

The Studies of Violence(s) at the Northeast Border of Mexico
Los estudios de la(s) violencia(s) en la frontera noreste de México

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to carry out a semi-systematic approach to the academic literature that studies violence in Tamaulipas from 2008 to 2019. It is argued that violence in that state is studied primarily from a broad perspective. However, regardless of the study perspective, there is a close relationship between violence, organized crime, and drug trafficking. Two lines of research little explored in the literature are proposed: the first studies risks associated with the analysis of violence(s) in each context; the second analyzes violence(s) from a gender perspective. The main limitation of this semi-systematic approach is that the results presented are descriptive and only classify the literature to find gaps in it.

Keywords: 1. violences, 2. restricted and expanded violence, 3. organized crime, 4. Tamaulipas, 5. Northeast Mexico.

RESUMEN

Este artículo tiene como objetivo realizar una revisión semi-sistemática de la literatura académica que estudia la violencia en Tamaulipas durante el periodo 2008-2019. Se argumenta que las violencias en dicho estado se estudian primordialmente desde una visión amplia. Empero, independientemente de la perspectiva de estudio, existe una estrecha relación entre violencia, el crimen organizado y el narcotráfico. Se plantean dos líneas de investigación poco exploradas en la literatura: la primera estudia los riesgos asociados al análisis de la violencia y las violencias en un contexto determinado; la segunda analiza la violencia y las violencias desde un enfoque de género. La limitación principal de esta revisión semi-sistemática es que los resultados presentados son de tipo descriptivo y únicamente se clasifica la literatura para dar cuenta de los vacíos existentes en ésta.

Palabras clave: 1. violencias, 2. violencia restringida y amplia, 3. crimen organizado, 4. Tamaulipas, 5. noreste de México.

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INTRODUCTION

In Mexico, the increase in homicides associated to the strategy against organized crime started by the federal government in 2007 fostered the development of a number of research works that focus on violence in general, and on criminal activities in particular. Such research works analyze public policies against drugs, the causes and effects of crime incidence as well as the economic and sociopolitical outcomes of activities linked to criminal organizations (Atuesta & Madrazo Lajous, 2018; Calderón, Robles, Díaz-Cayeros, & Magaloni, 2015; Mariñez Navarro & Vivas, 2012). In this sort of research, an increasing concern is noticed as regards the analysis of violence, which is noticed through crime incidence, that is to say, attention is paid to criminal violence, mainly high impact crimes such as homicide, kidnapping and extortion. Likewise, there are works that contextually address violence, which claim it has a relational nature, analyze its effects, mechanisms and the perception of phenomena that transcend crime incidence, e.g., migration, education or culture (Almanza Avendaño, Gómez San Luis, Guzmán González, & Cruz Montes, 2018a; Enciso, 2017; Valenzuela Arce, 2015).

In these two standpoints, dissimilar conceptions of violence are noticeable: their components—expressions, perpetrators and victims—are not always the same; that is to say, particular visions of violence underlie. On one side, a restricted meaning, while on the other, a broad one. The restricted vision entails understanding violence as the intentional use of force in order to hurt someone. Usually, this vision of violence is related to public security, specifically crimes. Violence, in a broad sense, is that which manifests in the exercise of power for the subordination of others, whose perpetration mechanisms exceed one particular sort of aggression (Martínez Pacheco, 2016).

In Mexico, the literature specialized in violence in the restricted sense had a greater boost owing to the interest in grasping and addressing its causes and effects for the purpose of preventing and eradicating every sort of criminal violence and/or related to organized crime. This interest replicated in the study of local cases, mainly in states whose high impact crime rates were above the national mean. For example, in the case of Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, research works focused on the increase of femicides and homicides, progressively incorporating a number of approaches that broadened the conception of violence, mainly that experienced by women, which enabled plural theoretical approaches, with greater contribution from the empirical sources utilized (Jusidman and Almada Mireles, 2007; Monárrez Fragoso, 2002). However, once *Operativo Conjunto Chihuahua* [Chihuahua Joint Operation] began by the end of 2007, the particular object of study in the specialized literature the following years was violence in Ciudad Juárez, and in Chihuahua in general; this privileged the analysis of violence in a restricted sense (Cervera-Gómez & Monárrez, 2011; Silva Londoño, 2017).

In Tamaulipas, the strategy against organized crime started in 2011 with *Operación Inflexible* [Inflexible Operation] led by *Secretaría de Marina* [Secretariat of the Navy]. From that year on, as in other states where military and federal forces were deployed (Chihuahua,

Coahuila, and Nuevo León), the increase in high impact crime was significant (Atuesta, 2018); adding to cases of enforced displacement, disappearance and enforced disappearance, clandestine graves and mass murder, as well as press silencing (Correa-Cabrera, 2018; Del Palacio Montiel, 2018; Varela Huerta, 2017). Albeit, the research agendas that focused on Tamaulipas paid attention to violence in a broad sense.

