MÉXICO AND DRUG TRAFFICKING:
THE SOVEREIGNTY DILEMMA

Jorge Chabat
Las colecciones de Documentos de Trabajo del CIDE representan un medio para difundir los avances de la labor de investigación, y para permitir que los autores reciban comentarios antes de su publicación definitiva. Se agradecerá que los comentarios se hagan llegar directamente al (los) autor(es).

D.R. © 2000, Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas, A. C., carretera México-Toluca 3655 (km. 16.5), Lomas de Santa Fe, 01210 México, D. F., tel. 727-9800, fax: 292-1304 y 570-4277. Producción a cargo del (los) autor(es), por lo que tanto el contenido como el estilo y la redacción son responsabilidad exclusiva suya.

NÚMERO 57
Jorge Chabat
MEXICO AND DRUG TRAFFICKING:
THE SOVEREIGNTY DILEMMA
Introduction

Sovereignty is a concept that is debated every day in international politics. In many respects, sovereignty is the foundational concept of the international system as we know it. The word is used frequently by most countries in the world, often with a defensive purpose in mind. At the same time, the concept is a subject of considerable debate in the academic literature, as well as in international fora. The discussions about the relationship between sovereignty, autonomy, human rights, and the role of the international community are abundant and challenging. However, it seems that not all states hold a similar concept of sovereignty, and not all of them practice (or suffer) a similar concept. Even more, the concept differs not only from state to state, but from one period of historical time to another. As Fowler and Bunck point out: "the concept of sovereignty has been used not only in different senses by different people, but in different senses by the same person in rapid succession".

There is also a disagreement among certain states as to how the post-Cold War threats are affecting traditional conceptions of sovereignty. Although a basic consensus exists about the threats associated with the new agenda, such as drug trafficking, terrorism, organized crime, environmental disasters, global epidemics and uncontrolled migration, it is not clear how these affect the different countries. For example, illegal migration is considered a threat by the United States government, but is seen as a solution to demographic and economic problems by many Latin American governments. Environmental degradation, likewise, is seen as a threat to many states; but for some of the poorest countries, it is a partial and immediately-available solution to their urgent economic problems.

Additionally, no consensus exists as to the dangers posed by the post-Cold War threats. Even when all countries can accept that drug trafficking is a threat, not all of them perceive it in the same way. For example, for the United States, drugs are a challenge because of American consumption, while for some Latin American countries, like Mexico or Colombia, drugs are threatening because of the corruption and violence they generate. However, the discussion about the effects of drug trafficking on sovereignty is intense. For many Latin American governments, drug trafficking represents a threat to their sovereignty because it impels the United States to


put pressure on them. Actually, this is the most common interpretation of the Latin American countries, as will be analyzed further below. Notwithstanding this, most of the Latin American countries that complain about the loss of sovereignty to United States intervention eventually agree to collaborate with the American government in the war on drugs.

Regardless of the fierce debate, it is clear that illegal drugs are seen by most countries of the world as a serious threat to national security and sovereignty, even when no agreement exists as to how to deal with the problem. Actually, more than any other subject, drug trafficking probably casts the problem of state sovereignty in the post-Cold War era into the sharpest relief. Many countries (principally Third World countries) face the dilemma of confronting the drug threat without giving up sovereignty in other areas. The solution, if it exists, is not a simple one. In the following pages, we will analyze the behavior of the Mexican government in handling this complex dilemma. The hypothesis I will sustain is that it is impossible for a country like Mexico to maintain “total sovereignty” in confronting drug trafficking, and that there must be a trade-off between different concepts of sovereignty in order to preserve the basis of the social contract: the people’s will.

In the first part of this paper, I will describe the different meanings ascribed to sovereignty, and how these varied interpretations may collide in confronting a specific threat. In the second part, I will review the Mexican government’s responses to the drugs threat, and how it has adjusted its interpretation of sovereignty accordingly. Lastly, I will offer some conclusions aimed at clarifying the responses and the underlying issues and interpretations.

