, none of the above was found and the claims of the EPR were narrowed down to a simple condemnation of Ernesto Zedillo’s presidency for running a dirty war against their organisation.

However, this way of acting changed completely in 2007. Two months after the EPR denounced the army for the disappearance of Gabriel Alberto Cruz Sánchez and Edmundo Reyes Amaya, members of this organisation set eight explosive bags along different points of the Pemex gas pipelines in Guanajuato and five days later another round of explosives in Querétaro . The explosion disrupted gas supply in the region and caused serious damage to the pipes with an estimated economic cost of 100 million dollars. It is important to mention that the industrial activity of Guanajuato and Querétaro were paralysed due to the lack of gas supply. This region, known as *El Bajío*, holds a large proportion of Mexico’s industrial base. Industries like GM, Honda, and Nissan in the automobile industry, and Kellogg’s and Hershey, have huge industrial compounds in that area.

These kinds of attacks are relatively common in countries that host radical guerrilla groups, such as Nigeria or Colombia, but this was the first time a Mexican insurgent group acted against the country’s essential infrastructure. According to experts, the explosives had a level of sophistication not seen in previous incidents. The level of coordination and knowledge the guerrilla had over the Pemex infrastructure was also worth noticing. The worst scenario for the armed forces and the intelligence agencies had come true. The EPR lost no time in accepting its role in the explosions. It said it would continue attacking the interest of the illegitimate government and oligarchic economic interest, until their comrades were presented alive to the press⁶¹. Two months later, on the 10th of September, 2007, the EPR set off another load of explosives at different points of Pemex gas pipelines in Veracruz and Tlaxcala⁶². This

⁶⁰ Román, Gerardo. “*Exige el EPR la presentación de combatiente*.” *Reforma*. Oct 27, 1996

⁶¹ “*Firma EPR explosiones*” *Reforma*. July 11, 2007

⁶² “*Reivindica EPR las explosiones*” *Reforma*. September 12, 2007

time the estimated economic cost, including lost gas, the costs for repairing the pipelines and the economic paralysis that followed the attacks, reached 110 million dollars in just one week⁶³. Together, the two attacks account for one fifth of the entire annual budget of the military in Mexico, which is an organisation with nearly 300,000 members.

There was no previous event that could match the magnitude of the economic damage caused by the EPR to the local economy. It was clear that the armed forces or local and federal police agencies lacked the capacity to survey or guarantee the safety of nearly 54,000 kilometres of pipelines that Pemex has within Mexican territory (Greenpeace 2005). This new strategy of the EPR showed to the armed forces that the usual ways of counteracting the power of the guerrillas are useless in the face of this sort of activity. It also showed that under such circumstances, the Mexican government would need to invest more resources in civilian agencies of security, especially intelligence to counteract the shifting strategy of the ERP. On the political side, it shows the EPR is willing to perform such attacks as a valuable resource against the traditional State's methods to combat the guerrillas. From now on, forced disappearances, torture or extrajudicial execution of members of the EPR may become too costly for the Mexican government to perform on the face of its retaliatory power.

7.5 Conclusions

The surprising emergence of the EZLN in 1994 made the Mexican armed forces redefine its mission in the era of globalization, mass media communications and democratisation. The violent and illegal recipes of the past for confronting the guerrilla could no longer be applied with the Zapatistas. The military, and especially the civilian elite understood, appropriately, I believe, that the EZLN could not be defeated militarily as their strength was not rooted in weapons, but on a progressive sector of the local Catholic Church, strong local appeal and consistent sympathy of national and international audiences with the Zapatista cause. In this case, containing the EZLN within certain areas of Chiapas is a success for the armed forces and the civilian elite. In the light of this experience, the army has consistently adjusted its allocation of soldiers within the territory and created incentives that promote the specialization of officers on counterinsurgency.

⁶³ Emiliano Ruíz. *¿A quiénes reclama el EPR?*. Reforma. November 4, 2007

However, the success in dealing with the Zapatistas has not lessened the insurgency issue in the country. The EPR's successful attacks on the Pemex infrastructure in June and September 2007 in four different states of the Republic suggest the strategy of containment is of little use in confronting a guerrilla group whose operations are quickly transiting towards terrorist-like activities. It is obvious that the institutional weakness of the Mexican state directly translates in the impossibility of the military or civilian agencies of intelligence to confront such a challenge. On the political side of the equation, the process of democratic transition has pushed the issue on human rights and the past record of the armed forces back into the public agenda. It is clear that this situation has made the armed forces profoundly uncomfortable. However, their reaction reveals one of the main characteristics of the system of civil-military relations and the enormous political leverage this agency has accumulated since 1989. The evidence shows that the executive power has consistently defended the reputation of the army. The failed attempt to bring army officers to trial under the umbrella of the FEMOSPP represents clear evidence of this trend. The final outcome was a *de facto* amnesty for those involved in the abuses perpetrated during the dirty war. Furthermore, the submissive attitude of the Governor of Veracruz towards the army in the case of Ernestina Ascencio is further evidence of the scope of political leverage of the military at different levels of the public administration.

This overprotective attitude of the ruling elite towards the military reveals the level of attachment and reliance the federal government has on the armed forces to perform basic tasks of governance, such as public security, counterinsurgency and disaster relief. It seems clear that given the extended role of the military in the political system, the president simply cannot afford to endanger the legitimacy of its main policy instrument. Therefore, this chapter showed that the current system of civil-military relations in Mexico relies on tradition and the way loyalty towards the executive power has been constructed since the Mexican Revolution. Yet, the weakening capacity of the executive power to carry out its policy goals has turned this tradition into an obstacle for democratic consolidation.

Chapter 8. Civil-Military Relations and the Militarisation of Public Security in Mexico (1989-2007)

Introduction

Since 1989, the armed forces in Mexico have increasingly expanded their participation in the system of public security, mainly by replacing or assisting civilian agencies of security at federal and state level. This new set of responsibilities has been delegated by the executive power due to the incapacity of civilians to address rampant levels of violence in the country, mostly related to drug trafficking. International pressures have played an important role. The Mexican government has been historically constrained by the US continental approach on the combat of drug trafficking, which prescribes the utilization of the military to disrupt the supply of illegal drugs to the American market. On this issue, General Mario Palmerin Cordero, former undersecretary of defence during the first two years of Vicente Fox's administration, explained the situation to this author in a very straightforward way: "the Americans tell you, if you fight drugs you are our friend, if you don't, you are in problems. If you can't contain drug trafficking as we expect you to do it, we can either do it for you or help you to do it." (London, July 13, 2003). The part of "do it for you or help you to do it" has clear sovereignty-threat connotations the Mexican Government has historically opposed to consider in the relationship with the United States. It clearly contravenes Mexican foreign policy principles and international conventions, leaving "*to show that you can fight it appropriately*" as the main path to follow. The literature on this issue is again quite prolific and has been at the centre of acute disputes and accusations between both countries (Barona Lobato 1976; Craig 1978; Margain 1990; Dombierer 1991; Chabat 1996; Dunn 1996; Benítez 1997; González 1997; Salgado 1997; Tello Peón 1997; Santamaría Gómez 1999; Vélez Quero 1999; Van Wert 2001; Chabat. 2001; Chabat 2002; Recio 2002; Serrano and Toro 2002; Sheptycki 2003; Youngers and Rosin 2004; Astorga 2007).

I will argue in this chapter that the delegation of policy missions to the armed forces and away from civilian agencies transformed the balance of power that pervaded for decades in the system of civil-military relations. As will be observed in this chapter, the initial decision of president Carlos Salinas to use the military to counteract the power of the drug cartels, instead of the Attorney-General's Office, created a momentum of militarisation that has virtually reached every corner of the system of public security at federal, state and municipal level. This momentum is partly supported by the moral capital and good image of the military in the eyes of the population. This condition permits the president to increase military roles without confronting important resistance from civil society and opposition parties. Still, the consequences of this shift of responsibilities from civilians to soldiers reinforce the authoritarian nature of the system and represent a visible obstacle to the process of democratic consolidation in the country. It is clear, as we observed in the previous chapter, that the new policy missions delegated to the military have not been accompanied by an adequate mechanism of supervision. According to the principle of exclusive subordination, the armed forces only remain accountable to the president, while progressively more other police corporations are now under the formal or informal control of the army.

In order to address these issues, this chapter is divided into three sections. First I address the historical background of the participation of the military in counteracting drug trafficking. In this section I deal with the long-standing pressure the United States has put on the Mexican government to improve its capacity to combat the power of the drug cartels. In the second section, I look at the possible motivations that perhaps pushed President Salinas to make the crucial decision to delegate this load to the armed forces. I analyse the impact these measures had in terms of the institutionalisation of military roles during the presidency of Ernesto Zedillo. I particularly delve into the transformation this new roles generated in the organisation of the armed forces, especially in what concerns its yearly budget allocations, geographical distribution of personnel and internal structure of promotions.

Finally, I look at the presidency of Vicente Fox. Here I address the great expectations of social change embraced by the people because of his electoral triumph, especially in terms of democratising the system of civil-military relations. However, his policies turned out to promote the opposite. In fact, it was during his *sexenio* when the

militarisation of public security reached its zenith with the appointment of an on-leave army general as the Nation's Attorney General. This policy of militarisation does not appear to be changing, but is in fact deepening, during the first third of the presidency of Felipe Calderón (2006-2012). I suggest in this section that democratisation in Mexico has not meant a change in the basic rule of the system of civil-military relations, as it was defined by President Porfirio Díaz in the 1880s. This feature represents one of the major problems of the current process of democratic consolidation.

8.1 Armed forces and the origins of the drug war

Military involvement against drug trafficking was active long before the US Government tagged the issue as "relevant" to its internal security in 1946¹. Back in 1938, under the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas, a battalion of the 4th Military Zone destroyed marihuana fields in Sonora. This operation was run in cooperation with the Attorney-General's Office (PGR) and Agent Scharff from the US Secretary of Treasury (Astorga 2007:57). These early efforts by the Mexican government were followed by a permanent campaign of eradication of illicit drugs under the leadership of the PGR (Wager 1994; Bertram 1996). However, this policy was suspended during the Second World War, presumably as a result of the US intention to ensure the supply of opiates to produce morphine.

In the years that followed, mild international pressure was placed on the Mexican government, for example when the Director of the Antidrug Unit of the US Government, Harry J. Anslinger, declared in 1955 that 90 percent of the marihuana consumed in the US came from Mexico (Senate 1955). Yet, it was until the 1960s, in the midst of the hippie revolution, that the rampant consumption of illicit drugs in the United States attracted the eye of national policy makers, particularly that of President Nixon. According to the President's Commission on Organised Crime, Mexico supplied almost the entire demand of marihuana in the United States in 1965 (GPO 1986). In fact, it was in the late 1960s when Mexico and the United States experienced

¹ Based upon its record in the early 1930s, the government in Mexico City appeared willing to act with the United States to stop smuggling. In 1930 the two countries concluded an informal agreement for the exchange of information on drugs. The following year, officials sent a special agent to coordinate antidrug activity with Consul William Blocker in the Juárez-El Paso region. Mexico next requested that agents of both countries be permitted unrestricted border crossings, pursuant to their duties. The State Department and the Bureau of Narcotics turned down the request, although United States agents did continue to cross into Mexico with Anslinger's express approval. By mid-1932 all the Mexicans had achieved was another informal arrangement for the exchange of information. (Walker, 1989)

the first mayor diplomatic confrontation over the issue of illegal drug trafficking. In 1969, President Richard Nixon ordered the closure of all crossing points in the border with Mexico, so agents of the newly created Task Force One, integrated by the Justice Department's Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs and the Treasury Department's customs bureau, could search for illegal drugs in every car and person who intended to cross the border (Andreas 1998). The search created an enormous chaos. According to Carpenter (2003), thousands of Mexican workers lost their jobs in the United States because of customs delays. Lastly, more than 5 million citizens of the United States and Mexico were caught up in that nightmarish dragnet before it finally ended.

Despite the extent of the operation, only small quantities of drugs were seized. It is to be remembered that President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz was not upset by the closure of the border itself. This unilateral action damaged Mexico's international reputation and the economic welfare of cities along the border (Toro 1995). Allegedly, Nixon's drastic actions were the response to Mexico's refusal to allow U.S. directed aerial inspection over Mexican territory. Díaz Ordaz's negative got in the way of a U.S. continental policy that used spraying chemical herbicides over illegal crop fields to disrupt supply. Gordon Liddy, special assistant to the Secretary of the Treasury and member of the diplomatic team that negotiated with Mexico during the end of the operation explains: "Operation Intercept, with its massive economic and social disruption, could be sustained far longer by the United States than by Mexico. It was an exercise in international extortion, pure, and simple and effective, designed to bend Mexico to our will. We figured Mexico would hold out for about a month; in fact they caved in after about two weeks and we got what we wanted"².

There is evidence that since 1969, Mexico's ruling elite has not disregarded the U.S. concern on drug trafficking. After Operation Intercept, a wider cooperation was instituted between the two countries with the objective of eradicating illegal crops and running shared interdiction programs. Still, the frenzy of the war on drugs lost some steam under Presidents Ford and Carter's tenures. Both presidents adopted a slightly different approach towards the issue of drugs and the bilateral relationship with the United States strongly improved. Carter shifted the policy focus towards preventing

² Quoted in Epstein (1990: 84)

consumption rather than concentrating exclusively on supply (Carpenter 2003). Paradoxically, under a period of low American pressure, the Mexican government launched the strongest ever known campaign against drug trafficking in the country to eradicate illicit drug crops and dismember domestic drug trafficking organisations. Under the so-called *Operación Cóndor*, the Mexican state brought together the efforts of the military, federal and local police agencies and the Federal Directorate of Security (DFS) towards a single objective: the combat of international drug trade.