This article has as a goal to carry out a review of the academic literature on violence, particularly research works with Tamaulipas as a case study from 2008 to 2019. It is argued that unlike states such as Chihuahua or Nuevo León, where research focuses on the observation of violence in a restricted sense, given the high indices of crime incidence, in Tamaulipas, violence is mainly studied from a broad-sense standpoint. For the present work, a research design called semi-systematic approach to literature was resorted to, using 31 secondary sources classified according to the standpoint of the study of violence (broad or restricted).

Violence and violences: analytical notes

One of the main difficulties faced by researchers to analyze such phenomenon is the diversity of definitions and approaches existing even in kindred disciplines (Chinchilla, 2018). There is no consensus among Mexican academicians regarding the concept of violence, instead definitions are heterogenous and ambiguous, which has analytical and political implications (Sanmartín, 2006). It is so that some notes are produced about the analytical standpoints in the reviewed works on violence to accomplish a definition of them.

From classic sociology, violence is understood from theoretical-methodological stances such as the rational, systemic, functional or interpretative-subjectivist perspectives. Hence, violence: 1) is the product of the imposition of a set of normative and social structures on the subject; 2) is the result of capacity for self-reflection or creation certain actors have, who deem violence a valid way to act in specific contexts; 3) is the result of processes in which the interaction between subjects fails; and, 4) is understood as the interpretation of the normative order located in meaning frameworks, thereby, it configures as a symbolic action (Arteaga Botello & Arzuaga Magnoni, 2017).

In contemporary studies on violence, it is stated that a methodological or theoretical discussion is unnecessary and sterile to define the category of violence, whereas it is pressing to put forward alternatives to viably, logically and coherently solve the causes and effects violence has on life in society. Some researchers consider that the most suitable proposition is Galtung's (2016), in which violence produces and reproduces itself by means of social structures, therefore it may be structural, cultural-symbolical and direct. Another sector considers that instead of speaking of violence, it should be violences, in plural, since it is not a phenomenon that may be limited to a single sort of aggression mechanism, but multiple forms of acting against others are observed. Moreover, violences refer to the possibility of developing in various spheres, since they are located and respond to particular contexts (Enciso, 2017).

For Martínez Pacheco (2016), these standpoints may be articulated in two conceptions of violence: restricted and broad. The restricted conception, strict or objective violence, is that in which a subject or subjects are directly attacked in order to hurt them. This perspective considers that an actor hurts another deliberately by means of physical force with a view to forcing them to carry out an action against their will. In any case, Chesnais (1982) states that in the restricted vision, violence and death are comparable, since death may be the product of a crime, accident or suicide. What is in the center of the conception of violence is the affectation that may be experienced by a victim in their life, health, body integrity or individual freedom (Blair Trujillo, 2009). Plus, violence in restricted terms is reduced to a single action, a direct occurrence at a specific time and in a defined space, where the aggressor, who makes harm, and the victim, the one that receives such harm, coexist. This delimitation of individual events is the one that allows clearly defining the subject and object of action, which prevents redundancies and inaccuracies. In this notion of violence, one finds research works whose main interest is public security, specifically transgression and crime.

However, such conception restricts the possibility of making the victim part of the process of the violent action, it is only considered a recipient, that is to say, an object. Besides, the space where aggressions take place is taken as the stage, which neither influences nor recognizes the specific social processes involved in the various spheres where it takes place, i.e., household, family, school or work, even if it considers the events that occurred in those spaces. At once, a denial of the relational nature of violence persists, which prevents recovering processes before the subsequent violent manifestations, for example, when an individual may be victim and later aggressor (Wieviorka, 2001).

Owing to this, violence in the broad vision is defined as “a form of social relationship characterized by the denial of the other” (Martínez Pacheco, 2016, p. 9). In this way, the characteristics and situations assumed by certain social relationships are considered. Violence turns into a qualifier for the interaction between actors in several spheres, which needs to consider: 1) the sort of damage caused, which is not only a single sort of aggression (physical), but admits the possibility of other forms; 2) the repetitive nature of violent actions, whose intentionality refers to the subordination of other(s); 3) the mutual influence of the context and relationships deemed violent. Violence in broad terms goes beyond the processes of absence/presence of crime and turns from singular into plural, changing from violence to violences. Within this vision, one finds conceptions such as structural, cultural, symbolical or moral violence, whose perpetration mechanisms imply indirect damage, while their consequences are not always immediately noticeable (Enciso, 2017; Martínez Pacheco, 2016; Zárate Ruiz & López León, 2017).

In the visions of violence or violences, the following components are located: perpetrator, aggression mechanism, stage, and victim. When one speaks of perpetrator, or aggressor, is the actor(s) who produce damage, perform aggression, causing the suffering or affliction of other(s). It is worth considering that the sort of aggressor will be defined by the dimension in which one is positioned. In this way, in direct violence, the aggressor may be an individual,

whereas, in structural violence, the offender may be a set of formal and informal regulations regarding production and economic processes. In the case of aggression mechanisms, these are devices or forms whereby damage is done or others are harmed, for instance, physical devices, homicides, sexual and/or psychological aggressions. By stages, it is understood spaces where aggressions take place, for example, public spaces, households, workplaces or schools. Finally, the victim is the subject that experiences some damage from a third party (Sanmartín, 2006; Villarreal Sotelo, 2013).