Three Concepts of Sovereignty

Sovereignty, either in the hands of a king or a nation-state, means ultimate authority: “a police chief may have authority over me, but he is not sovereign”. In other words, “in all cases, nobody may question the sovereign [power]; nobody may legitimately

---

3 See Juan Gabriel Tokatlian, Drogas y Seguridad Nacional?: La amenaza de la intervención?, Santiago, Chile: Comisión Sudamericana de Paz, Documento de Trabajo No. 1, 1990, 29 pp.

4 For example, in 1986 the United States government carried out the “Blast Furnace” operation in the Chaparen region in Bolivia. This operation mobilized 170 American soldiers and six UH-60 “Blackhawk” helicopters, and was aimed at supporting the destruction of laboratories by Bolivian anti-drug forces and agents from the American Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). In 1988, the “Snowcap” Operation was carried out in Bolivia and Peru. Like the “Blast Furnace” Operation, this one sought to support local anti-drug units, and involved the delivery of American helicopters and military personnel. Michael T. Klare, “Fighting Drugs With the Military”, The Nation, January 1st, 1990, pp. 8-12.

oppose it". For some classical writers the “ultimate” attribute of sovereignty is supposed to be that the sovereign lies “above human law, and is in fact the source of it”. This does not mean he is illegitimate, although that is one possible outcome. The classical definition of sovereignty (Bodin, Hobbes) was little concerned with the problem of legitimacy, even when Hobbes proposed the existence of a “social contract”. But the sovereign in Hobbes has no clear control over his essential duty: providing security to citizens. For some other classic authors, the linkage of the sovereign with the people was much more direct: Rousseau, for example, thought that in “popular sovereignty” lay the origin of a ruler’s authority.

Independently of the origin of the sovereign’s “ultimate” authority (God, the people, etc.), the consolidation of the concept provided an answer to the internal chaos that nations faced in the 15th and 16th centuries. The demand for an authority capable of guaranteeing security for individuals was the impetus behind the modern state and its sovereign attributes. But this concept did not only reside in the minds of the political philosophers of the time. It reflected an historical fact: the birth of the nation-state. This is the reason why the concept of sovereignty had a vital territorial content: it was developed for states with well-defined borders, and the authority of the sovereign was ultimate only within those borders. As we have already noted, this authority could be legitimate or illegitimate; but its main characteristic was that it was not contested by anybody inside the state’s territory. This concept of sovereignty clashed with some previous ones, such as that favored by religious authorities. The authority claimed by the Church, for example, lacked a territorial basis. Thus, the nation-state-based concept of sovereignty was absolute. This has been described as “positive sovereignty”. Positive sovereignty “presupposes capabilities which enable governments to be their own masters: it is a substantive rather than a formal condition”. However, for Jackson, positive sovereignty involves some kind of obligation of the government vis-à-vis the citizens: it is the means which enable states to take advantage of their independence, usually indicated by able and responsible rulers and productive and allegiant citizens”. For Jackson, the fact that positive sovereignty involves a compromise with the population of a nation-state makes it the “distinctive overall feature of a ‘developed’ state. Consequently it is a stronger characteristic of some states than of others”. Obviously, this “positive” sovereignty, as Jackson suggests, is not a mere formality: it reflects a capability to protect the

---

6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
10 Daniel Philpott, op. cit., p. 19.
12 Ibid, p. 29.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
citizens from external aggression. This leads us to the second concept of sovereignty: external sovereignty.

External sovereignty is the projection of internal sovereignty into world affairs. Contrary to the concept of internal sovereignty, which means “ultimate authority”, external sovereignty means independence from external power. “External sovereignty simply denotes the independence of states (although they share power), while internally sovereignty means that states reign supreme.” At home, “sovereignty meant supremacy over all other potential authorities within that state’s boundaries. In foreign affairs, the concept connoted concentrated power sufficient to secure independence from other states”.

However, both concepts, as Philpott points out, “do not denote distinct types of sovereignty, but rather complementary, always coexistent, aspects of sovereignty.” External sovereignty can also be defined, as noted, in terms of negative sovereignty: “freedom from outside interference: a formal-legal condition”. Actually, external sovereignty is “the central principle of the classical law of nations: the sphere of exclusive legal jurisdiction of states or international laissez faire”. It is “the legal foundation upon which a society of independent and formally equal states fundamentally rests”. Indeed, external sovereignty is the pillar on which the nation-state system has rested since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. Since that time, it has been “illegitimate to interfere in other states to influence their governance of religion or of anything else”.