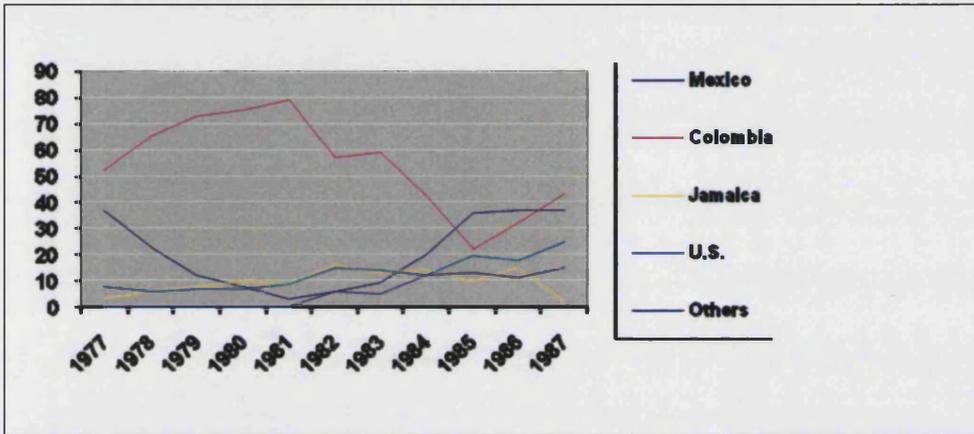
The launch of *Operación Cóndor* exposes an interesting paradox that helps to exemplify the different dimensions and aims of Mexico's drug war as well as the role of the armed forces in the strategy. Up to that year, 1976, Mexico had often taken measures against drug trafficking only as a direct response to pressures from the US government. However, *Operación Cóndor* was launched in a period where the "Nixonian" drug politics was absent. S. Aguayo (2001) argues that in the late 1970s the regime began to use the façade of combating drug trafficking to conceal a disproportionate response to incipient and badly organised guerrilla movements. By using information of the state intelligence apparatus, S. Aguayo concludes that there are indications that the relentless campaign to combat drug trafficking in the late 1970s, particularly in Jalisco, Sinaloa, Nuevo León and Michoacán, was put in motion to prevent a hypothetical merger between drug traffickers and guerrilla groups. This view is consistent with the findings presented in chapter 6 of this research. Beyond the possible political motivations of this policy, the results of the Condor Operation were stunning. The share of the Mexican marijuana in the U.S. market passed from levels of 40% in 1977 to 3% in 1981 (Graph 8.1).

This result of *Operación Condór* were not only applauded by US officials, but even influential scholars in the field of organised crime, such as Peter Lupsha, affirmed that the results achieved during those years represented probably the only resolute attempt to fight drug trafficking successfully in Latin America in 1970s. In fact, the US presented the Mexican achievements in the war on drugs as the model to follow by other countries (Lupsha 1986) as marijuana and poppy fields were practically eradicated during the five years the operations lasted. For a different set of authors, the success of the Mexican efforts to combat drug trafficking derived from the bad reputation of the Mexican

marihuana among American consumers, due to the intensive use of paraquat, a highly toxic substance used to exterminate the plant by the local authorities³. (Anderson 1981; Baum 1996).

Figure 8.1

Estimated sources and percentage of imports of marijuana available in the United States 1977-1987



Data taken from the National Narcotics Intelligence Consumers Committee compiled for various years (1981,1985,1987,1994 and 1998).

Despite the success of the Condor Operation, the total amount of drugs available in the United States was hardly reduced, as Colombian traffickers and other external and internal suppliers managed to fulfil the market share left by Mexican drug cartels (Chepesiuk 1999). Still, Condor showed, for the first time, that the Mexican government was eager to act against drug trafficking both in response to international pressure and for their own reasons, in other words, to conceal the open combat the state was undergoing against urban and rural guerrillas. Not surprisingly, once the political power of the regime was reinstated and the guerrilla movement annihilated in the early 1980s, the production of illegal drugs bounced back and recovered its normal levels, but with some important variations. First, the number of state resources employed during the Condor Operation brought into play almost all the security bodies available in the county. This massive eradication effort pushed less daring and smaller traffickers out of the market, thus benefiting the most powerful and organised, particularly those who could afford the high cost of corruption and the increasing use of violence (Toro 1995). It also greatly expanded the corruption potential of a burgeoning illegal drug market⁴

³ According to Baun and Anderson, American users stopped buying the Mexican marihuana as they considered it too risky due to the harmful effects that paraquat could represent to human health.

⁴ For an interesting explanation of the hippie culture and the American drug market see (Estrada 1996)

that was about to experience its best performance ever in the first half of the 1980s. To put it in numbers, based on US Health Ministry statistics, by 1979 almost 29% of the population above 12 years old was addicted to marijuana, 3% to heroin and 10% to cocaine (Bertram 1996). There is no doubt that such a massive demand made the business of illegal drugs very appealing, particularly for an increasingly impoverished Mexican peasantry.

A further element that enhanced the role of Mexico in the international map of drug trafficking was the widely celebrated triumph of the Reagan administration on the subject of the Caribbean corridor and its closure to Colombian cocaine shipments that entered the US through Florida (Camp 2005:110). After such “success,” Mexico was left as the preferred substitute route for Colombian cocaine exporters. This shift dramatically elevated Mexico’s position in the international drug trade and vastly increased the power and influence of country’s major trafficking organisations. (Andreas 1998; Andreas 2000a). Under these conditions, the 1980s represented an extremely difficult period for the Mexican Government. It coincided with the onset of Miguel de la Madrid’s *sexenio* (1982-1988) and the Republican administration of President Ronald Reagan. Internally, President de la Madrid needed to introduce urgent measures to readjust the country’s economic performance after the disastrous functioning of his predecessor. Externally, the revival of Nixon’s rhetoric by President Reagan implied that the return of a bilateral relationship that could easily be poisoned by the topic of drugs. In fact, the Reagan administration labelled De la Madrid’s *sexenio* as poorly committed to the war on drugs and highly penetrated by corruption. The State Department’s long list of alleged Mexican corrupt public servants included names such as Sergio García Ramírez who served as the Nation’s Attorney-General, Manuel Bartlet, Secretary of Interior; General. Juan Arevalo-Gardoqui, Secretary of Defence; Miguel Aldana, Chief of Interpol Mexico; and the chief of the State’s Intelligence Agency, José Antonio Zorrilla Pérez, who was later convicted for the assassination of Manuel Buendía, a well-known journalist specialising in national security issues, particularly drug trafficking. Even though many of these allegations were never fully proved, the confiscation of 7,000 tons of marijuana (the largest ever in world’s history) at *El Búfalo* Ranch in Chihuahua in 1984 and José Antonio Zorrilla’s imprisonment in 1989 showed that some of the rumours were certainly true and the

presence of drug traffickers in the political system was not merely a suspicion (Chabat 1996).

Not surprisingly, after each political scandal of corruption, a political statement was issued by President De la Madrid exposing his firm commitment to combat drug trafficking, to clean law enforcement from corruption and to strengthen interagency cooperation with the United States. However, the presidential political discourse and the policies adopted in this area were not at all related. From 1969 to 1988, no president in Mexico tried to reform the police agencies as a way of boosting the ability of the state to counteract the power of the drug mafias. In other words, law enforcement reform did not figure in the agendas of President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (1964-1970), Luis Echeverría (1970-1976), José López Portillo (1976-1982) or Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988). The Attorney-General's office (PGR) remained the main actor in the antidrug strategy of the Mexican state as it had been since 1938.

8.2 The militarisation of the PGR and the presidencies of Carlos Salinas and Ernesto Zedillo.

The Attorney-General's office had been the traditional agency for combating drugs. This changed drastically during the presidency of Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994). Since the year of Operation Intercept, failure and corruption scandals had already caused great damage to the reputation of the Federal Judicial Police. Furthermore, achieving the inclusion of Mexico in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) —arguably the primary objective of President Salinas's administration in his relationship with the United States— needed to ease the negative impact of drug matters on the bilateral agenda to gain the support of the US Congress in this endeavour. Therefore, the President's strategy focused on conveying the idea that Mexican authorities were working hard against corruption, and were willing to cooperate fully with the United States.

Still, it was clear that more than good intentions and joint press releases were going to be required this time. The government of Mexico wanted to prevent the generation of the type of corruption scandals that had damaged the past reputation of the Federal Judicial Police and the regime's apparatus as a whole. In other words, President Salinas had to ensure that drug trafficking affairs would not become recurrent front-page

material for newspapers, particularly as a result of corruption of Mexican officials. Furthermore, Mexico would also require compliance with the U.S. Department of Defense's recommendations on the war on drugs. In practice, this meant bringing the military into counter-narcotics operations to assist or replace inefficient and corrupt police bodies. Under this set of conditions, President Carlos Salinas chose to delegate important responsibilities related to the war against drug trafficking to the armed forces instead of the Office of the Attorney-General⁵. This policy shift was framed within the National Development Plan (PND) 1988-1994⁶. In the PND, President Salinas recognised that drug trafficking was a growing public health concern, which was also a damaging force affecting the performance of public security institutions. Therefore, it was the executive's responsibility to direct as many resources as needed to counteract such a "destructive" effect. An important element underlying the situation was the public acknowledgment within the incoming administration that federal civilian police had failed to counteract the power of organised criminality. This was allegedly because they were corrupt and allied to the groups they were supposed to combat⁷.

The PND also made it clear that the participation of the armed forces was meant to exclusively assist the Attorney-General's Office in the combat of organised crime, particularly drug trafficking. However, the activities the military performed during the Salinas Administration demonstrates that the word "assistance" was an euphemism for replacement. From 1989 to 1992, a series of joint programs between the Mexican Attorney-General's office and the Defense Secretariat began to bring the efforts of the two institutions together in the fight against drug trafficking. The cooperation included training programs of civilian personnel in military facilities as well as the constant replacement of "dirty" or corrupt police officers with "on-leave" military personnel⁸. It

⁵ The eroded electoral legitimacy of the government of Carlos Salinas after allegations of electoral fraud in the presidential election of 1988 meant that the President could not afford the political cost of major corruption scandals that became endemic during the incumbency of his predecessor. In this sense, Artz (2000) argues that the lack of civilian alternatives to control the expanding problem of the drug money and common crime, given the total absence of professional security forces, left the military as the only resource available to the government of Carlos Salinas.

⁶ The NDP is a document that contains the main policy guidelines that each elected President is obliged to present to Congress within the first year of functions.

⁷ "The situation is very clear, the police bodies fell apart due to corruption and the army is intervening more every time because is the institution less penetrated by drug trafficking" said Sergio Aguayo, professor and specialist on national security issues and U.S.- Mexico relationship of *El Colegio de Mexico* during a conference in Veracruz in December 2002. (Ortiz, 2002)

⁸ "The Mexican Attorney General's Office (PGR) purged some 737 agents from PJF organizations in August 1996.²⁰ The mass firings — which had been preceded by the dismissal of hundreds of other PJF

was thanks to this policy that the first wave of army officers arrived to the PGR in 1990 and the police department of Mexico City to occupy key positions. That was the case of General Jorge Carillo Olea, who took control of the fight against drug trafficking and the reorganisation of the intelligence apparatus of the PGR and General José Domingo Ramírez Garrido, current secretary of Public Security in Nuevo León, who became the Secretary of Transit and Security of Mexico City⁹.

Cooperation between the two institutions has never been free of conflict. On several occasions, the Army expressed its contempt for the lack of professionalism of the Federal Judicial Police or *los judiciales*. It claimed that training or educating already corrupt police personnel couldn't do much to prevent them from protecting and assisting the operations of narcotraffickers (Avalos-Pedroza 2001:4). This kind of statements has been common in the discourse of the armed forces, especially when they achieved the apprehension of a notable drug lord. For instance, after the army detained Hector *el Güero* Palma in 1995, who at the time was one of most hunted drug trafficker in the country, General Luis Garfías declared that the military had carried out the incarceration of Palma under strict conditions of secrecy as the Federal Judicial Police or the local police could not be trusted¹⁰. A similar argument was used by the Defence Minister when Benjamín Arellano Félix, the leader of *El Cartel de Tijuana*, was captured in 2002 by a specialized unit of the army¹¹. According to General Clemente Vega García, there were only three senior public servants who knew about the operation: President Fox, the Attorney General (who was also an army general), and José Luis Santiago Vasconcelos, who acted as the general director of the Special Unit Against Organised Crime (UEDO). Once more, General Luis Garfías declared, this time from his chair at the Centre for the Study of the Armed Forces, that the apprehension of Benjamín Arellano Félix was possible due to the close cooperation that exist between the DEA and the Mexican government as well as the efficient work of the army's intelligence apparatus. "It could not be otherwise, because the Mexican police has not changed, these people remain corrupt." José Luis Santiago Vasconcelos (JLSV) told this author that the intelligence unit that followed the leads concerning Arellano Félix was a very closed and select agency, made up of fine army officers and civilians. JLSV affirmed that the UEDO was

personnel — had been planned for over a year and undertaken because of the failure of many officers to meet the requisite "ethical profile." (Turbiville, 1997; Maldonado, 1996)

⁹ Sierra, Jorge Luis. *Fuerzas Armadas: la crítica lealtad*. *Reforma*, December 17, 1995

¹⁰ Sierra, José Luis. "La crítica lealtad". *Reforma*, December 17, 2005

¹¹ Castilla, Gustavo. "la captura". *La Jornada*, March 10, 2002

the only civilian office enjoying the trust of the military, partly because he (JLSV) and his men also had the trust of the DEA (London UK. February 8th, 2006). In this case, it was also curious to observe how General Clemente García allowed the mass media to film the specialized squad that had captured Arellano Félix¹². For Oscar Rocha Dabrowsky, Director of the Foundation Joaquín Amaro of Strategic Studies, the message General Clemente was indenting to send with this video was clear: “the army is the only institution capable to delivering results in the war against drug trafficking”¹³.

A similar message was repeated by the Defence Minister when the army captured Osiel Cárdenas Guillén, the leader of *El Golfo* Cartel, in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas in March 16, 2003 (Leroy 2004:117). On this occasion, General Clemente declared that only President Fox knew about the operation and the whole task of intelligence had been operated by the army alone¹⁴. According to General Clemente, not even the Governor of Tamaulipas, Mr. Tomás Yarrington, knew about the operation. Later that day, in an interview for a news radio show, Mr. Yarrington said he was happy about not knowing anything about the operation that ended in the incarceration of Cárdenas Guillén, as issues related to drug trafficking were very delicate and, for that reason, more convenient to be carried out in strict secrecy¹⁵.

There is no doubt that the army has taken its mission to counteract drug trafficking very seriously; and the secrecy surrounding their operation may well be further evidence of such an attitude. However, clearly, the public relations side of the equation, that is, the success story of the army in the drug war, is also aimed at reinforcing the idea among the population that organised criminal rings have penetrated civilian agencies of security and, perhaps, key political figures. Therefore, the army is the only alternative to deal with the problem.

Under this logic, it is easy to understand the sharp resistance of military personnel to cooperate with, or even to receive orders from what they consider “inept and corrupt”

¹² Giddis Smith, David, “Mexico’s military Coming Out of Shadows and Onto TV”. San Diego Union Tribune. March 17, 2002

¹³ Najar, Alberto.” *Los éxitos contra el narco: de EU o de herencia priista*” La Jornada. April 21, 2002.