Another element to consider in the visions on violence are the dimensions, which may be direct, symbolical or moral, cultural and structural. Dimensions differentiate from the spaces and contexts by the abstraction level in which aggressions, damage, and prejudice take place. That is to say, dimensions characterize by including one or more spheres where violent actions or situations occur, they surpass the perpetration mechanisms, the repetition of the aggression and the identification of the offenders. The direct dimension of violence refers to the most visible of all these dimensions, it is the most limited, situated, not repetitive, and is fully enclosed in individual events that may be observed in a specific context (Izcara-Palacios, 2012b). Indeed, this dimension is closely linked to the restricted perspective of violence.

All the social constructions that become symbols of a determinate group—religion, ideology, language, art, etc.—, which justify or legitimate direct violence, may be considered part of the cultural dimension of violence. For its part, speaking of the structural dimension implies considering the aggressions experienced by groups and individuals from the political and economic system in which they live; thus, poverty may be considered a form of direct violence with a structural dimension (Galtung, 1998). The symbolical dimension entails an uneven distribution of power among the actors, where there is one who commands and another who is dominated. The former performs actions that subordinate the latter, though since they are invisible, not physical, they are naturalized and reproduced, making the dominated accomplice of their own domination; oppressions due to gender and race are an instance of this (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1996; Segato, 2003). Symbolical or moral, cultural and structural dimensions are comprised in the broad perspective of violence (Izcara-Palacios, 2012a). In point of fact, such dimensions configure as a response to the narrowest vision. Table 1 summarizes the various elements previously presented.

Table 1. Perspectives, dimensions and components from which violence(s) are studied

Perspective	Dimension	Components			
		Aggressor	Mechanism	Stage	Victim
Restricted	Direct	Active	Any, as long as the affectations are immediately visible	Public and private space	Passive
Broad	Symbolical or moral	Murderer	Firearms	Public space	Murdered
		Dominator / Active	Naturalized symbols	Starts in public spaces, reproduced in the private	Dominated / passive / active / passive
	Husband / man	Gender roles	Households	Woman / wife	
	Cultural	Active	Legitimizing symbols	Public space with effects on the private	Passive / active
		Nazi	Arian ideology	Occupied countries	Jews
Structural	Passive	Juridical, social, economic conditions	Public space with effects on the private	Passive	
		State	Human rights violations	Public and private space	Citizens

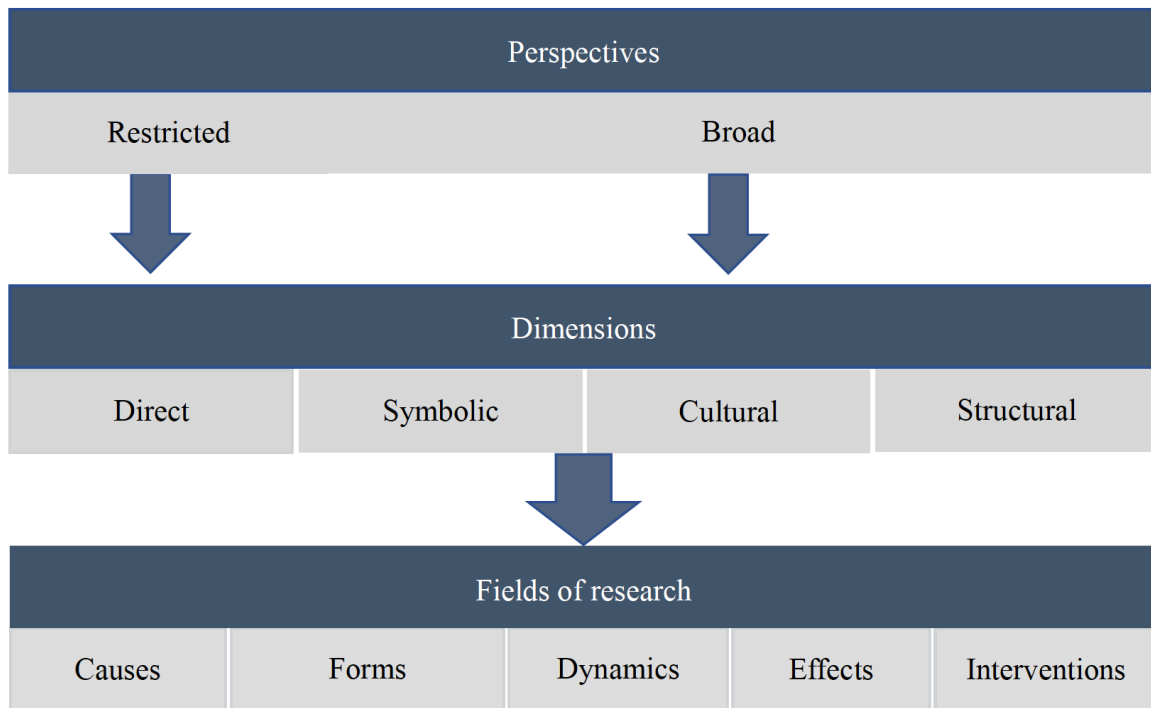
Source: Own elaboration based on Martínez Pacheco (2016); Blair Trujillo (2009); Wieviorka (2001); Enciso (2017); Zárate Ruiz and López León (2017); Sanmartín (2006); Villarreal Sotelo (2013); Izcarra-Palacios (2012a; 2012b); Galtung (1998); Bourdieu and Passeron (1996); Segato (2003).