Thus, external sovereignty is the key concept of international society, and it meshes well with a perception of the international system as anarchic. I do not want to engage in a discussion of the anarchical character of international society. Still, even if we accept that a certain degree of anarchy exists in the international system, this should be understood more as an absence of government, and not as total chaos that impedes collaboration. Actually, the definition of the international system as chaotic is as erroneous as the definition of it as composed of totally isolated units. Therefore, even when external sovereignty means independence, it does not mean isolation. States communicate with each other, collaborate with each other, and adjust policies according to the power and preferences of other states. This involves international

---

16 Michael Ross Fowler and Julie Marie Bunck, op. cit., p. 5.
17 Daniel Philpott, op. cit., p. 20.
18 Robert H. Jackson, op. cit., p. 27.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 Daniel Philpott, op. cit., p. 20.
compromises, the most basic of which is respect for the sovereignty of other states. Thus, external sovereignty involves also “the obligation to protect within the territory the rights of other states, in particular their right to integrity and inviolability in peace and war, together with the rights which each state may claim for its nationals in foreign territory”. Actually, the international obligations of a sovereign state, in order to respect another state’s sovereignty, suppose some degree of activism from the State. For example, sovereign states are “legally obligated to act to prevent their territory from being used by terrorists intent on attacking other states or peoples”.

As the foregoing discussion suggests, external sovereignty, although closely related to internal sovereignty, differs in a substantial way, since it is not absolute. It depends on each state’s ability to protect itself from external interference (which in turn creates the conditions that make some states incapable of possessing it); and it implies a degree of compromise and accommodation with the outside world. In the traditional analysis of sovereignty, weakness in internal sovereignty was closely correlated with the inability of a state to protect itself from the predatory international environment. However, in recent decades, we can perceive a reduction in the external sovereignty of strong states (those with a high military and economic capacity and an unchallenged authority within its territory), as well as in weak states (those with a low military capacity and serious problems of internal consolidation). The difference is that in the first case, developed states have agreed voluntarily to limit their external sovereignty in exchange for other rewards (economic gains, protection for their citizens, etc.), while weak states have been forced to give up their external sovereignty. In the first instance, the limitations on external sovereignty result from the strength of the state; in the second instance, they are provoked by the weakness of the state. This can be defined as the “sovereignty paradox”: “the doctrine of sovereignty and non-intervention are Western constructs, constructs now most tenaciously affirmed by non-Western states. There are good reasons for this. In practice sovereign immunity from interference is not a question of sovereignty, but of power, a property with which most developing countries are not well supplied”.

Nonetheless, industrial states’ acceptance of limits on external sovereignty has occurred in a changing international environment, one in which some forms of external sovereignty are becoming increasingly illegitimate. Since the end of the cold war, it has been possible to perceive the strengthening of the liberal internationalism paradigm, one that moves the center of gravity in the international system from the nation-state to the individual. Although previous liberal attempts have been made to displace the

23 Island of Palmas (US/Neth.), 2 Reports of International Arbitral Awards) 839 (1928), quoted in Michael Ross Fowler and Julie Marie Bunck, op. cit., p. 13.
nation-state as the ordering principle of the international system, the 1990's attempt appears much stronger than its predecessors, and has influenced in an important way the international politics of the end of the 20th century. This paradigm "is not interested on this or that group, province, nation or continent. It is internationalist; its range of action covers humankind and the whole earth." For proponents of the liberal paradigm, the right to self-determination means "the self-determination of the individuals living in every geographic zone", and has nothing to do with the "self-determination of nations". The key concern of government, according to this paradigm, should be individuals and their well-being: "The king governs, under liberalism, over persons, not over pieces of land..." Even nationality is something to be decided by the individual: "people should be able to decide freely the political state to which they wanted to belong." Liberal internationalism sees territorial boundaries as an accident: "For the liberal it is not acceptable that the world [should] end in the borderline; the national limits have for him a mere incidental and subordinate transcedency." From this perspective, economic globalization has a great importance: "the domain of the international division of labor is not exclusively national but worldly."