¹⁴ This declaration of General Clemente Vega was given to Joaquin López-Doriga in his daily news show in Radioformula. March 14, 2003.
<http://www.radioformula.com.mx/rf5000.asp?page=2&anio=2003&mes=3>

¹⁵ This declaration of Tomás Yarrington was given to Joaquin López-Doriga in his daily news show in Radioformula. March 14, 2003.
<http://www.radioformula.com.mx/rf5000.asp?page=2&anio=2003&mes=3>

civilian authorities. These internal disputes reached a first point of crisis during the last year of the administration of Carlos Salinas. In April 1994, the president ordered the creation of the National Coordinating Council of Public Security (NCPS) (Arzt 1998). This interagency institution contained the Secretaries of Defence, the Navy Interior, the Attorney General, and the State Governors (including the Mayor of Mexico City). All of them were under the supervision of Arsenio Farell Cubillas, by that time Secretary of the Department of the Comptroller General and Administrative Development¹⁶. It is known they were told that President Salinas's Minister of Defence, General Antonio Riviello Bazán, declared publicly that the army would not receive orders from a civilian other than the President. Because of this refusal to go along with civilians, the NCPS did not last long and later became, after being reformed, the National Council of Public Security, where the military assumed a primary leading role.

Jeffrey Davidow, former ambassador of the US to Mexico, revealed a second incident of this nature. According to Ambassador Davidow, Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, who was appointed as senior advisor of President Vicente Fox on National Security, intended to establish better channels of communications between the Mexican government and the United States Embassy regarding security matters. As chairman of the National Security Council, Aguilar Zinser set up a meeting of top public servants of the incoming administration with some senior officers of the US Embassy, the Ambassador included. Among the attendants were the Minister of Navy, Defence, Interior, CISEN and the Attorney General. Davidow remembers that General Clemente Vega refused to participate during the meeting. He simply remained silent and other colleagues adopted the same attitude. (Davidow 2004:263-264). Once more, it was clear the Secretary of Defence refused to receive directions from a civilian other than the President¹⁷. This attitude rendered Zinser's presence in Fox's team irrelevant and forced his resignation in the following months (Leroy 2004:114). Thereafter, Vicente Fox took personal care of the coordination of the National Security Council¹⁸.

¹⁶ Criticism to this new interagency council came from well-known law professors who considered abominable the subordination of the military to a civilian other than the president, in this case Arsenio Farell. See Vera, Rodrigo. "Con el Ejército sometido a Farell Cubillas, todo se vale y se vulnera como nunca el estado de derecho: Burgoa y Arteaga" *Proceso* May 2, 1994.

¹⁷ Benavides, Carlos and García, Adriana "Había divergencias, acepta Aguilar Zinser, *El Universal*. January 10, 2002.

¹⁸ Benavides, Carlos and García, Adriana "Coordinará Fox seguridad nacional" *El Universal*. January 9, 2002

The last major incident of this nature took place during the first year of the presidency of Felipe Calderón with the creation of the Federal Forces Task of Support. Initially, this agency, made up entirely of elite members of the armed forces, was meant to be commanded by the Secretary of Public Security, Genaro García Luna, to address a sudden upsurge in the levels of criminality and violence in the country¹⁹. However, the resistance of the armed forces to receive orders from a member of the cabinet forced the transformation of the newly created security agency. In the end, the new task force remained within the structure of the Defence Ministry and is expected to act only to direct command by the executive power, and by the prior request of a state governor²⁰. In the light of these three cases, it seems clear that differences of opinion between the armed forces and the civilian leadership have always been resolved in the military's favour. It shows that the Secretary of Defence fiercely defends the system of civil-military relations in terms of the exclusive subordination of the military to the executive power, even when different presidents appeared to be willing to accept some modifications.

While the military has been capable of keeping its sphere of influence intact and even expanding it, the fate experienced by its civilian counterpart tells a completely different story. Since 1990, the PGR has entered into a process of fragmentation, gradual loss of responsibilities, constant change of leadership and purges of allegedly corrupt personnel. For instance, between 1988 and 2000, the PGR had seven Attorneys General, the same number this institution had had in the previous 30 years (see table 8.1).

¹⁹ Jiménez, Benito. "Muestra Presidente a su grupo de élite" *Reforma*. September 17, 2007

²⁰ Guerrero, Claudia and Salazar, Claudia. "Divide grupo elite a los legisladores". *Reforma*. May 11, 2007.

Table 8.1

Mexico Attorney's General 1988-2000

| Attorney General | Period |
|--------------------------------|---------------|
| Enrique Álvares del Castillo | 1988-1991 |
| Ignacio Morales Lechuga | 1991-1993 |
| Jorge Carpizo Mcgregor | 1993-1994 |
| Diego Valadés del Río | 1994 |
| Humberto Benítez Treviño | 1994 |
| Fernando Antonio Lozano Gracia | 1994-1996 |
| Jorge Madrazo Cuellar | 1996-2000 |

Source: Own construction

Within the same period, the department responsible of implementing the counternarcotics policy suffered five major transformations. From 1988 to 1990 it was named Deputy Attorney General's Office for Investigation and Combat of Drug Trafficking. In 1990 it was renamed to Division Anti Narcotics. From 1990 to 1993 it became the General Coordination of Crimes Against Health. From 1993 to 1997 this agency acquired the name of National Institute for the Combat of Drugs (INCD). During this period, the INCD had seven general directors and one of them is in a federal prison for serious corruption allegations. In June 1997, the INDC was renamed to Special Prosecutor's Office of Drug Crimes (FEADS). This office stayed in place until 2002, when another case of corruption triggered its transformation to the Deputy Attorney General's Office for Special Investigation into Organised Crime, SIEDO. (Sierra-Guzmán 2003; Resa Nestares 2006:935)

In addition to this continuous transformation, the PGR also experienced several purges of personnel, since every new Attorney General ordered one. For instance, as soon as Ignacio Morales Lechuga arrived to the Department, he ordered the firing of 600 agents of the Federal Judicial Police. In 1993, Jorge Carpizo applied the same recipe and got rid of 237 agents who did not enjoy his trust. Later, in 1994, when Congress approved the Federal Law of Responsibilities of Public Servants, 1,205 agents were fired or voluntarily left their job at the PGR. (Carpizo 1994:30). Under the Presidency of Ernesto Zedillo, the new Attorney General, Antonio Lozano Gracia, fired 1,250 agents

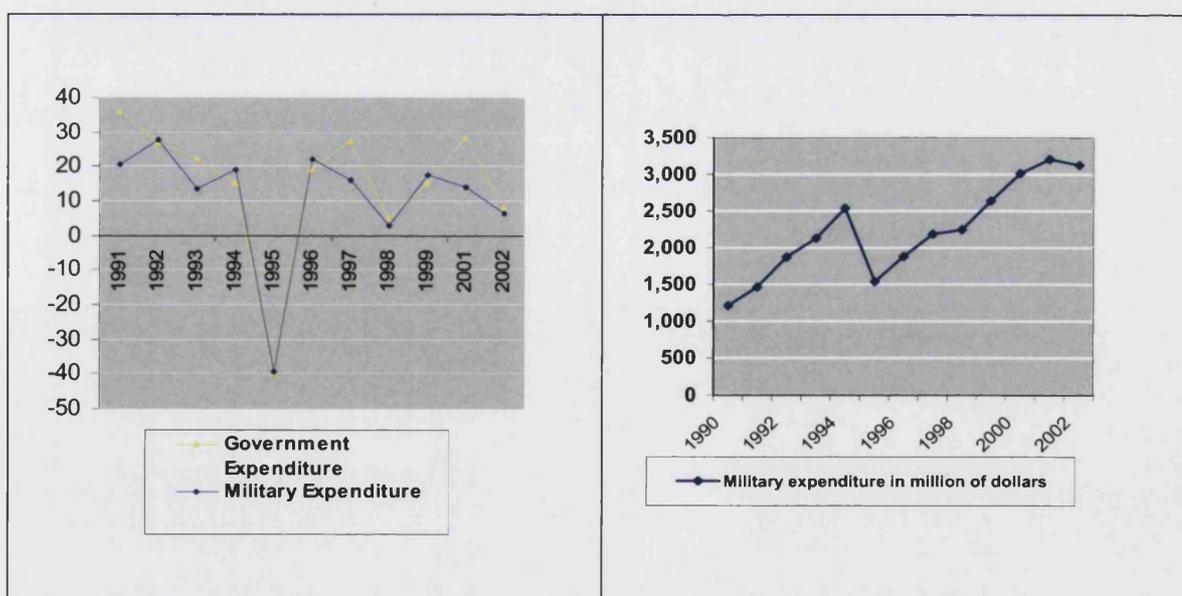
of the Federal Judicial Police²¹. One year later, when a major corruption scandal exploded at the INDC, another 1,100 agents left the Department. By the onset of Vicente Fox's presidency (2000-2006), the PGR had about 1,300 agents. This was one fourth of those that had been contemplated by the annual budget and by January 2003, the new Attorney General, Rafael Macedo de la Concha, fired another 200 agents (Davidow 2004:266).

8.2.1 Budgets, performance and personnel growth of the armed forces as a result of their participation in drug trafficking.

While the PGR has been virtually dismantled since 1989, the armed forces experienced a completely different fate. While most state agencies have been characterised by deep cuts in government spending, the military is one of the few that massively increased its size during the 1990s (Andreas 1998). In other words, military budget allocations resisted the uneasiness of the Mexican economy in the second half of the 1990s. With the exception of 1995, military spending has consistently increased.

Figure 8.2

Variations in percentage of government and military expenditure, 1991-2002



Source: Statistical appendix of the fourth address to the nation of President Vicente Fox Quezada (Fox 2004) and SIPRI Military Expenditure Database <http://milexdata.sipri.org/result.php4>

²¹ Unfortunately, within two years, 500 of them had to be rehired, because even if they were corrupt, they still had labour rights. See Labardini, Rodrigo. "Mexico's Federal Organised Crime Act" *United States-Mexico Law Journal*. Vol 11, The University of New Mexico. School of Law Albuquerque. Spring 2003

A correlation analysis between the total government budget and the budgets of other government ministries since 1990 gives further evidence of the relevance the armed forces acquired in the years that followed. Military allocations increased at the same pace as total government spending, which marks a sharp contrast to what occurred in other ministries, whose budgets experienced serious cuts as a result of the economic crisis of 1995. (Table 8.2). The Military budget increased even more than budgets of key areas of the public administration, such as the Interior Ministry, Inland Revenue, the Foreign Affairs Secretary and Education, all considered Type “A” Secretariats.

Table 8.2

**Correlation between government expenditure and selected ministries budgets
1990-2001**

| | | Military Budget | Inland Revenue Ministry Budget | Ministry of Energy Budget | Communications Ministry Budget | Foreign affairs ministry Budget | Ministry of the Interior Budget | Secretary of economy Budget | Secretary of Education Budget |
|---|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Government budget | Pearson Correlation | .988(* *) | .841(**) | .230 | .350 | .955(**) | .948(**) | -.419 | .678(*) |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .001 | .497 | .291 | .000 | .000 | .200 | .022 |
| | N | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 |
| ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). | | | | | | | | | |

Source: Calculations made with data taken from the statistical appendix of the fourth address to the nation of President Vicente Fox Quezada

The consistent increase in military budget allocations also positively affected the capacities of the armed forces, particularly the army, in the campaign against drug trafficking. Drug interdiction and eradication increased almost at the same rate as budget allocation, shown by the correlations detailed in Table 8.2. It also improved their capabilities to ensure vigilance on highways and at airports, disaster relief and health assistance campaigns to the civilian population (army only), and apprehensions of drug related suspects (army only). The growth of the military membership also became possible. Still, it is necessary to point out that most of the statistics of eradication and interdiction of drugs are provided by the armed forces themselves, without any sort of external supervision or verification. Therefore, it is important at least to consider the possibility that such estimations could be manufactured to justify the constant increase of their budget.

Table 8.3

Correlation between military budget allocation and military functions 1990-2001

| | | Military Cocaine Seizures | Military Marijuana Seizures | Military Marijuana Eradications in HC | Military eradication opium poppy fields in HC | Military vigilance operations |
|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| Military Budget | Pearson Correlation | .608(*) | .726(*) | .716(*) | .535 | .691(*) |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .047 | .011 | .013 | .090 | .019 |
| | N | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 |

| | | Professional isation of the armed forces | Military Personnel | Disaster relief operations | Military detentions related to Drug Trafficking | Military health provision to civil population | Schools repaired by military personnel |
|--|---------------------|--|--------------------|----------------------------|---|---|--|
| Military Budget | Pearson Correlation | .818(**) | .686(*) | .483 | .200 | -.638(*) | .534 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .002 | .020 | .133 | .555 | .035 | .091 |
| | N | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 |
| ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). | | | | | | | |

Source: Calculations made with data taken from the statistical appendix of the fourth address to the nation of President Vicente Fox Quezada.

8.2.2 Changes in the scale and criteria for moving across the ranks in the army

In addition to increasing budget allocations, the 1990s were also marked by an increase of promotions to the highest ranks within the army. This can be seen by comparing the promotions of army officers to the rank of colonel from 1976 to 1988 with those promotions that took place between 1989 and 2002. Here it is possible to appreciate a 60 per cent increase, 49 percent more in Brigadier Generals, 56 per cent increase in Brigade Generals and only 5 percent more on Division Generals. In sum, by 2002, the Mexican army had one general for every 348 soldiers, while the US army had one for every 1,467²².

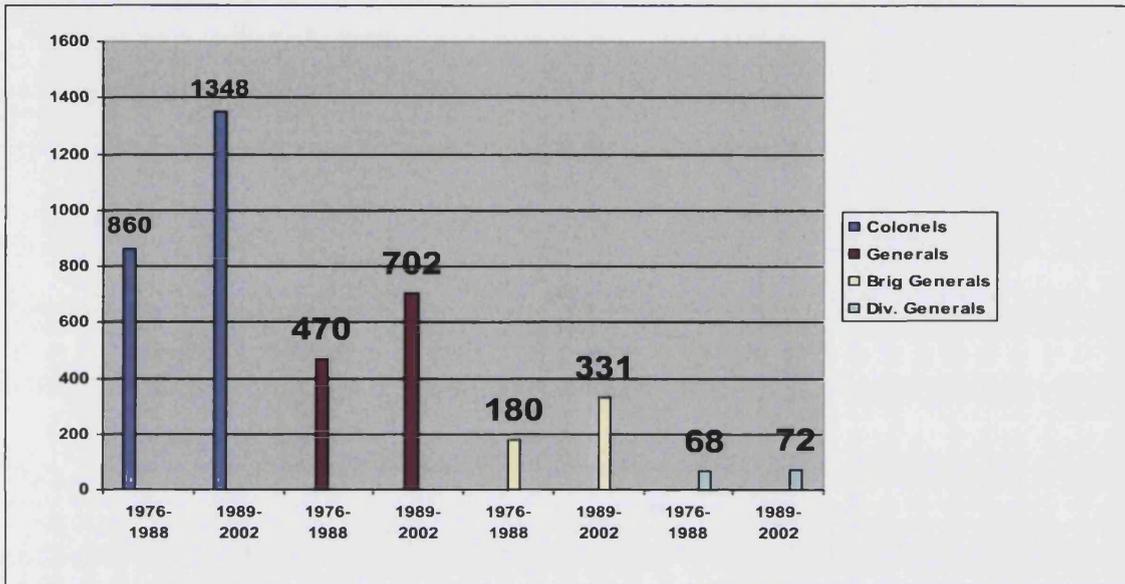
It is important to mention that the Secretary of Defence presents the promotions from colonel to division general to President's approval every year during the Anniversary of the Mexican Revolution. Once the president approves the promotions, the Senate makes the final ratification. During the 1990s, the number of promotions to the highest echelons of the army considerably increased in number and the president and the Senate approved them immediately (see figure 8.3). This attitude also exhibits the willingness

²² Fuentes, Víctor "Empareja México a EU en generales" *Reforma*, November 24, 2002

of both powers to comply with military demands.