A typology may be produced for each of the elements in Table 1. The existing academic discussions on ambiguous and divergent conceptions of violence refer that it is impossible to agree on the elements comprised in it. However, the conceptions of violence are produced from a certain type of aggressor, victim or perpetration mechanism; there is even a classification from the stage where the aggression occurs, that is, the household, school or workplace. Moreover, there exists confusion between the most general and specific characteristics, as in the case of dimensions. It may be noticed that in the various sorts of violence presented in the specialized literature, the existing limits between them are not always well defined. Owing to this, identifying the components would allow putting forward a better classification of studies focused on violence or violences.

However, in both perspectives the main concerns concentrate on defining what violence(s) produce, how they are produced, and why they appear. In like manner, there is wide interest in developing alternatives to favor the prevention of violent actions. This entails revising the research agendas that address the causes, forms, dynamics as well as effects of violence, including public policy interventions; analyzing public policies in this regard and the various

actions of civil society to address, prevent and/or eradicate all sorts of violence. An important element to underscore is that unlike the suggestions by Martínez Pacheco (2016), these fields of research can be found in each of the perspectives and dimensions previously put forward. Plus, it is from the object of study that the outline of the underlying violence is sketched, as observable in Figure 1. In any case, the components have to remain in sight when making a categorization of violence.

Figure 1. Perspectives, dimensions and fields of study of violence(s)



Source: Own elaboration.

METHODOLOGY

The research design applied to this article is a semi-systematic approach to the literature (Snyder, 2019; Tinto, 2009). Unlike metanalysis, this does not consider statistically weighing the sources and their elements, but it produces a codification and categorization of the findings to understand the contributions that various research approaches on a topic and summarize them in metanarratives instead of measuring the effect size (Arranz Lozano, 2015; Ferreira González, Urrútia, & Alonso-Coello, 2011; Snyder, 2019). In this sort of research, the analysis criteria must be necessarily documented and explicit so that they could be methodologically assessed (Beltrán, 2005; Ferreira González et al., 2011).

The enquiry was as follows: 1) the keywords “*violencia*”, “violence” and “Tamaulipas” were defined; 2) these words may be in the title, abstract, or keywords, and were used in the electronic databases Redalyc, Scielo, Ebsco-Host, Jstor, and Google Scholar; 3) empirical articles from indexed journals and chapters of peer-reviewed books were selected in order to

ensure the scientific quality of the sources; 4) 31 book chapters and research articles written in Spanish or English were chosen; 5) once the sources were extracted, a database called “literature matrix” was produced in Microsoft Excel, in which the theoretical-methodological perspective and the findings were analyzed, this allowed defining the dimensions and research fields; 6) out of the 31 sources, 29 were utilized, for two of them referred Mexico as a general study case and did not use data or references to the state of Tamaulipas; 7) research works were classified from the perspectives, dimensions and research fields. The period of study was defined from the intersection of violence and organized crime, which is part of the central argument of this semi-systematic approach. Owing to this, the year 2008 was chosen, as it concurs with the beginning of the strategy against organized crime in the term of Felipe Calderón; the period considered is 2012-2018, as the security strategy did not change. The first year of alternance in power is included (2019), since the proposal of the Federal Executive implied a distancing from previous administrations.

THE STUDY OF VIOLENCE AND VIOLENCES IN TAMAULIPAS

In this section, the analyzed documents are categorized starting from the afore mentioned proposal to understand from which perspectives, dimensions and research interests, violence and violences in Tamaulipas are studied, and identify the consistencies, counterpoints and contradictions of them, in addition to observing the gaps in the specialized literature that may offer new fields of interest.

Restricted perspective: direct violence

It is research that observes direct violence when the analysis is carried out from an event or set of events, and the aggressor and victim are both easily identifiable (Izcara-Palacios, 2012b).

Undeniably, acknowledging and recognizing the *forms* and/or characteristics of violence that takes place in spaces deemed dangerous or high-risk is thought of as one of the main concerns of *in-situ* researchers. This dynamic was reproduced in the same manner in Tamaulipas between 2008 and 2013, there were multiple efforts to grasp what violence was like in the state. In this way, the main crimes committed between 2007 and 2008 in the municipalities with the highest crime incidence were analyzed, such municipalities and crimes were: Reynosa, Nuevo Laredo, Matamoros, Victoria, and Tampico; physical injuries, common thefts, car theft, burglaries, neglect of parental duties, possession of prohibited firearms, robbery and frauds (De León Palomo, 2008).