The liberal paradigm evidently favors the actions carried out by the international community over formal state sovereignty. This emphasis derives from an alternative concept of sovereignty, popular in character. Even when this concept of sovereignty lay at the heart of the United States' independence war, as well as the French Revolution, it was not until the 1990's that popular sovereignty came to challenge the other two concepts of sovereignty in a meaningful way. What we are seeing now, therefore, is a revolution in the concept of sovereignty, concretized in the tendencies that favor humanitarian intervention.

The liberal international revolution is obviously supported by the major powers (the United States and Europe); but it would be a mistake to think that this radical change in world politics lacks a legitimate foundation. Actually, the fundamental

27 The liberal paradigm was strongest in the post-war periods. It gained in influence after the First World War, with the League of Nations, but was finally unsuccessful. Likewise, it resurfaced after World War II, but the liberal project of Dumbarton Oaks was replaced by a more conservative, state-centered approach in the San Francisco Conference that founded the United Nations. The third attempt, in the post-Cold War era, appears to represent the strongest effort yet of liberal ideas to influence world politics.


31 Ibid, p. 150.


34 Ibid.

35 See Daniel Philpott, op. cit.
change has been the displacement of the parameters of international legitimacy, from internal and external sovereignty (state-centered sovereignty) to popular sovereignty. "In an age of transnational standards, the incompatibility between sovereign immunity shielding governments that commit domestic atrocities and influential public opinion concerned with human rights is becoming unsustainable."36

This revolution has placed many Third World states in a complicated situation. They must choose between clashing concepts of sovereignty: state-centered versus individual-centered concepts.37 This sovereignty dilemma is aggravated by the fact that most of the developing countries lack both the strength necessary to defend state-centered concepts of sovereignty, as well as the domestic behavior and disposition to accept the legitimacy of the liberal paradigm. Actually, those Third World countries that are ill-disposed to accept the liberal paradigm internationally (and, obviously, domestically) are condemned to international irrelevance. Since they do not possess the capacity to defend their internal and external sovereignty, their only option is acceptance of popular sovereignty. If they refuse to do so, they are likely to lose political relevance in the international arena. Chile’s behavior regarding General Pinochet’s arrest in London is a good example of a country acknowledging the strength of international legitimacy outside its borders. Since Chile was not disposed to exchange its state-centered sovereignty for popular sovereignty, it is probable that in the end, its sovereignty will be diminish substantially.

**Sovereignty in the Post-Cold War Era**

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the threats that nation-states are facing in the post-Cold War era are quite different from those of previous decades.38 The main change is the presence of non-state actors. Most of them are challenging the traditional functions of the nation-state, including its ability to defend external and internal sovereignty (or even to defend popular sovereignty). Actually, one of the main reasons for this change is that, as Keohane and Nye pointed out in the 1970’s, the criteria of power allocation have changed radically. Not only is economic power becoming more and more significant, but there are more and more international actors possessing power. Nowadays, power is not only in the hands of economic agents, but also in the hands of actors that generate information (newspapers, media, private companies), legitimacy (parties, NGO’s, Churches, etc.), fear (terrorist groups, organized crime), images (advertising agencies), and knowledge (universities, think tanks, advisory groups, etc.).

36 Marianne Heiberg, op. cit., p. 15.
37 This dilemma is similar to those that Third World states face regarding economic development. Most of them have to give up independence (external sovereignty) in exchange for economic resources necessary for their development. This dilemma was clearly exposed by Franklin B. Weinstein in "The uses of foreign policy in Indonesia. An Approach to the Analysis of Foreign Policy in the Less Developed Countries", *World Politics*, vol. XXIV, No. 3, April, 1972, pp. 356-381.
38 For the challenges that come with the “new” agenda, see Fred Halliday, “International Relations: Is There A New Agenda?”, *Millennium*, Vol. 20, No. 1, pp. 57-72
Of course, not all of these actors challenge nation-states in the same way. Also, not all of these actors challenge all the concepts of sovereignty. Most of them, however, cast into doubt the state's capacity to maintain domestic stability and protect its territory in the traditional way. Organized crime and terrorism are good examples of the strength of these post-Cold War threats. They challenge internal as well as external sovereignty - and also popular sovereignty, since they attack individuals and negatively affect the state's ability to protect its citizens. In these cases, probably the only option is to appeal to the international community for help in the fight against international organized crime or terrorism. Obviously, accepting that help implies a significant reduction in internal and external sovereignty, in order to rescue some of the same sovereignties, and to protect popular sovereignty as well.