Figure 8.3

Number of officers promoted to the ranks of division general, brigade general, brigadier general and colonel for the period 1976-1988 and 1989-2002



Source: Information provided by the Secretary of Defence to this author. IFAI Petition 0000700039604

If a higher number of promotions of army officers to top military ranks indicate the growing influence of the army in the political system as well as a more extensive package of rewards to its membership, it is important to point out that this transformation has also a clear qualitative nature. Since 1989, it seems that army began to increase the rewards to officers with direct participation in counterinsurgency and drug trafficking operations. Nowadays, reaching the top of the army hierarchy requires a concise record of service in military zones identified with the production of illicit drugs or the presence of guerrilla activity (See Table 8.4).

Table 8.4

States identified by the army to be highly active in drug trafficking (DT) or face presence of guerrilla movements (G)

| | National Ranking of Violent homicides 2007 ²³ | National ranking on positive opinion of the armed forces at sub-national level 2008 ²⁴ | National ranking on reported violations to human rights of the armed forces 2007 ²⁵ |
|----------------------|--|---|--|
| Baja California (DT) | 4 th | 2 nd | 15 th |
| Chiapas (DT) | 24 th | 5 th | 10 th |
| Chihuahua (DT) | 5 th | 6 th | 8 th |
| Guerrero (DT and G) | 2 nd | 6 th | 13 th |
| Michoacán (DT and G) | 3 rd | 8 th | 1 st |
| Sinaloa (DT) | 1 st | 6 th | 4 th |
| Sonora (DT) | 7 th | 6 th | 9 th |
| Tamaulipas (DT) | 12 th | 3 rd | 3 rd |

Source: Constructed by the author

Through an analysis of the databases sent to this author by the Secretary of Defence, it is possible to identify that from 1976 to 1988, 30 percent of those officers who reached the rank of Division General had command experience in zones where the army itself recognises the high presence of insurgency (See table 8.5) . For the following period, 1989-2002, that proportion increased to 47 percent. For the case of direct command experience in military zones identified with the presence of drug traffic activities, the percentage passed from 34 between 1976 and 1988, to 43 percent in the following period under study. This transformation is also noticeable at lower levels of the hierarchy. In the case of Brigade General, the second highest rank within army files, the results are as follows:

²³ Data retrieved from the daily report of the nacional newspaper Reforma on violent executions in the country. www.reforma.com

²⁴ (GCE, 2008)

²⁵ Garduño, Silvia, "llueven quejas a la sedena". *Reforma*. May 19, 2008

Table 8.5

Command experience of army officers promoted to the rank of division and brigade general 1976-2002

| Command experience of army officers promoted to the rank of Division General | | | Command experience of army officers promoted to the rank of Brigade General | | |
|--|-----------|---------------------------|---|-----------|---------------------------|
| | Guerrilla | Drug Trafficking Activity | | Guerrilla | Drug Trafficking Activity |
| 1976-1988 | 39% | 16% | 1976-1988 | 10% | 34% |
| 1989-2002 | 48% | 27% | 1989-2002 | 16% | 43% |

Source: own construction with data provided by the Secretary of Defence IFAI petition number 0000700043003 and 0000700039604. On the states identified by the Secretary of Defence to host the largest number of guerrillas IFAI 0410000023405.

A third indication of the transformation of the army as a result of its increasing participation in the system of public security is the willingness of the institution to provide more opportunities of direct command experience to high ranking officers. In this area, we found that chiefs of army zones are being rotated more often after 1989 than in the previous period under analysis. Rotations seem to be more acute in Sinaloa, Chihuahua and Michoacán, where chiefs of military zones last barely a year in their posts when in the previous period under study they stayed considerably longer.

Table 8.6

Average of months in post of chief army military zones

| Drug Trafficking | 1976-1989 | 1989-2003 | | Guerrilla | 1976-1989 | 1989-2003 |
|------------------|-----------|-----------|--|------------------|-------------|-----------|
| Sonora | 18 | 14 | | Oaxaca | 19 | 13 |
| Chihuahua | 25 | 12 | | Guerrero | 27 | 15 |
| Durango | 22 | 19 | | Chiapas | 16 | 14 |
| Sinaloa | 19 | 13 | | Puebla | 20 | 14 |
| Nayarit | 13 | 12 | | Estado de Mexico | 26 | 9 |
| Michoacán | 24 | 14 | | | 21.6 | 13 |
| | 20 | 14 | | | | |

Source: own construction with data provided by the Secretary of Defence IFAI petition number 0000700043003 and 0000700039604.

In sum, it seems clear the army has taken the mission of guarding public security and combating drugs very seriously. As we can appreciate by this data, the army has not only increased the number of officers promoted to the highest ranks within the institution, but also favoured their specialization in the areas that represent the driving force of its recent expansive role in the political system, meaning the fight against drug dealing and counterinsurgency. This may show their willingness to take over key policy

areas in the system of public security with a long-term perspective²⁶. The conclusions drawn from this data present a sharp contrast with the army's alleged reluctance to take over the mission of combating drug trafficking from civilian agencies. This contradiction between their apparent reluctance to fight drug cartels and their patent proclivity to gain more political influence and economic power through this task may be difficult to comprehend. Admiral Rafael Gálvez Ibarra, who participated in the creation of the Federal Preventive Police in 1997, explained to the author that the army clearly uses a double discourse. According to Gálvez Ibarra, their intention is to occupy as many positions in the system of public security as possible, because this means an expansion of their influence in the political system. However, they need to publicly acknowledge that police agencies are very difficult to handle because of the endemic phenomenon of corruption they suffer. In that way, they can protect the good name of the institution in case a scandal breaks out (Veracruz, Ver. July 23, 2003).

Besides the increase in size and budget allocations, the military, especially the army, continued gaining space in areas of public security that had been traditionally occupied by civilians. However, their missions were not limited to fighting drug trafficking or the reorganisation of the PRG. President Salinas called the armed forces to maintain the public order during local elections in Baja California Sur, Hidalgo, Guerrero, Quintana Roo, San Luis Potosí, Estado de México, Nayarit and Yucatán,²⁷ and sent soldiers to replace bus drivers during the strike of the Ruta 100, the state owned public transportation company of the government of Mexico City in 1989.

Salinas also used the army to apprehend Joaquín Hernández Galicia ("*La Quina*"), leader of the Oil Workers' Union, for illegal accumulation of weapons intended for the exclusive use of the armed forces, as well as for assassination and corruption. In his memoirs, former President Salinas affirms that he got the indication from his Secretary of Defense that *La Quina* and his personnel had firearms without the proper documentation and permits (Salinas de Gortari 2000:502). It is important to notice that in Mexico, civilians who wish to carry a firearm need to request a special permit from the Secretary of Defense. This was the argument President Salinas employed to justify

²⁶ In fact, Vice Admiral Wilfrido Robledo, Director of the Federal Preventive Police, affirmed that the presence of the armed forces in the system of public security would last at least 15 years. Martínez Mcnaught, Hugo. "*Quedará lista la PFP en 15 años: Robledo*" *Reforma*. November 19, 1999.

²⁷ Trejo, Armando "*Entre los desastres y la guerrilla*" *Reforma*. February 16, 1994

the intervention of the army against Hernandez Galicia on the morning of 10th January, 1989. It was, however, a controversial argument. Article 129 of the Mexican Constitution prohibits the use of the army on missions that do not correspond strictly to “military discipline,” unless the Mexican Congress declares the suspension of constitutional guarantees. That was certainly not the case during the apprehension of *La Quina*. In fact, the partisan utilization of the army to hunt down a well-known political enemy of President Salinas²⁸ was seen by academics and political commentator of the time as a powerful message to other trade union leaders or members of the PRI who wished to oppose his policies²⁹ (Reding 1989). This view was recently corroborated by a released intelligence document of the United States and published by the National Security Archive. According to this file, Fidel Velazquez, the emblematic leader of the CTM, informed the US Embassy, that Hernández Galicia was incarcerated because he had several times challenged the policies of the PRI and the President. Fidel Velázquez stated that La Quina had gone too far in his attacks on the PRI, the Governor of *El Estado de Mexico*, former president Miguel de la Madrid and President Salinas, “...things were out of control and it was clear that the government, in this case the President, was forced to act”³⁰.

8.2.3 Formalising the role of the armed forces in the system of public security

Militarisation of public security continued during the Presidency of Ernesto Zedillo. However, it was during his *sexenio* when such participation acquired an important qualitative shift. The participation of the military in missions of public security, as it was portrayed in President Zedillo’s National Development Plan, represented the chief asset of the Mexican state to combat the power of the drug cartels. In 1996, the Mexican

²⁸ The animosity between *La Quina* and Carlos Salinas was not new. Back in 1984, Carlos Salinas, Minister of Budget and Planning under the Administration of Miguel de la Madrid, prohibited the participation of trade unions as Pemex’s contractors or outsourcers. This decision was then considered as a challenge from the young Minister to one of the principal sources of power and illicit enrichment of Pemex’s trade union leaders. See Hinojosa, Oscar. “*La malquerencia entre Salinas y la Quina surgió a la luz pública en 1984 y fue creciendo*”. *Proceso* January 16, 1989. Ever since, Hernández Galicia did not conceal his discontent with the proponents of neoliberalism and De la Madrid’s economic policy. Not surprisingly, it was in the public domain that Hernández Galicia was unhappy with PRI’s nomination of Salinas as presidential candidate. Even when the Pemex’s trade union formally supported the PRI, it has been argued that *La Quina* threw part of his support behind Salinas’ main electoral contender, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, in the presidential elections of 1988. See Enrique, Maza. “*Tres Presidentes le rindieron pleitesía. El de la Quina, un imperio construido a golpes de corrupción*”. *Proceso*. 16 January, 1989.

²⁹ See López, Narváez, Froylan. “*La subversión de La Quina*”. *Proceso*. January 16, 1989; Castañeda, Jorge. “*El ocaso de un sistema*”. *Proceso*, January 16, 1989.

³⁰ Lizarraga, Daniel. “*El Quinazo, una venganza política*”. *Proceso* August 10, 2008

Congress formalised this role in the law that created the National System of Public Security (SNSP). According to the new strategy, the army assumed a central role in backing federal, state and local police bodies in their effort to confront organised crime (Moloeznik 2001:100). This cooperation included direct intervention of the military in anticrime operations, designing and implementation of training programs for police bodies. With the creation of the SNSP, the participation of the military ceased to be an arbitrary choice of the executive power to deal with the problem of public security. Instead, their roles became institutionalised in the best-funded policy of President Zedillo's administration. Under this scheme, the armed forces were allowed to arrest drug related criminals, interrogate them, carry out investigations and use their intelligence apparatus to support their tasks against criminal organisations (Arzt 2001).

In fact, the intervention of the military in the system of public security was taken even further in the second half of Zedillo's term of office under the name of the National Crusade Against Crime (NCAC). Highly advertised on radio and TV, the NCAC focused strongly on reducing criminality levels in the country through modernization of police bodies and the participation of the armed forces. Not surprisingly, it was also meant to strengthen the position of Francisco Labastida —the Interior Minister who later became the presidential candidate of the ruling party— in preparation for the upcoming presidential election. In the same year, President Zedillo created the Federal Preventive Police, a new security agency whose human resources, nearly 5,500, came directly from Army and Navy battalions (Sierra-Guzmán 2003:31)³¹.

As in the past, President Zedillo's strategy started with the assumption that military-educated personnel were more resistant to the corrupting power of the drug cartels and other forms of organised criminality. Furthermore, their rigorous instruction and civic education were thought to be helpful to boost the efficiency of police agencies (Mares 2003:63). No doubt, this vision was widely accepted among the political elite, regardless of party affiliation, until General Jesús Gutiérrez Rebollo, Mexico's Drug

³¹ When President Zedillo created the PFP in 1999, about half of the original agents were on loan from the military police. Under Fox, the number of soldiers within the PFP increased by twenty-five percent, thanks to the addition of 1,700 newly hired agents and the incorporation of 826 new recruits from the Federal Support Forces (*Fuerzas Federales de Apoyo*, FFA), which are composed entirely of military police and members of the navy. Based on information from the Second State of the Government Report, compete army units were transferred to the FFA to make a current total of eight, including the Third Military Police Brigade and the Tenth Military Police Battalion. 1,600 members of several navy battalions were also added to the PFP. Top positions in the PFP are also held by military officers: The FFA is led by a general, and the PFP as a whole is led by a retired brigadier general.

Czar, was removed from his position in February 1997 for his alleged links to the criminal underworld. It was alleged that Gutiérrez Rebollo maintained close ties with Amado Carrillo Fuentes, leader of the Juárez Cartel (Chabat 2002:140). It was also found that General Gutiérrez lived in the same building as Carrillo; that he was particularly aggressive towards the Arellano Félix Cartel, while remaining rather ineffective against Carrillo's organisation³².