In the same line, an analysis of the incidence of various sorts of kidnapping over the period from 2005 to 2010 was run, noticing a significant increase in this crime, mainly common kidnapping (Arrona Palacios, Banda Cruz, Guevara López, & Villarreal Soletto, 2011). Also, research works that in spite of starting from a restricted vision of violence are related to individual or collective processes of suffering and subordination were studied; for instance,

the research that analyzes the prevalence of suicides in the border city of Reynosa (Arrona-Palacios, García, Villareal-Soletto, Durán, & Retana, 2009). Furthermore, in the intersection between gender and direct violence specifically noticeable is the violence that women suffer in the domestic sphere and aggressions in courtship, up to those that analyze the sociodemographic conditions of women victims of femicide (Peña Cárdenas et al., 2013; García Santiago, 2010; Villarreal-Sotelo, Vargas-Orozco, Leal-Sotelo, & Alfaro-Bustos, 2009).

This set of research works is descriptive and allows acknowledging the forms of violence in Tamaulipas from statistical data provided by former General Attorney's Office of the State of Tamaulipas. They are endeavors that start from the State reality, and their ultimate purpose is to observe the crime incidence in the most populated municipalities. The main problem in this sort of research works is that data are not weighed by rate, which may confuse in the presented results. In them, it is underscored how studies on crime incidence decrease from the milestones of violence in the state, which took place as of 2010, and move toward topics that are not necessarily directly linked to delinquency, organized crime or drug trafficking.

Within the fields of research on direct violence, it is also found the *study of interventions* of the state and civil society to prevent, contain and/or eradicate the manifestations of direct violence. In this set, there are studies that explain how crime incidence manifests from the influence of institutional elements, organized crime development and the participation of civil society.

Up to 2015, it is considered that the state (i.e., Tamaulipas) had the largest number of missing persons; a high number of internal displaced (mainly in strategic areas of the state such as the border area known as La Ribereña); in addition to emblematic cases of security (such as mass prison breaks or "car bomb" attacks on communication media), despite the deployment of the navy and army as of 2011. The main conclusions of these works state that violence may be the product of the close relationship between state authorities, local political groups and organized crime cells; this relation is conveniently reinforced by security and justice institutions. Adding to the above, the cessation of violence demanded by certain mobilization processes is not possible, given the fear in a citizenry with limited organization capacity and unable to become a counterbalance, also due to the silencing of the media, via coercion or patronage (Correa-Cabrera, 2013, 2017). These research works describe the institutional and social context wherein criminal activities take place after governmental interventions in the process of contention of criminal violence.

When exhaustive analyses that conjugate fields of research are carried out, as for example, the intersection of the causes of violence and public interventions, it is possible to understand violence in restricted sense in a determinate time and space better, and reflect on the causes for the increase or decrease in crime as a fundamental axis to design evidence-based public policies with a view to being effective. The *effects of military interventions* in the states with the most crime incidence over the first 21st century decade have been explored following a research line and from various approaches. It is that, public security policies whose goal was

to coordinate the efforts to strengthen security, in practice, were focused on replacing local civil commands with military ones, which generated substantive increments in homicide levels. This Atuesta demonstrates in her research; the author considers that in the short and long terms, the level of homicides was indeed affected by the presence of federal forces, though there were differenced effects at the level of locality. She argues that in the localities where cartels were “beheaded”, or forces disbalanced, homicides increased; whereas, long-term collateral effects are greater when local police forces (either state or municipal) are involved (Atuesta, 2018).

As a matter of fact, according to Calderón et al. (2015), the captures or murders of drug lords and hitmen have increased drug-related crimes and the spatial behavior of crime incidence. In order to verify this, they propose a causal mechanism that allows understanding why the arrest or killing of a criminal leader increases high impact crimes. The authors consider that once the group in question has no leader: 1) a struggle for the succession takes place inside the cartels; 2) this succession struggle is possible because of the autonomy and hierarchy inside the groups; 3) the chains of command break inside the cartels and with this, the discipline of local cells and prisons; and, 4) the groups of organized crime decide to frontally attack the State forces as a warning for the government about their resistance capacity or as a strategy so that their actions are attributed to rival groups, paying them less attention and persecuting them less.

They conclude, from the empirical evidence displayed, there is an effect opposed to the expected by the authorities with the *neutralization* of a drug lord, since homicides related to organized crime substantially increase, as well as homicide in the open population after the killing or arrest of a drug lord, creating a hydra effect. This is, in the place where neutralization takes place, the inter- and intra-cartel dispute intensifies, mainly affecting the population not related to organized crime. More so, about six and 12 months later, the neighboring municipalities become polluted due to this effect. However, results are differenced by the hierarchical level of the captured leaders. That is to say, in the case of a lieutenant, this mechanism is not immediately activated, but if he is neutralized in a strategic municipality, the increase in violence between opposing groups is imminent. Calderón et al. (2015) conclude that the intervention of the federal government generates an effect opposed to that expected, since homicides increase, and to lesser extent, so do other crimes, for example, kidnapping and extortions.