**Drug Trafficking in Mexico: What to Sacrifice?**

Drug trafficking was not an issue in Mexican domestic politics or international relations until the end of the 1960's. The reasons for this are several. Mexico itself was not a very important country in the international arena; the interest of the international community in Mexico (except for the U.S. government, which had an interest in Mexican stability) was not high; drugs were not an important issue inside the United States; and the power of the drug traffickers was not such as to threaten the power of states. All of these characteristics contributed to creating an environment in which the idea of combating drug trafficking seemed feasible and, indeed, one of the state's duties. Drug traffickers were viewed simply as criminals, and nobody doubted the state's capacity to confront and punish them. Obviously, the years following the end of World War II were characterized by considerable optimism as to the state's capacities (especially in Western states). If the Allies could defeat a world criminal like Hitler, there seemed to be practically nothing they could not do.

Nonetheless, in 1969 the first so-called “Operation Intercept” demonstrated to the Mexican government that drugs could, indeed, be a problem for Mexico’s international relations, as well as a domestic concern. This incident, which in certain respects affected Mexico’s external sovereignty, led to effective collaboration with the U.S. government in subsequent years. “Operation Intercept” was replaced by “Operation Cooperation,” aimed at fighting the traffic and cultivation of illicit drugs on Mexican territory. This program gave birth to the Mexican government’s most successful anti-drugs campaign of the post World War II era: “Operation Condor.” The campaign had a clear effect on the two main Mexican drugs for export (marijuana and heroin). Production of heroin decreased from 85 percent of the total volume introduced.

---


to the U.S. in 1974 to 37 percent in 1980. The decrease in marijuana entering the United States was more evident: it fell from 90 percent of the American market in 1974 to 5 percent in 1981.

In general terms, the collaboration with the U.S. during the 1970's was positive for the Mexican government. It sacrificed a portion of its external sovereignty, by adjusting its policies to American interests; but in return, Mexico strengthened its internal sovereignty, by dismantling the emerging drug cartels. It also strengthened its popular sovereignty, by protecting Mexican citizens from the risk of drug consumption, and by diminishing the violence carried out by drug traffickers. However, the success of the 1970's proved ephemeral. During the 1980's, Mexico again positioned itself as one of the major providers of marijuana and heroin for the United States, and one of the most important transit points for cocaine shipments to American territory. The reasons for the change were both domestic and international. Among them it is possible to mention climatic conditions favoring the cultivation of marijuana and poppies; the resurgence of Colombia as a major producer of cocaine, what made Mexico an attractive transit point; the deterioration of the Mexican economy, which increased the attractiveness to peasants of cultivating illicit drugs; the deterioration of Mexico's anti-drug campaign as a result of corruption in the Mexican anti-drug forces; the bureaucratic inertia of the Mexican offices involved; and the success of the Florida Task Force interdiction campaign against the production of marijuana in Colombia, what in turn favored Mexican production.

The increasing prominence of drug trafficking in Mexico during the 1980's posed new threats to Mexican sovereignty in the internal as well as external arenas. Internally, increased drug trafficking had a direct impact on the strength and number of drug mafias in Mexico. Although these criminal groups were not able to destabilize the Mexican government in an important way, they posed a direct challenge to Mexico's internal sovereignty. Even more, drug traffickers began to take control of the police forces, posing a direct challenge to the most basic element of internal sovereignty: the ability to enforce the law. The lack of governmental control over its police forces was evident at the beginning of 1985. In February of that year, a DEA agent, Enrique Camarena, was kidnapped and assassinated in the Mexican city of Guadalajara. During the months following this event, it became clear that the Guadalajara police were deeply corrupt, as was an important sector of the Mexican Judicial Police. It took some months to find Camarena's body and capture his assassins, and his alleged murderer,

---

41 These reasons are mentioned by Richard B. Craig, "U.S. Narcotics Policy toward Mexico: Consequences for the Bilateral Relationship", in Guadalupe Gonzalez and Marta Tienda (eds.), The Drug Connection in U.S.-Mexican Relations, San Diego: Center for U.S. Mexican Studies, University of California, 1989, pp. 75-77.