This was not the first time that a high-ranked military officer was presumably involved with drug trafficking. President Salinas removed Admiral Mauricio Schleske from the position of Secretary of the Navy in 1990, presumably for his alleged links with drug traffickers³³. However, the official story was that Schleske left his post due to health problems³⁴. The other case was the corruption scandal of General Juan Arevalo Gardoqui, the Secretary of Defence under President De la Madrid. Still no formal accusations were made in that case, even when the DEA had a number of testimonies supporting the General Arevalo Gardoqui's guilt (Wager 1994:15). However, the case of Gutiérrez Rebollo was different. For the Mexican government, the international community and the military itself, it became clear that one of the major powers of the State against drug trafficking was being used to serve the interests of a criminal organisation. The magnitude of the scandal led to the disappearance of the INDC and the creation of the Special Prosecutor's Office for Crimes Against Health (FEADS), but the military participation in the war against drugs was not affected, nor was the perception of the population towards the military, which remained as high as it had been for decades. Furthermore, the US government continued portraying Mexico's decision to involve its armed forces in the war against drug trafficking as the best possible solution to the problem. The director of the DEA, Barry McCaffrey, recognised that the Mexican army represented an adequate instrument to counteract drug trafficking, because their values, discipline, honour, and self-sacrifice made them less vulnerable to corruption³⁵. It seems this is an institutional position of the US Government. Silvestre Reyes, who is the President of the Intelligence Committee of the US Congress, affirmed

³² Riva Palacio, Raymundo. "Sin asombros" *Reforma*. February 24, 1997

³³ Ortiz Pinchetti, Francisco. "Actividades de narcos de las que Schleske debió estar enterado" *Proceso*. July 23, 1990

³⁴ Gómez Leyva, Ciro. "El escenario del caos" *Reforma*. February 23, 1997

³⁵ González Maribel and Romero, Cesar. "Democracia es vital en lucha antinarco" *Reforma*. May 13, 1999

that the decision of President Calderón to involve the army in the war against drug trafficking is not only respected but highly valued by the United States³⁶.

All the same, the incarceration of Gutiérrez Rebollo did multiply the voices of opposition politicians, retired army officers, and leaders of national and international organisations of Human Rights challenging the idea that the militarisation of public security represented a sensible policy to counteract criminality. For instance, Francisco Molina, former Director of the INCD in 1996 and PAN Senator in 1997, declared that involving the military in the war against drug trafficking was a serious mistake made by President Zedillo. Molina argued that there were no evidence to assure that the military had been more effective or less corrupt than the civilian police in such tasks³⁷. In fact, Molina argued that 150 officers from the armed forces had been found to be linked to criminal organisations³⁸. A secret dossier leaked to the press in July 1997 clearly showed the great concern of the army concerning the links of high ranked officers to the drug mafias. The files included the names of 10 generals who had been investigated on that matter since 1990. General Gutiérrez Rebollo was not on that list³⁹.

For the leading academic expert on the Mexican Military, Roderic Ai Camp, the incarceration of General Gutiérrez meant further evidence of the impossibility of guaranteeing the immunity of military officers from the corruptive power of the drug cartels⁴⁰. In fact, many studies deal with the proclivity of the Mexican Military to become corrupt (Schulz 1997; Shelley 2001). General Luis Garfias, former president of the Commission of Defence of the Federal Congress, affirmed that it was urgent to keep good care of the army and retire it as soon as possible from the war on drugs as well as to limit its role and involvement to missions of eradication of marihuana or opium poppy fields⁴¹.

³⁶ Guerrero Claudia. "Pide México a EU su Plan Colombia". *Reforma*. June 9, 2007

³⁷ Carlos Resa Nestares argues that there is a direct relationship between high military presence and high production of illegal drugs, because the military centralises the cost of corruption in a single agency, facilitating the activities of growers of illegal crops. Resa Nestares, Carlos. "El ejército mexicano y el comercio ilegal de drogas". *Nota de Investigación*. Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. 2002

³⁸ Ravelo, Ricardo. "El Narcotráfico invencible. En la PGR, los enemigos en casa". *Proceso*. May 14, 2000.

³⁹ "Archivos secretos del Ejército señalan a jefes y oficiales involucrados con capos de la droga" *Reforma*. July 27, 1997.

⁴⁰ Martínez McNaught, Hugo. "Necesaria una política antinarco alternativa" *Reforma*. March 21, 1997

⁴¹ Martínez McNaught, Hugo. "Obligados Sedena y Zedillo a revisar estructura militar". *Reforma*. January 28, 1998.

From all these voices against the participation of the military in counter-narcotics operations, it is interesting to read the declarations and even articles written by Felipe Calderón, current President of Mexico, while he served as the national leader of PAN. In February 1997, Calderón stated that the armed forces were being excessively used by President Zedillo. He argued that the military had been unnecessarily exposed to situations like the case of General Gutiérrez Rebollo⁴². Calderón also said that the disproportionate use and abuse of the armed forces in missions that correspond to civilian agencies, meaning public security, could only set the military on a path of institutional debacle⁴³. Despite the strong position of Felipe Calderón concerning the missions that should not be carried out by the armed forces, his record as President of México tells a different story. I will return to this issue in the final section of the chapter.

No doubt the avalanche of criticisms of the armed forces, particularly the army, after the incarceration of Gutiérrez Rebollo, forced President Ernesto Zedillo to appear on National Television to defend the reputation of the military and their participation in the war against drug trafficking. Zedillo pointed out that the Mexican Army, as an institution, supports legality and represents the great ally of Mexicans to defend the country's security as well as to counteract, without hesitation, organised criminality⁴⁴. The behaviour of President Zedillo on this issue was consistent with the system of civil-military relations and honoured one of the basic rules of the agreement between the executive power and the armed forces; that is, to secure their corporate interest and moral capital whenever it may be threatened.

8.3 Democratisation and militarisation of public security.

Despite the rhetoric of president Zedillo on the topic of public security and an acceptable performance of the country's economy during the last two years of his mandate, the ruling party lost the presidential election in July 2000 after 70 years in office. Great expectations were formed on the arrival of Vicente Fox to the presidency in terms of democratisation of the system of civil-military relations and the redefinition

⁴² Caballero, Alejandro and Román, Gerardo. "Se recurre en exceso al Ejército" Reforma. February 20, 1997

⁴³ García, Adán. "Exige PAN evitar abuso de funciones". Reforma. July 31, 1997. Also see, Calderón Hinojosa, Felipe "Cambios en el Necaxa" Reforma. May 18, 1998.

⁴⁴ "Es el Ejército el gran aliado: Zedillo" Reforma. March 20, 1997

of the missions of the armed forces. In fact, one of Fox's campaign proposals was to take the military out of the war against drug trafficking (Camp 2005:116). His position towards the issue was to consider drug trafficking as a problem of public health, not national security. There was even a presumed intention of the team commanding the transition to find ways of selecting a civilian defence minister. Apparently, the idea was to appoint a retired general as the secretary of defence, so he could prepare the arrival, within a period of two years, of a civilian successor⁴⁵. The idea was not new; it had been implemented in Uruguay, Paraguay and El Salvador in the 1980s and 90s⁴⁶.

However, none of the above plans or ideas was carried to fruition. One day after the arrival of Vicente Fox to the Presidency, the Minister of Defence, General Vega García, declared that he had been instructed to fully concentrate on the war against drug trafficking⁴⁷. This was the first sign that the arrival of a president from a political party different to the PRI did not mean a shift of direction in terms of public security and the inherited trend of militarisation⁴⁸. On the contrary, it was during the Presidency of Vicente Fox that the PGR seemed for the first time in history as a mere extension of the Secretary of Defense. By 2002, Mexico's Attorney General was an on-leave army general and 16 out of the 20 most important positions within The Attorney-General's office (PGR) and the Federal Secretariat of Public Security had military backgrounds⁴⁹ (See table 8.7)

⁴⁵ Tirado, Erubiel. "Fox: *del azul al verde olivo*". Proceso August 26, 2000

⁴⁶ Barajas, Abel: *Interview to Luis Garfias Magaña, "Yo mejor que Godinez"* Reforma. July 21, 2000

⁴⁷ Alegre, Luis. "*Ratifica Sedena lucha antinarco*" Reforma. December 2, 2000

⁴⁸ Tirado, Erubiel. "*Ahí vienen*" Proceso. January 15, 2005

⁴⁹ Gen. Rafael Macedo de la Concha, Attorney General, brought a number of military officers with him into the PGR. They were given top positions in counter-narcotics and intelligence divisions. Brig. Gen. Demetrio Gaytán Ochoa was named anti-drug operations coordinator, responsible for detecting and destroying marijuana and poppy plants. Gaytán was later replaced by Div. Gen. José Rubén Rivas Peña, whose previous record included counterinsurgency campaigns in Chiapas and training at the U.S. Army's School of the Americas. Gen. Carlos Fernando Luque Luna, former director of military intelligence, was named CENDRO's director. In addition, Div. Gen. Alfonso Mancera Segura was named director of the PGR's training institute.

Table 8.7

Top positions occupied by high-ranking military officers in the PRG and the Secretariat of Public Security in 2002.

| Position | Name | Military Rank |
|---|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Nation's General Attorney. PGR | Rafael Macedo de la Concha | General |
| Attorney General Chief of Staff | Alejandro Ramos | Lieutenant Colonel |
| Coordination of Operations Against Drug Trafficking | Oliver Cen | General |
| Drug Control Planning Centre CENDRO | Carlos Fernando Luque | General |
| Federal Judicial Police PJF | Genaro Luna | Civilian |
| *Assistant Director of the PJF | Pedro Huerta | General |
| Federal Preventive Police Coordinator. | Guillermo Alvarez | General |
| Operations coordinator of the PGR | Carlos Demetrio Gaytán | General |
| General Direction of Eradication PGR | Arnoldo Rios | Lieutenant Colonel |
| General Direction of Search and Interception SSP | Carlos Mendivil | General |
| Director of the Federal Police Academy SSP | Luis Angeles Fuentes | General |
| Internal affairs SSP | Alfonso Hernandez Morales | General |
| Direction of interagency coordination SSP | Eduardo Gómez García | Lieutenant Colonel |
| Direction of maritime interception SSP | Carlos Humberto Lanz | Admiral |
| Direction of land interception SSP | Eufebio Ibarra Flores | Lieutenant Colonel |
| Direction of air Operations SSP | Joel Guzmán Molina | Captain |
| General Direction of Interception SSP | Agustín Becerra | Colonel |
| General coordinator of operations SSP | Demetrio Gaytán | General |
| Direction of IT and telecommunications SSP | Carlos Villa | Lieutenant Colonel |
| General Direction of Air Services SSP | Roberto Noble | General |
| Direction of appropriations SSP | Hilario Mejía | Lieutenant Colonel |

Source: Alegre, Luis and Barajas, Abel. "Monopolizan Militares el combate Antinarco". *Reforma*. March 18, 2001. Information sent to the author by the army. Petition number: 0000700034603 and 0000700039703

Furthermore, the presence of the armed forces is not limited to agencies of the federal administration. They have also begun to dominate state and local agencies of security. Based on information obtained through the Freedom of Government Information Law, the army is known to have 241 officers, retired or on-leave, working in public security institutions in 2003 (Table 8.8).

Table 8.8

Army personnel working in public security positions at federal and state level in 2003

| Generals | Colonels | Majors | Captains | Lieutenant | Sergeants |
|----------|----------|--------|----------|------------|-----------|
| 54 | 46 | 32 | 43 | 40 | 48 |

Source: Constructed by the author, based on information from the army. IFAI Petition number: 0000700034603 and 0000700039703

Even if the number does not look significant, the positions they occupied in local and state police corporations made a notable difference. High-ranking army officers commanded 16 out of the 32 state police departments in the country and nine were secretaries of public security at state level (Table 8.9). In 2004, only in Aguascalientes and Tlaxcala, the smallest states of the country, did the army have no public security functions.

Table 8.9

Army personnel occupying high positions in state public security systems

| Status | Position | Rank |
|---------------------|---|----------------|
| Colima | Secretary of Public Security | Captain (2004) |
| Guerrero | Secretary of Public Security | Mayor (2008) |
| Nayarit | Executive Secretary of the State Council of Public Security | General (2004) |
| Nuevo León | Secretary of Public Security | General (2008) |
| Puebla | Secretary of Public Security | General (2004) |
| Quintana Roo | Secretary of Public Security | General (2004) |
| Tamaulipas | Secretary of Public Security | General (2004) |
| Tlaxcala | Secretary of Public Security | General (2005) |
| Veracruz | Secretary of Public Security | Captain (2004) |
| | | |
| Baja California Sur | Chief of State Police | Captain |
| Colima | Chief of State Police | General |
| Distrito Federal | Chief of State Industrial Police | Mayor |
| Estado de México | Chief of State Police | General |
| Guerrero | Chief of State Police | Lieutenant |
| Hidalgo | Chief of State Police | Captain |
| Jalisco | Chief of State Police | General |
| Michoacán | Chief of State Police | Colonel |
| Morelos | Chief of State Police | Colonel |
| Nayarit | Chief of State Police | Captain |
| Nuevo León | Chief of State Police | General |
| Oaxaca | Chief of State Police | Mayor |
| Puebla | Chief of State Police | General |
| Quintana Roo | Chief of State Police | General |
| Tabasco | Chief of State Police | Mayor |

Information sent to the author by the army. IFAI Petition number: 0000700034603 and 0000700039703

The method followed by elected officials to select those in charge of local and state police agencies is also symptomatic of the enormous influence of the armed forces in this field. Governor Fidel Herrera stated that he made the decision to appoint General Orozco as his Secretary of Public Security by direct recommendation of the Secretary of Defence, General Clemente Vega García. The governor told the author that this method was a common practice among PRI governors, as he got the advice to call General Clemente from José Natividad González Paras, the governor of Nuevo León. (London UK, February 20th, 2006). This practice of consulting the Secretary of Defence or the Regional Military chief seems to be common among elected officials, regardless their political affiliation, when it comes to selecting a chief of police. In an interview dated 13th May 2008, the PAN Governor of Baja California, Francisco Osuna Milan, affirmed that the appointments of the head of the police agencies of Tijuana, Ensenada and Tecate were made by direct recommendation of General Aponte Polito, the Military Chief of the northern region⁵⁰.

Moreover, the information provided by the military on the allocation of on-leave or retired officers in local and state institutions of public security revealed that up to 2004, the army tried to avoid direct participation in local police agencies in states with a high density of illegal crop cultivation (Sinaloa, Chihuahua, Durango, Sonora and Nayarit) or that share the northern border with the United States (Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila and Tamaulipas). It is quite possible to think that this trend had everything to do with their intention to prevent possible corruption links that have traditionally emerged among civilian law enforcement institutions in this particular set of states. Quite the opposite occurs near the southern border, where high participation of army officers in state and local public security agencies is noticeable.

It terms of presumed violations of human rights by the military, it is interesting to note that the highest number of reported violations to human rights in 2007 occurred in states where the federal government put in motion the emergency security plan known as “*Mexico Seguro*”⁵¹: Baja California, Chihuahua, Guerrero, Tamaulipas, Michoacán,

⁵⁰ Such statement was made by Governor Osuna during an interview within the radio news show of Joaquín López Doriga. The interview can be listened at: http://www.radioformula.com.mx/multimedia/jld/130508_jld1_ram

⁵¹ The *Mexico Seguro* plan is an interagency policy that includes the armed forces, federal and local police forces in joint operations of stop and search as well as provide constant surveillance of highways, ports and airports.