As exposed later in the text, one of the phenomena in the academic agendas on violence is migration. The above is explained because, in addition to the noticeable border with the U.S., Tamaulipas is the closest geographic point between northern and southern borders in Mexico, which makes this state the space with the greatest flow of individuals, movement of all sorts of commodities (importations and exportations), adding to the incidence of crimes derived from such interchange. However, the gradual loss of territorial control by state authorities, failed interventions and presence of organized crime groups are factors that have

increased direct violence, generating diverse effects both in migration flows and the reasons for individuals to migrate.

The migration phenomenon may be approached from a broad vision of violence, albeit, more than institutional characteristics, subordination mechanisms or specific ideologies, what is noticed in this literature is the way crimes, mainly extortion, influence on the processes of migration toward the U.S. That is to say, the effects of direct violence on migration between Mexico and the United States are analyzed.

For Ríos Contreras (2014), there is a strong relation between the level of violence, drugs and migration. The author considers migration the product of crimes such as extortion, mainly, while Mexicans decide to migrate based on the probability of experiencing any harm. These decisions generate visible changes at both sides of the border. Between 2006 and 2010, in the U.S., the number of visas granted to businesses (investors) increased almost four times, and so did the number of Mexican students in school departments close to the border. At the Mexican border, the index of abandoned households increased in such manner that there are extensive uninhabited areas within the cities; conversely, in the communities of Guadalupe, Mier and General Treviño, the rates of refugees per million inhabitants increased 25% up to 2010.

For Durin (2012), the migration phenomenon product of violence has generated a distinction between the sorts of displaced: those with higher incomes are enabled to legally change their residence to the U.S., being considered “gold displaced”; those with no resources start an internal enforced displacement process, which is stressed in areas such as Reynosa—where migrants from Veracruz or San Fernando arrive—, or in populations such as Miguel Alemán—a municipality deemed “a ghost town”, whose inhabitants have moved to other places in the state. The destination and conditions in which the displaced from this community develop have not been recorded; this makes it evident that institutional and social processes model the contours of violence in different ways on each side of the northeast Mexico-U.S. border.

Another of the effects of direct violence may be noticed in the electoral competitiveness of localities with presence of organized crime. A higher violence level contributes to lower electoral competitiveness in the place due to the alterations in the offer and demand of candidates. Some do not postulate because of fear, and those who do may be threatened by criminal organizations, dropping out of the competence, or might be murdered; in other cases, organized crime favors, supports and promotes some electoral option. Owing to all these factors, options noticeably decrease. The lack of electoral offer entails higher concentration of votes in a smaller number of electoral alternatives that in the short- and mid-terms favor the appearance or consolidation of subnational authoritarian regimes (Ponce, 2016).

It is worth underscoring that this group of research works do not consider Tamaulipas as a single case study, but all the northern states of Mexico. However, they do carry out an exhaustive study of the state. In some of these research works, Tamaulipas is considered an

exemplary case, either because of the high crime rates or the specific cases of committed crimes that have been configured as historic milestones of state public security.

Well now, it may be considered that these research works start from a broad vision of violence, specifically the structural dimensions, though in such works, reflection revolves around the manifestation of crimes, and how crime incidence related to organized crime influences or has direct effects on various phenomena such as migration, transborder dynamics, and also on institutional and sociopolitical processes. Finally, it is worth underscoring that these researches have been published on international journals and produced by researchers ascribed to universities and research centers located outside Tamaulipas, for example Stanford University, the University of Texas in Brownsville, Harvard University, and CIDE Center region.

Broad perspective: symbolical or moral and structural dimension of violences

As a response to the restricted vision of violence comes the one that extends the scope of aggressions or damage to others and such harm is not considered an ultimate end in the analysis. Within this broad perspective are analyses from the symbolical or moral dimension and from the structural dimension. The former, as exposed, necessarily entail a process by means of which the subordination of the other is accomplished by means of its denial; while in the latter, we face processes to deny the others by means of restricting access to their rights using institutional, political and/or economic mechanisms.

Symbolical or moral dimension

How is violence lived and suffered at the northeastern Mexican border? This set of research works states that violence is a product of social devices that position specific actors in subordination. From this standpoint, the violences experienced by young population that works in maquiladoras in Matamoros are analyzed. It is considered that youth experience violence in three spheres: at the household, characterized by physical and psychological mistreatment; at the workplace, sexual harassment and labor pressure; and at their barrios or community environments, via threats, kidnappings and harassment. These three spheres produce and reproduce violence by means of perpetration mechanisms, whose purpose is not necessarily aggression *per se*: psychologic, sexual, abandonment of paternal duties (at the households); marginalization and exclusion, as well as discipline by means of physical aggression (in the neighborhoods). That is to say, youth do not only live and coexists with one dimension of violence, but their bodies incarnate multiple violences (De la O Martínez & Flores Ávila, 2012).