42 See Bruce Michael Bagley, "U.S. Foreign Policy and the War on Drugs: Analysis of a Policy Failure", Journal of Interamerican Studies and World affairs, Vol. 30, Nos. 2 and 3, Summer/Fall 1988, p. 199.
Rafael Caro Quintero, was reported to have a Judicial Police identification, which helped him to evade arrest for a protracted period.\textsuperscript{43}

Camarena's murder affected Mexican external sovereignty as well. The assassination provoked strong pressure from the U.S. government on Mexico. This pressure not only forced Mexican authorities to speed up investigations on Camarena’s death, but also had a direct impact on Mexican territorial sovereignty. Among the methods of exerting pressure was the kidnapping of a Mexican citizen, Rene Verdugo Urquidez, in 1986 for his alleged participation in Camarena’s assassination. Verdugo Urquidez was transported to Los Angeles where he faced trial. This kidnapping was sponsored by the DEA and performed by Mexican policemen. Mexican territorial sovereignty was violated again in 1990 when a Mexican citizen, Humberto Alvarez Machain, was kidnapped and brought to U.S. territory. A couple of years later, Alvarez Machain was released, and returned to Mexico.\textsuperscript{44} The Mexican government withheld strong protests over the incident, because at the time President Salinas de Gortari was negotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Although the negotiation of NAFTA also affected Mexico’s external sovereignty, it was perceived by the Salinas Administration as the best way to promote Mexican economic development at that time.

In following years, the collaboration between the White House and the Mexican government increased significantly. On March 1996, the High Level Contact Group was created, with the purpose of intensifying and regulating the bilateral collaboration in the fight against drugs. However, this did not prevent the renewal of U.S. pressure on Mexico’s external and internal sovereignty. In this sense, the most notorious affront to Mexican territorial sovereignty was “Operation Casablanca,” carried out covertly by the U.S. government over a couple of years. As a result of this operation, 22 officers of 12 Mexican banks were arrested and charged with money-laundering.\textsuperscript{45} After the Casablanca affair, the Mexican Attorney-General, Jorge Madrazo, as well as the Secretary of Foreign Relations, Rosario Green protested the “violation of Mexican sovereignty”.\textsuperscript{46} Additionally, the Mexican Attorney-General announced that an investigation was underway into the actions of the U.S. agents involved in the operation, to determine whether they had acted illegally on Mexican territory.\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{43} For the Camarena’s assassination and the reaction of Mexican police, see Elaine Shannon, Desperados, New York: Penguin Books, 1989.


\textsuperscript{46} Marco A. García and Sofía Miselem, “Violó nuestra soberanía la Operación Casablanca”, Excélsior, May 26, 1998.

As a result of the Casablanca affair, the Mexican Secretary of Foreign Relations proposed to the U.S. government a "behavior code" based on respect for the territorial sovereignty and integrity of each country. In July 1998, two months after the Casablanca affair, the Mexican and U.S. Attorneys-General, Jorge Madrazo and Janet Reno, signed in Brownsville, Texas, a letter guaranteeing closer communication in order to avoid incidents such as the Casablanca Operation. As a result of this letter, both governments signed a "Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the United Mexican States on Procedures for Cooperation regarding Law Enforcement Activities". In this memorandum, both governments "commit[ted] themselves, fully respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each nation, to observe all relevant bilateral and multilateral agreements, and to recognize and respect the unique responsibility of each Government for the exercise of law enforcement authority in its own territory". It is remarkable that this memorandum had to emphasize what is supposedly the foundational characteristic of the international system: the territorial sovereignty of states. The memorandum established collaboration in four areas: exchange of information, protection and dissemination of highly sensitive information, request for assistance and reports to the Attorneys General. In the days previous to its signing, the Mexican government dropped the threat of extraditing U.S. Customs Service agents who had carried out investigations in Mexico for the Casablanca Operation, as a sign of good will.