Nuevo León, Sinaloa and Sonora. This plan, originally implemented by President Vicente Fox in 2005 and maintained by Felipe Calderón, is meant to stop sudden upsurges of violence in states identified by the armed forces and intelligence bodies as hosting the main criminal organisations, mostly connected to drug trafficking⁵². According to information of the CNDH, five out the six states with more presumed violations of human rights committed by the military were included in the first part of this programme (See table 8.10). In other words, high physical presence and activity of the armed forces seems to be related to a high index of alleged human rights violations (Freeman 2002). Still, this phenomenon does not affect the military's good image among the population in this small but significant number of states. A recent public opinion study, the first of its kind that has been made available to the public, indicates that the highest evaluation achieved by the military among the population (on a scale from 1 to 10) was reached in Colima, a tiny state located on the pacific coast, with 8.4 (GCE 2008). After Colima, we find Baja California second, Tamaulipas third, Chiapas fifth, Sinaloa sixth, Sonora seventh and Michoacán eighth. The rating obtained throughout these states was above the National average of 7.5 and all were recipients of the "*Mexico Seguro*" Plan. Furthermore, all these states are also identified by the military as either high in the presence of drug trafficking (Baja California, Sinaloa, Tamaulipas and Sonora), or suffering guerrilla activity (Chiapas and Guerrero); and even in a couple of cases, a combination of both (Michoacán and Guerrero). If we look at the number of violent assassinations connected with drug trafficking, the list of states that rank at the top is not particularly different. Sinaloa comes first with 346 violent executions in 2007, 253 in Guerrero, 238 in Michoacán 154 in Baja California and 125 in Sonora⁵³. A complete radiography of this data can be consulted in Table 8.10

The analysis of this data suggests that the image of the armed forces is not affected by their presumed violations of human rights, the implementation of highly invasive security operations such as *Mexico Seguro*, or even their high, permanent and visible deployment of troops. On the contrary, whenever the presence of the military is high, either as a result of guerrilla or drug trafficking activities, they register a noticeable appreciation from the population. In fact, according to a Bimsa poll made in 2000, 66 per cent of the Mexican citizens believed that the armed forces should participate more

⁵² Melgar, Ivonne. "*Solicita Fox a EU apoyo anticrimen*. Reforma. June 14, 2005

⁵³ Data retrieved from the daily report of the national newspaper Reforma on executions in the country. www.reforma.com

in tasks of public security⁵⁴. It seems that this fact has made elected politicians, the president included, to rely increasingly on the armed forces not only to contain the advance of criminality, but also to convey the idea of commitment to attend the problem of public insecurity. This attitude was recently taken to the extreme by President Felipe Calderón, who, on his first day in office, appeared on TV dressed in an army uniform while commanding military operations against drug trafficking in Apatzingan, Michoacán. During the same event, Calderón announced a policy of austerity and restricted government expenditure, but he made clear that such cuts would not affect the military. On the contrary, soldiers' salaries would be raised. Calderón's speech was also accompanied by a strong campaign on TV and radio, where the president says "it is an honour to command a military organisation whose origin are the people of Mexico, that is identified with the people and works for the people." It has been suggested by many political analysts that the President's extreme reliance to the armed forces and his public adulation of them is the result of his weakened legitimacy and political authority, deriving from the challenging attitude of Andres Manuel López Obrador and his refusal to accept defeat in the presidential election of July 2006⁵⁵. Therefore, Calderón has been obliged to rely too much on the political institution that enjoys the highest regard of the population, meaning the armed forces⁵⁶, as a way to enhance his public image⁵⁷.

It is fair to say that this general attitude is not exclusive of the executive power, but shared among politicians and members of congress. In an interview, José Alberto Aguilar Iñarritu, former federal representative and member of the congressional commission of National Defence, affirmed that we should not disregard the military as they are the experts on national security and enjoy the full confidence of the population (Mexico City. September 20th 2007). Similarly, former senator and assistant chairman of the Mexican Senate, Ernesto Gil Elordoy, said to this author: "It is possible to exchange views and even challenge the opinion of the army's leadership, the big generals, but we have to do it behind shut doors and within a climate of respect and

⁵⁴ BIMSA. Propuesta de Reforma Judicial de Vicente Fox-ags 00. www.bimsa.com.mx/bimsaon2000/lasencu/foxrefjudgs00.htm

⁵⁵ During his presidential campaign, Andres Manuel López Obrador offered to enact a constitutional reform to provide the armed forces greater powers in terms of research and operations against organised crime. Aguirre, Alberto. "Ve AMLO caduco a Mexico Seguro" Reforma. January 30, 2006.

⁵⁶ Aristegui, Carmen. "Comandante Supremo". Reforma. January 5, 2000. Meyer, Lorenzo. "Cada quien su Guerra" Reforma. January 18, 2007. Braco Padilla, Tonatiuh. "Estrategia perdida" Reforma. May 19, 2007.

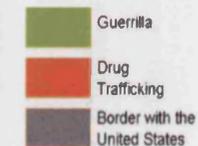
⁵⁷ Meyer, Lorenzo, "68-07". Reforma. June 14, 2007.

deference.” On the question, “Given the amount of responsibilities delegated to the armed forces by President Fox, wouldn’t it be reasonable to increase congressional supervision on their responsibilities and performance?” Senator Gil Elorduy answered that the military is very sensitive and “there is no need to look for problems where there are none” (London UK. November 8th, 2005). Finally, Congressman Cesar Camacho and José Manuel del Río, both members of the National Security commissions of the Federal Congress, affirmed that the Mexican state should give as many resources as possible to the armed forces to correspond the size of their responsibilities in the crusade against organised crime. Both deputies stressed the need to fund the modernisation of the military and the purchase of new equipment⁵⁸.

⁵⁸ “*Diputados: al Ejército, todo el dinero posible*” Milenio. June 16, 2008

National distribution of the armed forces according to local agencies of public security, guerrilla activity and drug trafficking incidence 2002

| State | Army personnel working in public security agencies (2004) (a) | Rank on size of deployed military personnel (b) | Permanent army personnel deployed (2005) (c) | Rank in marijuana and opium eradication (2005) (d) | Rank on guerrilla activity (2005) (e) | Executions in 2007 (f) | Reported Human Rights Violations by the Army. CNDH (2008) (g) | Citizen's appraisal of the army's image. June 2008 (h) |
|---------------------|---|---|--|--|---------------------------------------|------------------------|---|--|
| San Luis Potosí | 4 | 29 | 1900 | 0 | 0 | 13 | 8 | 7.0 |
| Chiapas | 15 | 3 | 9187 | 0 | 3 | 12 | 21 | 8.0 |
| Durango | 1 | 8 | 5317 | 2 | 0 | 124 | 11 | 8.0 |
| Zacatecas | 3 | 21 | 3000 | 0 | 0 | 13 | 2 | 8.0 |
| Coahuila | 1 | 27 | 2407 | 0 | 0 | 29 | 31 | 8.0 |
| Yucatán | 3 | 20 | 3000 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 8.1 |
| Estado de México | 13 | 2 | 19000 | 0 | 4 | 111 | 8 | 7.3 |
| Oaxaca | 12 | 7 | 5673 | 8 | 2 | 33 | 28 | 7.3 |
| Tamaulipas | 2 | 14 | 3200 | 0 | 0 | 88 | 68 | 8.2 |
| Nayarit | 2 | 18 | 3000 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 8.3 |
| Baja California | 2 | 26 | 2463 | 0 | 0 | 154 | 11 | 8.3 |
| Morelos | 14 | 17 | 3000 | 0 | 0 | 17 | 1 | 7.5 |
| Nuevo León | 6 | 24 | 2800 | 0 | 0 | 107 | 29 | 7.5 |
| Colima | 3 | 32 | 1000 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 8.4 |
| Tlaxcala | 0 | 25 | 2536 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 7.6 |
| Distrito Federal | 14 | 1 | 52000 | 0 | 0 | 145 | 106 | 6.8 |
| Jalisco | 23 | 10 | 5000 | 5 | 0 | 92 | 13 | 7.7 |
| Guanajuato | 3 | 15 | 3097 | 0 | 0 | 40 | 4 | 7.7 |
| Michoacán | 10 | 22 | 2873 | 6 | 6 | 238 | 139 | 7.7 |
| Hidalgo | 7 | 28 | 1947 | 0 | 7 | 37 | 2 | 7.7 |
| Aguascalientes | 0 | 31 | 1120 | 0 | 0 | 27 | 0 | 7.7 |
| Tabasco | 4 | 11 | 4997 | 0 | 0 | 24 | 15 | 7.8 |
| Sonora | 3 | 13 | 3864 | 0 | 0 | 125 | 22 | 7.8 |
| Veracruz | 16 | 4 | 8100 | 0 | 0 | 48 | 10 | 7.9 |
| Guerrero | 17 | 5 | 7198 | 7 | 1 | 253 | 13 | 7.9 |
| Chihuahua | 2 | 6 | 6346 | 1 | 0 | 147 | 33 | 7.9 |
| Baja California Sur | 2 | 9 | 5230 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 7.9 |
| Puebla | 17 | 12 | 4466 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 7.9 |
| Quintana Roo | 6 | 19 | 3000 | 0 | 0 | 34 | 4 | 7.9 |
| Campeche | 5 | 16 | 3000 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 7.9 |
| Sinaloa | 1 | 23 | 2828 | 4 | 0 | 346 | 38 | 7.9 |
| Querétaro | 4 | 30 | 1387 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 7.9 |



Source: (a) Information sent to the author by the army. 0000700034603 and 0000700039703. (b) . IFAI Petition number: 0000700011807. (c) IFAI Petition number: 0000700011807. (d) Information consulted by this author in the public information section of the Secretary of Defence website. (e) IFAI petition number 0410000017305. (f) Data retrieved from the daily report of the national newspaper Reforma on violent executions in the country. www.reforma.com. (g) Garduño, Silvia, "Illeven quejas a la sedena". Reforma. May 19, 2008. (h) (GCE 2008)

8.4 Conclusions

It appears that by delegating direct policing functions to the armed forces, President Salinas opened a window of opportunity for military participation in anti drug trafficking operations, and eventually in the entire system of public security. In fact, since 1989, the military has come to intervene and even command the functions of the Attorney-General's Office; control the reform of federal police bodies; dominate the intelligence apparatus of the state and displace civilian authorities from state and municipal police departments. There is evidence that this set of new responsibilities has been taken very seriously by the military, to the point of pushing an internal reorganisation aimed at creating incentives for their membership to specialize in the areas of counterinsurgency and anti drug trafficking.

As the military gained power and autonomy from civilian law enforcement bodies and other representative institutions, the executive power is the only institution they remain accountable to. However, the nature of such "accountability" operates more in the sense of tacit obedience to presidential orders rather than a real accountability exercise. This situation has isolated the military from practically any formal form of supervision, reinforcing their autonomy and their internal mechanisms to ensure discipline. In the end, this condition has been greatly enhanced by the necessity of the executive to convey internally and externally the message that there is a clear will to combat corruption in police agencies and drug trafficking activities in the country.

It seems that this new set of responsibilities delegated to the military has heightened the principle of exclusive subordination that has ruled the system of civil-military relations in Mexico for more than one century. As we observed in this and the previous chapter, the military has been successfully able to oppose, stop and even reverse attempts to make them accountable for abuses committed during the 1970s or be subjected to parallel ways of civilian supervision. This clearly authoritarian attitude is not only defended by the military, but also by members of congress. Regardless of political affiliation, the leadership that led the process of democratisation in Mexico deliberately left untouched one of the most emblematic institutions of the authoritarian regime. None of the political actors have attempted to deprive the president from full control over his most effective policy instrument. Only then it is possible to understand the weak political will to strengthen supervision

over the armed forces, in spite of their enormous role in the political system. In the end, this loss of authority by civilians *vis-à-vis* the military poses serious questions about civilian supremacy and represents one of the faulty lines that hinders the process of democratic consolidation in Mexico.

Thesis' Conclusions

I started this thesis with the idea of explaining the driving forces behind the increasing intervention of the military in the system of public security during the *sexenio* of Vicente Fox (2000-2006). I particularly noted Fox's initial decision to appoint a top army officer to head the Attorney-General's Office in December 2000 and the invasion of high ranking army and navy personnel to leading positions in the entire system of public security that followed. My first thought on this matter was that the great expectations of democratisation built upon the triumph of a non-PRI candidate in the presidential election after 71 years in office, were somehow in conflict with the responsibilities and duties this new and undisputed democratically elected elite were entrusting to the armed forces. I wondered why the use of the military had become the preferred choice of the executive power, governors and even city mayors when addressing rising levels of public insecurity. I saw in this increasing role a serious obstacle to democratic consolidation, given the autonomous and unsupervised nature of the military in Mexico.

The conventional explanation to this puzzle, long defended by the President and the Secretary of Defence, is intended to portray the use of the military against organised crime as an urgent and temporary measure. There was an explicit understanding that given the inefficiency and corruption affecting civilian agencies of security, the military represented the last line of defence for the Mexican State to reinstate the rule of law. This justification was not only shared and promoted by domestic and international government agencies, the US State Department included, but also by numerous scholars who have closely documented the scandals of corruption in the Mexican police. From the beginning, I found these explanations somehow incomplete. They often overlooked the public policy process by which the executive power has historically delegated an increasing number of domestic responsibilities beyond their traditional expertise to the military. They did not take into consideration the ample support these "urgent" measures found among left or right wing politicians, the Catholic Church or public opinion. I argued throughout this thesis that the proclivity of the executive power to militarise police agencies is closely related to the historical character of civilian supremacy in Mexico, the unique nature of the system of civil-military relations and the interest the military, especially the army, may have

as an institution to intervene in the system of public security. In order to address these issues, I disentangled the origins of the undisputed civilian control over the armed forces in Mexico. There I found a clear path-dependent trajectory of civilian supremacy that has consistently encouraged the executive power to delegate to the military a variety of missions. This was either because of poor civilian performance or just to add a quota of legitimacy to key and often controversial policy decisions. It is clear that the executive power depends on the moral capital of the military to make credible its policy commitments to domestic and international audiences. Despite official statistics, which inexorably reveal the inefficiency of the policy on abating the illegal traffic of drugs, federal and local ruling elites appear to be reluctant to adjust the current policy route.