Furthermore, the effects of violences are analyzed from the representations, configurations and/or associations made by university youth and adolescents. It is studied what drug trafficking means for them and the way this representation has affected their perception of security in public spaces and social relationships. On one side, these research works consider that drug trafficking brought a modification in the way of life of these youth as a

consequence, thereby, the perception of insecurity increased. On the other, they consider that not only they fear criminal groups, but also authorities (Gómez San Luis & Almanza-Avendaño, 2016). These works valorize that the social representation built on drug trafficking is ambivalent, for on one side, the activity is rejected, while on the other, crime and related activities are associated to labor options with certain social prestige, even though the respondents of these studies deny taking this alternative as an option for life. In this sense, the presence of criminal groups modified the experience of using and living the public space: it restricted transit over specific places intuitively catalogued as insecure; restricted mobility after certain hours; there were radical changes in night life, leisure activities, among others. The visible consequences of these modifications are the rupture of the social fabric, for example, due to constant suspicion of unknown people or the impossibility of establishing friendships with third parties. Moreover, as previously mentioned, total mistrust is expressed toward authorities in charge of providing security, either federal, i.e., the military, or local authorities such as state police corps (Almanza-Avendaño, Romero-Mendoza, & Gómez-San Luis, 2018b; Jurado Montelongo, 2016).

As regards the symbolical dimension of violences against women and their dynamics from a gender perspective and from feminist theories, threats, specific risks and resources women in transit over Tamaulipas are analyzed. Hence, in the analysis of the regional context, where there is an intensive activity of organized crime, distinguishable is that the violences women experience are not only limited to homicides, kidnappings or extortion, but the risks of migration are differenced by gender and nationality, since due to the fact of being a woman, they are more prone to become victims of rape, prostitution or human trafficking. These risks are reduced if the nationality is Mexican; however, if women come from a country with a lower development level such as Central American ones, the risk increases considerably (Cueva-Luna & Terrón-Caro, 2014).

The research works that analyze the symbolical dimension of violences have youth and adolescents engaged in maquiladoras, students and/or migrant women as subjects of study. Historically, these groups have been considered in condition of vulnerability or precariousness, what locates them in a particular place and time, that is to say, in a context where they suffer multiple violences with high presence of organized crime. The above implies that they are not necessarily victims of direct aggressions, but also of indirect attacks. Therefore, the forms, dynamics and effects of these violences may be apprehended from the subjectivity of the actors who interpret the reality in which they live, but who are aware of being in a disadvantageous or a subordinate position, nevertheless.

Well now, the analysis of the symbolical dimension is carried out by more plural research groups, whose institutional ascription is regional and national. It is distinguishable, as of 2018, that regional researchers retake the interest in violences from a symbolical dimension in university students; while, over the years when the federal security strategy had negative impacts on the state, those who carried out fieldwork and later published the works were

researchers from other states, which speaks of a possible risk for the security of local researchers.

Structural dimension

The structural dimension of violences addresses institutional, governmental, political, and social processes that victimize and reassert the subjects, where there is no physical aggression or immediately visible physical harm necessarily. However, as it is a process, it produces damage for the individuals, generating conditions of disadvantage, though not necessarily submission. In any case, despite there is direct violence against individuals, truth is, the starting point is a broad perspective, in which not only they are victims of homicide, rape, trafficking or kidnapping, but also of a series of institutional, symbolic and cultural conditions, which, as a set, articulate to victimize and revictimize the actors whose consequences may be collectively apprehended.

In this regard, one of the faces most commonly explored is that of the violences experienced by nationals and aliens in transit over Tamaulipas in a context of high criminal violence. The various forms in which migrants are violented are analyzed, as well as the specific dynamics, over their transit on the state, such violences take in a context where high impact crime indices may be considered alarming. Izcara-Palacios (2012b) describes four forms of violence suffered by migrants, both in transit and agricultural day-laborers in the country: 1) people who participated in the research are afraid to be imprisoned, kidnapped or murdered by crime groups, however, they do not press charges for fears of the authorities in charge of security and justice; 2) migrants, mainly agricultural day laborers, are harassed by state and municipal authorities, since most does not have identity documents; 3) agricultural day laborers experience social isolation due to prejudice among native inhabitants, which has drawn a moral barrier between them, since for the locals, immigrants do not deserve a dignified life, so they live in crowded conditions and are excluded from social programs; and, 4) forced recruitment of migrants in Mexico creates a perception and prejudice on the subject as a disposable object, in this way, they turn into aggressors since they are forced to partake of criminal activities (kidnapping, extortion, murder, among others), in spite of their conditions of victims.

The analyses on the effects of violences in migration processes and migrant individuals point at two opposing stances. On one side, Izcara-Palacios (2012b, 2013) considers that the smuggling of undocumented people was not displaced by organized crime networks, since there are insertion processes into people smuggling from the micro level; for example, from trust and loyalty toward the bosses, forged through labor relationships, which does not make them part of organized crime via people smuggling.