Although popular and accepted, there is little doubt about the pernicious effects of militarisation in the overall process of democratic consolidation. First, increasing participation of the armed forces in the system of public security has become the official excuse to delay, postpone, even disregard, a true renovation of law enforcement institutions based on civilian leadership. Second, the recent militarisation of the system of public security tipped the balance of power in favour of military institutions to the detriment of a long-standing tradition of civilian supremacy in Mexico. Nowadays, this phenomenon is particularly noticeable when considering the constant conflict between military personnel, local political authorities and federal police bodies that collide in anti-drug trafficking operations; or in the capacity of the military to stop and even reverse attempts to dig deep into their past and current record of violations of human rights; or in the struggle to bring the armed forces under reasonable conditions of civilian control. Third, the lack of institutional watchdogs to supervise military functions has left large segments of the population unprotected from the violence and excesses that military operations often generate in regions where drug trafficking or guerrilla activities are more prevalent. I devoted the last two chapters to addressing these issues and the way they affect the prospects of democratic consolidation in the mid and long term.

In this concluding chapter, I will present the empirical findings of this research, the theoretical conclusions and contributions, some methodological considerations and new horizons for research. Extended and particular conclusions for the experiences

on militarisation presented in Chapter 7 and 8 can be found at the end of each chapter. In this section, I will provide my general conclusions to the whole thesis.

I. Empirical findings

I found evidence of a clear path-dependent trajectory of the way civilian supremacy was constructed during *El porfiriato* and the route it followed after the Mexican Revolution. This feature is particularly noticeable in the exclusive and rather undisputed authority of the president over the military elite as well as in the autonomy and independence the military enjoys from the judicial and legislative power. As I tracked the way this relationship has evolved since the late 1880s up to the onset of the 21st Century, I found that it provided an extraordinary room of manoeuvre to ruling elites to define the scope and reach of military missions according to their policy preferences. This characteristic became even clearer after 1934, when the executive power emerged as the undisputed national and political leader of the country. Since the 1930s, there has been no conclusive evidence suggesting that a president of Mexico has seriously considered the possibility of a military coup regardless of the increasing number of missions in the hands of military officers or the intensity of economic and political problems.

I also observed that it was during the 1930s and mid 40s when the military acquired the core of its moral capital. Their decisive intervention during the expropriation of the oil industry in 1938 and their intervention in the Second World War portrayed the armed forces as the great asset of the Mexican Nation to achieve wide social and economic transformations. Ever since, it is clear that the conservation of the military's moral capital represents a priority for officers and politicians as it allows a free and even celebrated intervention in a wide variety of issues such as disaster relief, sanitation campaigns, reforestation, etc. Both characteristics, their high moral capital and the exclusive subordination to the executive power, allowed the creation of a profound internal dimension of intervention where the armed forces have been employed to address mostly, but not exclusively, internal security missions.

It was clear that threats to internal security were often defined under partisan criteria, as opposed to the impartial and professional expertise of civilian and military agencies responsible for looking after the security of the Mexican state. After 1946, several

manifestations of political dissent that explicitly challenged the nature of the political system or opposed the policies promoted by the ruling elite became a matter of national security for the executive power. The regime showed no patience in dealing with opposition, so they were often identified as “those who want to curtail the objectives or the heritage of the Mexican Revolution.” President Miguel Alemán used the military against different movements and labour demonstrations during his term in office. He also created the Federal Directorate of Security. It was shown through this work that the DFS served for nearly 40 years as the only civilian agency that managed to counterbalance the autonomy of the armed forces. Therefore, its cancellation in 1985 ended up intensifying the unchecked role of the military in the political system.

As the regime failed to include other groups of society within the corporatist branches of the ruling party, the use of the armed forces and the DFS for political ends increased accordingly. In fact, the extensive partisan use of the military reached its zenith in the late 1960s and 70s with the emergence of the student movement, the urban and rural guerrilla. However, it was also detected that the military started to display some reticence to obey orders to repress politically dissenting social groups, particularly in urban centres. Their intervention against the student movement in 1968 caused long enduring damage to their moral capital. However, this attitude did not lead to the cancellation of their partisan role, but the adjustment of its plans and operations. The creation of *Los Halcones* in the late 1960s and the White Brigade in the mid-70s responded to the need to conceal their direct political intervention in urban centres. The strategy worked as expected, and the military remained obedient to the president while protecting its public image and moral capital.

In the last two chapters of the research, I presented evidence that democratisation of the political system in Mexico strengthened rather than diminished the authoritarian nature of the system of civil-military relations. In terms of counterinsurgency operations, it was clear the military adjusted its operations and low intensity conflict strategies to contain the advance of the EZLN to neighbouring states as opposed to going after the rebels and annihilating them as had occurred with Lucio Cabañas’ and Genaro Vázquez’ guerrillas. The new strategy succeeded in terms of restricting the EZLN within a small region of Chiapas; however it seemed to be unable to contain the terrorist attacks the EPR made against PEMEX infrastructure in 2007. In other

words, this proves that the military may be able to contain the advance of the EZLN, but unable to prevent the activities of the EPR. These deficiencies may well be the result of a policy of internal security that relies too much on the armed forces and the way it has prevented the professionalisation of civilian agencies of intelligence.

In terms of politics, it is clear that democratisation put the issue of human rights, and their past violations by the armed forces at the centre of the political debate, at least during the first half of the presidency of Vicente Fox. As we observed in chapters 7 and 8, the military has been successfully able to oppose, stop and even reverse attempts to make them accountable for abuses committed during the 1970s, or to be subjected to civilian supervision. This clearly authoritarian attitude is defended by both the military itself, and also by members of congress.

The second arena of intervention of the military is given by the recent militarisation of the system of public security. It was observed that the decision of President Salinas to open the Attorney-General's Office to the direct participation of the armed forces facilitated an apparently unstoppable intervention in the entire system of public security. As a result, military budgets have considerably increased since 1989. It was also noticed that the army took its new responsibilities very seriously, to the point of promoting the transformation of its educational system, training programmes and internal structure of incentives, which promoted the specialization of its personnel in tasks of public security, specially drug trafficking and counterinsurgency. The increasing participation of the armed forces in the federal system of public security after 1989 exposed a clear difference between old and new military responsibilities. After 1989, policing public insecurity became the hub of military professionalisation and development. Furthermore, their participation in public security reached local and state police bodies, as governors and even city mayors opted to regularly involve the armed forces to contain criminality and maintain public order. No doubt, the expansion of military roles into the system of public security has placed the army above civilian agencies of security. In that sense, the military is not only autonomous from other civilian agencies in terms of accountability and supervision, but it also has direct control over agencies of security which have become subordinated to the military itself. This is particularly noticeable in state and local police agencies.

II. Theoretical considerations and contributions

After reviewing the literature on civil-military relations in Latin America, I proposed in chapter one a model to address the inner workings of the system of civil-military relations in Mexico. The model is arranged as three levels of a pyramid, each with unequal distributions of power between civilians and military officers in what I called the dual nature of civilian control over the military. I argued that in the first level, this is at the top of civilian control, the relationship between the president and the military remains unequal, favouring the authority of the executive power. However, at lower levels of the pyramid, where the military interacts with other agencies of the government, the relationship changes significantly as civilians become the agents of the military. This was particularly clear after the takeover of the Attorney-General's Office and the system of public security by military personnel. In the third level of the structure, at the bottom of the pyramid, the relationship between the armed forces and the judicial and legislative power remains unchanged, as it has been since *el porfiriato*. The interactions of the three levels of the pyramid depict a system of civil-military relations characterized by presidential control over the armed forces, rather than civilian control. It is a system where the military will take orders from the president, but from nobody else.

In order to address the interactions in between different levels of the model, I proposed a synthesis of two theoretical concepts: rational choice and historical institutionalism. Historical institutionalism explained how the initial configuration of civil-military relations established during *el porfiriato*, and later institutionalized in the country's constitution and organic laws of the military, created path-dependent tendencies ensuring military subordination to the executive's authority. My initial expectation was that this form of subordination would remain unchanged even when military missions reinforce, duplicate or absorb responsibilities of other state agencies. However, the empirical evidence gathered in this research indicates that some variations are possible at the top level of the model. The military has been able to contain and even reverse decisions of the executive power that could either affect their corporate interest or transform the balance of power at lower levels of the pyramid. This was clear after the failure of the CNDH and the FEMOSPP to assess the criminal responsibilities of military officers who had commanded operations

during the dirty war. It was also capable of reversing attempts by a President to decentralize his authority to supervise the armed forces.

At the second level of the model, I argued that the horizontal expansion of military responsibilities was intrinsically related to the impact that such a changing political environment can make to the objectives and preferences of the ruling elite. In other words, the political preferences of the President represent the key factor determining the character and scope of military missions. The empirical evidence I gathered during this research clearly supports this expectation. Thus, while subordination of the armed forces to the executive is formal and generally undisputed, the definition of their missions is more flexible and leaves room for agency manoeuvring. I called this part of the model the politics of military missions. I also found an interesting variation that was not foreseen at the onset of this research. It was observed that once a mission is delegated to the armed forces, it is very difficult to take it back. As an institution, the military creates entrenched interests and expects to collect rewards from such new missions, either in the form of moral capital or by the greater role these new tasks grant them in terms of access to top decision making, definition, and instrumentation of policies, particularly on anti-drug matters.

Therefore, I consider that the main contribution of my thesis is the identification of a path-dependent character of the exclusive subordination of the armed forces to the executive power and the politics of military missions. These represent the two interacting realms that define contemporary civil-military relations in Mexico. For analytic purposes, this initial analysis may prove useful for understanding the impact of formal institutions over the formation of preferences and choices of ruling elites concerning the scope of military missions. In the end, Mexico's record on civil-military relations shows that exclusive subordination remained constant, while the politics of military missions have been highly dependent on the preferences that incumbents may have concerning the convenience of delegating more responsibilities to the armed forces. In the case of Mexico, the politics of military missions made little impact on the preferences of the president while the regime was dominated by authoritarian politics, but they became paramount as the political system began the transit to democracy. In other words, under authoritarian conditions of electoral competition, it was possible to expect a low interest of the ruling elite concerning the

potential impact that military missions could generate on its public image. However, under more democratic conditions, missions delegated to the armed forces have become an important referent shaping the president's reputation, specially when such missions are pictured and advertised by the regime as an indication of commitment to combat pressing policy issues.

A fundamental question of this research is not directly addressed by the nature of the exclusive subordination or the scope of military responsibilities, but still determines contemporary civil-military relations in Mexico: why would the civilian elite be interested on delegating functions to the armed forces? What makes the armed forces so appealing, to the point that different holders of the executive power in Mexico have opted to assign them a variety of missions in preference to other state agencies? The answer to this question may lie on the loyalty, organisational capacity, strict discipline and most important, high citizen appreciation and moral capital of the armed forces. It appears that the current ruling elite rapidly envisaged in the military an effective tool to deliver policy results both in those areas where civilian performance involves a high number of transaction costs, and where Mexico is under constant international pressure, as in the case of border control, weapons traffic, international terrorism and the war against drug trafficking.

Military missions became more prominent under democratisation because the ruling elite found in the armed forces an effective instrument to convey their commitment to tackle a widely accepted perception of public insecurity. This kind of decision has been repeatedly made and reinforced even when it was clearly at odds with the process of democratic consolidation.

III. Further research horizons

Relevant research is still to be done on the attitudes of civilians, either in elected positions or the general public, to tolerate and even promote the expansion of military roles beyond their conventional expertise. It would be also interesting to research what the officers think about their new missions in the political system and the way they think these changes may affect their institution and the prospects for democratic consolidation. So far, we only know the official positions of the Defence Secretary on these issues as well some testimonies of retired officers to the press. Still, based on

my interviews, it is clear that military officers do not all think alike. I agree with S. Fitch (2003), who argues that theoretical progress in the study of civil-military relations requires giving up the implicit model of the armed forces as a unitary actor with a single mentality, a single set of interests, and a consistent political agenda (Fitch 2003).

Another string of research is the remarkable transformation experienced by the presidential power as a result of democratisation. It has been argued, and even recognised by former President Vicente Fox, that democratisation shifted power from the executive to the federal congress¹. Democratisation devolved political power to the legislative branch by weakening the presence of the ruling party and empowering those in the opposition. In practice, critics of Presidentialism suggest that this has been a mixed blessing. On the one hand, multipartyism brought the benefits of greater political competition and extended representation such as transparency in decision-making and accountability for the actions of elected leaders. On the other hand, given the presidential nature of the constitution, multipartyism involves a serious threat: recurrent policy deadlock or government paralyse. (Nacif 2003:21) Because of this new reality, it seems the military remains as one of the most effective assets of the President to deliver results on pressing policy issues, especially when a divided congress prevents the approval of more far-reaching policy programmes.

The relationship between congress and the military is another branch of the system of civil-military relations that remains widely understudied. I observed during the course of this research that federal deputies from states that are highly dependent on the action of the armed forces to maintain minimum levels of stability, such as those that have high density of illegal crops or suffer from guerrilla movements, may be consistently willing to approve increasing budgetary allocations to the armed forces irrespective of their party label. They may also exert influence over their representatives in congress to support measures that directly or indirectly favour the armed forces. This situation may provide an alternative explanation for the resilience of military budgets to economic crisis and cuts on government expenditures as it has occurred since the Presidency of Ernesto Zedillo. This may also exhibit an

¹ At his inauguration speech, President Fox recognised that the years of exaggerated power of the president had ended. "From now on the Executive will propose and the Legislative will decide." (Reforma Dec 2,2000. Internet Edition)

independent capacity of the armed forces to secure generous budgets using their own means of political bargaining.

IV. Final remarks

Greater military participation in areas that do not belong to their natural expertise does not by itself pose a challenge to democratic consolidation. In fact, military institutions in well-established democracies have shifted their functions towards policy areas that are not strictly related to national defence (Fitch 1998; Moskos, Williams et al. 2000). However, in the Mexican case, greater military participation is problematic because alternative forms of supervision and accountability have not accompanied the new military responsibilities. Formal supervision of military missions remains highly dependent on the capacity and willingness of the executive power to carry out this function. In other words, expanding military prerogatives poses a challenge to democratic consolidation in the country, because it seriously undermines the prospects that the state apparatus can be held accountable to, and become habituated to, the rule of law (Linz and Stepan 1996a). It also prevents the imposition of civilian control over law enforcement, which is necessarily a condition for polyarchy.

In sum, the process of democratic transition created political conditions favouring the militarisation of the system of public security. However, democratically elected politicians do not seem to have enough incentives to change the nature of civilian-military control, as the armed forces are an important resource to deliver policy results where civilian agencies cannot. If authoritarian, there seems to be no intention to change a status quo where both elected officials and armed forces are successful.