On the other, for Hernández-Hernández (2017), the internal struggle between drug cartels in Tamaulipas modified the ways and processes of clandestine migration, increasing the risks, for not only they face the difficulty of migration itself, but also the probability of becoming victims of serious crimes. Moreover, the author states that all of the actors and institutions of

civil society that are part of the defense of migrants' human rights may be the object of grave attacks; which suggests the existence of institutional weakness that neither protects nor ensures the security of people in transit.

Cárdenas-Rodríguez and Vázquez Delgado (2014), from feminist studies, consider that neither federal and state governments have the resources to protect and safeguard the migrants' human rights. This situation aggravates when it is analyzed from a gender perspective: the authors state that migrant women have virtually no resources of effective institutional protection. They stress that the mechanism of perpetration of violences women in transit experience is fully differenced and feminized; women suffer more harassment and sexual harassment, deprivation of liberty for sexual exploitation, as well as rapes. Correa-Cabrera (2013) attributes this lack of state capacity to provide security to the loss of territorial control and the legitimate use of force; these gaps have been filled by the structures of the cartels, which impose their rules on certain populations.

What made the State capacity diminish? For Flores-Macías (2018), the militarization strategy reduced public security and fiscal extraction. Institutionally, there is a pattern that promotes high levels of collective violence, mainly out of economic reasons. For Chinchilla (2018), organized crime groups have learnt the adjustments of formal and informal institutions so that the State is no longer able to strengthen and sustain impunity and negotiation pacts as in the past. The lack of counterbalances such as free press, not silenced, capable of informing the citizens about the occurrences in the state and a strong civil society show that Tamaulipas is a virtually failed subnational regime, since the territory is controlled by non-state actors due to the levels of systemic corruption that increase the levels of direct violence and deepen symbolic and structural violence (Del Palacio Montiel, 2018).

This political complexity is understood by research works that analyze the interventions of civil society and local government to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence. From an approach of political economy, Mariñez Navarro and Vivas (2012) analyze the way the economic elites of Nuevo Laredo, which have a high cohesion level, generated articulation and organization strategies to develop common business within the context of international trade. In any case, this economic elite has an *ethos* of apparent efficiency. This conjugates with the work carried out by the local government, which increased citizen participation through nongovernmental organizations which do not outlive the administration that fostered them. While López León (2014) suggests that the hypothesis that civil society organizations may contain and/or reduce violence is not fully valid or accurate. The author considers there is sufficient evidence to support the above, since the forms of relationship between government and society are weak and scarce, given the assistance (clientelist) tradition of non-governmental organizations in the state, which is not far from its reality. Finally, Zárate Ruiz and López León (2017) claim that public policies have been applied in the state to prevent crime where the efforts between society and government have not produced results because the premise upon which such policies base is wrong, for they start from an immovable, scantily flexible reality.

CONCLUSION

This document analyzes how violence has been studied in Tamaulipas. To do so, two standpoints were proposed; restricted and broad. Each one includes various dimensions. For example, the restricted perspective refers the direct dimension of violence; while the broad relates to symbolical, cultural and structural dimensions. It was argued that unlike other states in Mexico, where academic efforts have concentrated to understand violence in a restricted sense, in Tamaulipas, violence is mainly studied in a broad sense. It is noticeable an intense discussion on the violences that impact or influence the migration processes of people in transit and agricultural day laborers.

Moreover, regardless of the analysis perspective, in virtually all the research works there is a close relation between violence, organized crime and drug trafficking, therefore, studies from both perspectives start from a common space. That is to say, in the restricted sense and the broad vision, the components and dimensions of violence and violences may be defined from the presence/absence of criminal organizations and this is fundamental at the moment of running later analyses. Furthermore, in these standpoints it is identified that public policy interventions in security carried out by national, state and local government have produced an effect opposed to that expected; that is to say, militarization has significantly raised crime incidence, increasing the perception of insecurity and vulnerating human rights in the state. This opens research lines heading for correctly analyzing public policy on security at subnational level or the effects of suppressing police forces at municipal level.

In like manner, research works carried out during the strategy against organized crime that specifically analyze violence in restricted sense and its effects were produced by researchers ascribed to research centers and universities outside the state. In this same term, such *in situ* researchers opted for enquiries not necessarily dealing with violence but with violences, and despite they were related to organized crime, this was tangentially or contextually analyzed. The above opens a research line on the risks associated to the analysis of violence and violences in subnational states characterized by high rates of high impact crimes, mainly for the actors that research the field.

As well, the absence of analyses on violence and violences with gender perspective is noticed. Even if there are research works on violence against women, mainly in the private sphere, no studies in which women are the center of discussion beyond the family and domestic sphere are noticed. That is to say, if the backdrop is organized crime, how does violence in the direct dimension affect women who belong in organized crime? What are the effects of belonging in organized crime in the case of a woman? To what extent women in organized crime are victims/aggressors? What are the effects of the presence of criminal organizations in the public space of women? What are the social representations women make of violence related to smuggling?

In any case, the research questions on violences in Tamaulipas appear to the extent one or another perspective is taken, and are far from depleting.

Translation: Luis Cejudo-Espinosa.

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