Appendix 1

The Civil-Military Game

Following the methodology employed by P. Feaver (2003:96-117) to describe the American civil-military game, the next exercise depicts a minimal matrix of strategic interactions that provides a rational explanation of choices and outcomes, given the nature of the missions delegated by the executive to the armed forces in Mexico. I go around the description of this phenomenon through reverse engineering. That is, I take an observed civil-military outcome to identify the values of certain key variables. The basic assumption of this model is that players, in this case the President and the armed forces, are aware of the costs and benefits arising from their actions, so they can rank and order outcomes according to some subjective estimate of the benefits minus the cost (Feaver 2003:96-97). In any case, I assume that the armed forces will try to make decisions bearing in mind that the benefits derived from sticking to the orders of the President will be higher than the costs incurred in resistance or avoidance of the President's will. Second, I assume that the interaction between the principal and the agent is clearly defined by means of the Constitution, secondary laws and tradition. I also assume that friction may arise because of conflict of interest between the principal and the agent. Even so, the principal-agent framework does not presuppose agent obedience; on the contrary, it expects a certain amount of conflict that could even reach the point of a military coup.

Due to the longstanding subordination of the armed forces to the executive in Mexico, the game begins when the military, especially the army, has the choice of following or ignoring an explicit order or a policy lead from the executive. That is, the military can Work (W) or Shirk (S). Work means to do exactly what the president wants and Shirk means to do whatever is better for the armed forces in terms of protecting its corporate interest and moral capital. It may involve a partial or total rejection to the President's orders. Given the historical nature of civilian control over the military, there is no record of open shirking, since this attitude could trigger a military coup or the introduction of intrusive monitoring by the executive power to oversee the armed forces in general. Both outcomes are very costly for the armed forces.

In contrast, by working with the president, the military has been historically compensated with greater margins of autonomy and independence at the time of procuring the military with a government led strategy of public relations that minimizes the negative impact of its potential partisan missions.

The formal game:

Once the military has received an order from the executive, its available choices appear evident. They can either accept the orders of the executive (W) or evade the responsibility (S). Having in mind that the executive knows that the military could be hurting its corporate interest by taking part in a mission with an obvious partisan character, the military usually expects a reward for its obedience. This often comes in the way of cancelling any kind of intrusive monitoring over military missions, or a generous increase in their yearly budgetary allocations, which in turn increases their independence and autonomy. This research shows that both characteristics are highly treasured by the Mexican armed forces. Conversely, shirking can be punished by imposing intrusive forms of monitoring. The closest example to this form of intrusive monitoring was the creation of the Federal Directorate of Security in 1947. In the Mexican case, intrusive monitoring implies a diversification of civilian principals at the top of the structure of political power, which ultimately means involvement of congress and independent agencies in the supervision and accountability of the armed forces. This hasn't occurred in the last 80 years.

This was basically the core of the relationship between civilians and officer corps until 1989. However, democratisation slightly changed the equilibrium, making the executive more reliant on the armed forces to achieve specific policy objectives or to convey to the public the idea of commitment to address organised crime and impose the rule of law. After 1989, the military not only obeyed the commands of the executive power, but also took over areas that were traditionally undertaken by civilian agencies. This expanding role gives the armed forces more elements to negotiate with the executive power, being able to improve the conditions of their intervention on missions of internal security. As was observed in chapters 7 and 8, the armed forces have effectively contained and even reversed civilian attempts, the executive's included, to impose parallel means of monitoring over their functions.

Game sequence

1. The military is given an order to intervene
2. The military decides to work or to shirk
3. Given the outcome, civilians choose to punish or reward the military according to their allegiance to the executive power and their willingness to support the executive power in such mission.

Lexicon:

W: Work done as the civilian principal wanted.

S: Work done as the military agent wanted.

CPw: Corporate interest of the military when working with the President.

CPs: Corporate interest of the military when shirking the President's orders.

M1: Military payoff of working with the President without intrusive monitoring.

M2: Military payoff of working with the President with intrusive monitoring.

p: Cost to military of punishment (makes shirking less valuable for the military).

r: President's reward to military for working. Autonomy and Independence.

C1: Military payoff of shirking the President's orders with intrusive monitoring.

C2: Military payoff of shirking the President's orders without intrusive monitoring.

Outcomes:

O1: Military works and the President rewards by expanding the room for autonomy and independence. [W-CPw, M1 (r)]

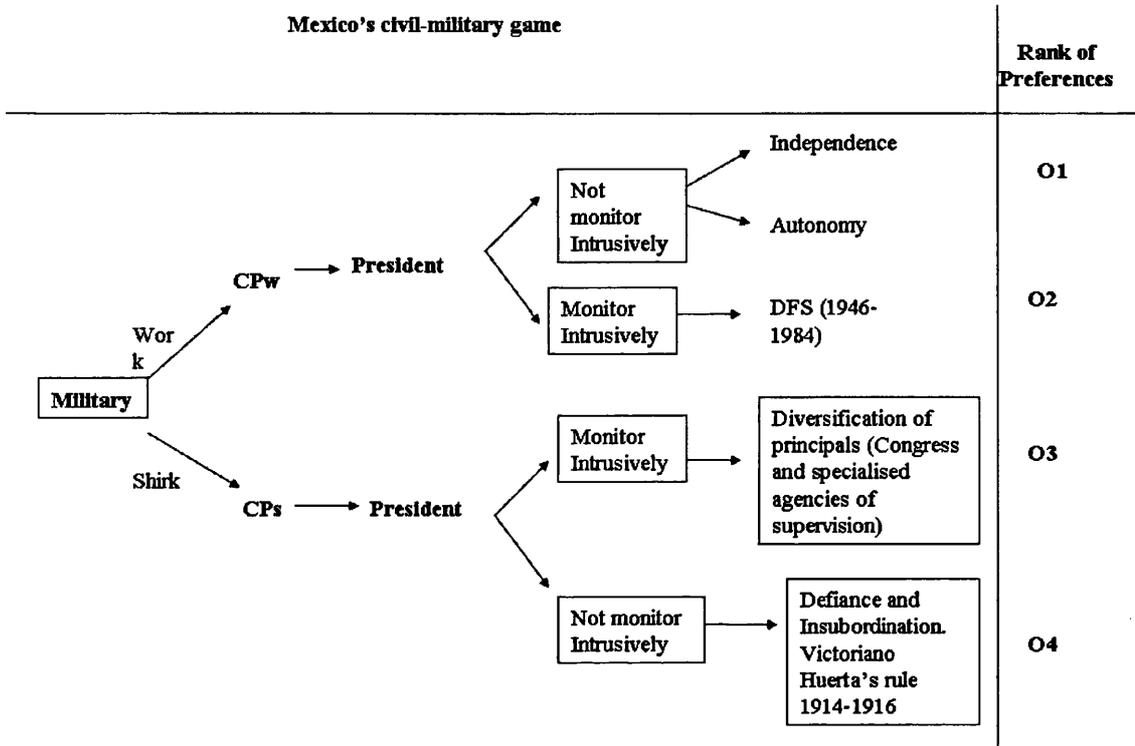
O2: Military works and the President imposes a civilian form of supervision. [W-CPw, M2 (r - p)]

O3: Military shirks and the President imposes a strict form of supervision. [S+CPs, C1 (p)]

O4: Military shirks and the President does not impose a strict civilian form of supervision. [S+CPs, C2 (p)]

□

Mexico's civil-military game



Over these four outcomes, it is quite clear that the military would rank its preferences according to the following structure. It seems the military would try to sacrifice its corporate interest to some degree in exchange for maintaining a system of civil-military relations that ensures the preservation of the principle of exclusive subordination. It is the preferred outcome because the military would also be expecting that the executive could use its informal power over the mass media to minimize the negative impact on the roles delegated to the armed forces. Therefore, the military would be able to operate with a minimum level of supervision, which would automatically improve its degree of autonomy and independence. The second best choice of the military would be O2. This option is similar to O1 but the President decides to include civilian supervision that is not meant to interfere directly with military missions but to assist their functions through the incorporation of a civilian agency. O3 and O4 derive from the decision of the military to shirk in the face of a mission with a high potential to damage their corporate interest. Within the landscape of authoritarian politics, a lack of trust of the armed forces in the political elite would trigger a serious political crisis. In the case of O3, it means the introduction of more principals in

the equation of civil-military control; it could be in the form of granting a greater role to the Mexican congress in terms of supervision and accountability or through the creation of a civilian minister of National Defence. In turn, O4 would represent a serious fracture in the chain of command with a President unable to impose his will or to punish the military for shirking. The closest example to this scenario took place before the assassination of Francisco Madero in 1913, and the brief reign of Victoriano Huerta.

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1.1 Interviews

Interviewee: Enrique Aguilar Ortega

Place and Date: Mexico City, July 10th 2006

Present Position: Deputy Director of Primary Education SEP (2000-)

Relevant Experience: Private Secretary of Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, while he served as President of the PRI between 1975 and 1976; Administrative Head of the Under Secretary of Political Development of the Interior Ministry (1992-1994)

Interviewee: General Miguel Angel Godínez Bravo

Place and Date: Mexico City, May 8th, 2005 and August 10th, 2008

Present Position: Retired Division General of the Mexican Army

Relevant Experience: President's Chief of Staff of José López Portillo (1976-1982). Federal Deputy PRI (1982-1985). President of the Defence Commission (1982-1985). Chief of the 7th Military Region and Chief Commander during the Chiapas Uprising in January 1994.

Interviewee: Jorge Moreno Collado

Place and Date: (Interview: Mexico City, May 8th 2005 and August 10th, 2008).

Present Position: Senior Legal Advisor of the Supreme Court of Justice (2006-present)

Relevant Experience: Former Deputy and Senator of the Republic. Secretary of Education of Veracruz during the administration of Governor Fernando Gutiérrez Barrios and General Director of Governing while Fernando Gutiérrez Barrios was Secretary of the Interior (1988-1992).

Interviewee: General Ramón Mota Sánchez

Place and Date: (Mexico City, August 23rd 2005)

Present Position: Retired Division General of the Mexican Army

Relevant Experience: Chief of Military Staff of the Secretary of Defence (1978-1980). Chairman of Senate's Defence Commission (2000-2006)

Interviewee: Emeterio López Marquez

Place and Date: (Xalapa, Ver, January 27th 2009)

Present Position: Legal advisor of Governor Fidel Herrera Beltrán

Relevant Experience: Veracruz's Attorney General (2004-2008)

Interviewee: Lieutenant Roberto Ruíz Illescas

Place and Date: Xalapa, Ver. April 4th 2007

Present Position: Retired officer of the Armed Forces and private airplane pilot

Relevant Experience: Airplane Pilot of the Mexican army during the *Telaraña* Operation in Guerrero 1970-1976

Interviewee: Ms. Tita Radilla

Place and Date: London, March 30th, 2005

Present Position: Human Rights Activist. Vice-president of AFADDEM (Asociación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos) which is The Association of Family Members of the Disappeared and Victims of Human Rights Violations in Mexico

Relevant Experience: Witness of the Telaraña Operation in Guerrero 1970-1976

Interviewee: Commander Sergio Espino Verdin

Place and Date: Mexico City, November 10th, 2006

Present Position: Inmate in the Penitentiary centre of Santa Martha Acatitla

Relevant Experience: Chief Commander (Second in command) of the Federal Directorate of Security (DFS) 1976-1985

Interviewee: Agent Samuel Raza

Place and Date: Mexico City, November 10th, 2006

Present Position: Inmate in the Penitentiary centre of Santa Martha Acatitla

Relevant Experience: Group commander of the Federal Directorate of Security (DFS) 1976-1985

Interviewee: Agent Francisco Tejeda Juárez (known as *el paco*)

Place and Date: Mexico City, November 10th, 2006

Present Position: Inmate in the Penitentiary centre of Santa Martha Acatitla

Relevant Experience: Group Commander of the Federal Directorate of Security (DFS) 1976-1985

Interviewee: Minister José David Paredes Kobrer

Place and Date: Xalapa Ver. May 14th, 2008

Present Position: Representative of the Secretary of Foreign Affairs in the State of Veracruz

Relevant Experience: Member of the Mexican Foreign Service

Interviewee: Dr. María de la Luz Lima Malvido

Place and Date: London UK. November 17th, 2004

Present Position: Counsellor for Parliamentary Relations of the Mexican Embassy in the UK.

Relevant Experience: Deputy Attorney General of Development. PGR (2000-2004)

Interviewee: Mr. José Luis Santiago Vasconcelos

Place and Date: London UK. February 8th, 2006

Present Position: Technical Secretary of the commission for the reform of the federal system of public security.

Relevant Experience: Deputy Attorney General for the Combat of Organised Crime (2004-2006) (PGR)

Interviewee: Mr. Ernesto Gil Elorduy

Place and Date: London UK. November 8th, 2005

Present Position: Chairman of the Federal Telecommunications Commission.

Relevant Experience: Deputy Chairman of Mexico's Senate (2000-2006) and member of the Commission of National Defence of the Senate.

Interviewee: Mr. José Alberto Aguilar Iñarritu
Place and Date: Mexico City. September 20th 2007
Present Position: Technical Secretary of the Commission for State Reform of Mexico's Senate.
Relevant Experience: Federal Deputy (2003-2006) and Secretary of the Commission of National Defence of Mexico's Congress (2003-2006)

Interviewee: Mr. Fidel Herrera Beltrán
Place and Date: London UK. February 20th, 2006
Present Position: Governor of the State of Veracruz (2004-2010)
Relevant Experience: Senator (2000-2006) and close collaborator of Fernando Gutiérrez Barrios.

Interviewee: General Mario Palmerin Cordero
Place and Date: London UK. July 13, 2003
Present Position: Retired officer of the Mexican Army
Relevant Experience: Under Secretary of Defence (2000-2002)

Interviewee: Admiral Rafael Gálvez Ibarra
Place and Date: Veracruz, Ver. July 23, 2003
Present Position: Chief of the Naval Zone in la Paz, Baja California. Navy Secretary
Relevant Experience: Founder of the Federal Preventive Police PFP

Interviewee: Professor John Grayson
Place and Date: Washington DC, September 16, 2005
Present Position: Professor of William and Mary College and senior advisor of the Project Mexico at the CSIS
Relevant Experience: Extensive research on Mexico's politics

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1.10 Press Articles:

As explained in the introduction, I did an extensive use of online search engines of five of the main newspapers of Mexico and the United States to construct and illustrate the narratives of chapter 6, 7 and 8. Such articles appeared in the following Mexican newspapers and magazines:

- Reforma www.reforma.com
- La Jornada www.lajornada.com.mx
- El Universal www.el-universal.com.mx
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- The New York Times www.nyt.com

CD ROMs

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