On the issue of drugs, U.S. pressure also derived from some aspects of law enforcement. In 1997 President Zedillo agreed to temporary extraditions of drug traffickers to the United States. At the same time, the Mexican government accepted that U.S. vessels and planes would be granted access to Mexican airports and ports. Some journalistic sources reported that DEA agents were allowed to carry guns on Mexican territory, but this was officially denied by the Mexican government. The United States government also collaborated with the Mexican authorities in training and selecting members of a Mexican anti-drugs unit established at the beginning of the Zedillo administration’s tenure. As a result of these pressures, Mexico agreed in 1998 to extradite four Mexican nationals, two of them on drug charges. The extraditions were in process in 1998.

---

51 Ibid.
As we have seen, the threats to state-centered sovereignty from drug trafficking are abundant, and most of them appear in the relationship with the United States. Mexico has been unable to resist U.S. pressures for closer collaboration, including American participation in internal police procedures. Also, covert operations in Mexican territory, such as the Casablanca affair, have been a feature of U.S.-Mexican relations. In other words, U.S. pressure over drugs has affected internal and external sovereignty, and the Mexican government has not been able to resist these violations of its sovereignty. However, threats to Mexican sovereignty do not only come from other nation-states, such as the U.S. Drug traffickers themselves threaten Mexican sovereignty at all three levels examined here: internal, external and popular. Drug traffickers also violate Mexican territorial sovereignty with impunity. They generate corruption among Mexican officials, affecting in this way the state’s ability to perform its basic domestic functions, notably law enforcement. The extent of the corruption is difficult to gauge, but its existence has been acknowledged by President Zedillo, who stated in an interview that “There is evidence that some individuals in the government may have served the narco traffickers’ interests.”

Other evidence also sustains a perception that corruption has reached top levels in Mexican government. The arrest of the Mexican “drug czar”, General Gutierrez Rebollo, in 1997 — because of his links to the head of the Juarez Cartel, Amado Carrillo — is probably the clearest example of this kind of corruption. There have also been denunciations of the supposed involvement of high-level members of the Salinas government in the drug trade. Some sources have even suggested that Salinas’s Chief of Staff, José Córdoba, could have had links to drug traffickers. The relationship of Córdoba with drug trafficking has not been proved, but clear evidence exists of his friendship with a supposed member of the Gulf Cartel. Journalistic accounts also point to Raul Salinas, the brother of President Salinas, who was cited as a friend of the leader of the Gulf Cartel, Juan García Abrego.

---

54 Geri Smith, “They didn’t elect me to have a pleasant time”, Business Week, April 3, 1995, p. 67.
57 Carlos Marín, “Exlocutora de Televisa, exagente federal, contacto de jefes narcos, confidente de José Córdoba... Marcela Bodenstedt y sus misterios”, Proceso, No. 968, May 22, 1995, pp. 6-13. In an amazing statement, President Zedillo said on July, 1995 that the friendship of José Córdoba with Marcela Bodenstedt, the supposed contact of the Gulf Cartel, involved a “fault” that Córdoba “has to examine with his wife and that will require the pardon of his wife”. “Texto íntegro de la conferencia de prensa del presidente Zedillo”, Unomásuno, July 5, 1995, p. III.
This narco-corruption may affect not only the external and internal dimensions of sovereignty, but also popular (or individually-based) sovereignty. One of the main expressions of popular sovereignty is democratic expression at the ballot-box. Although it is not yet proven, some journalistic sources have reported the possibility of drug money finding its way into Mexican electoral campaigns, as in other countries.

Moreover, drug trafficking poses a direct threat to individuals because of the violence it generates. Even when this violence is the result of the illegality of drugs, it affects common people in diverse ways. The general effect is increased individual insecurity, clearly threatening popular sovereignty. Finally, another aspect in which drug trafficking affects individually-based sovereignty is through drug consumption.

Even though Mexico still has low levels of consumption domestically, compared to the U.S., for example, these have shown a tendency to increase, principally in the main urban centers and border cities. In this respect, since drug trafficking itself threatens sovereignty at all three levels, Mexico has to face the sovereignty dilemma: how to fight drug trafficking and defend its essential sovereignty, without giving up sovereignty vis-à-vis the United States.


60 The U.S. government considers drug consumption a threat to its sovereignty. It was defined as such by President Clinton in the foreword of the 1999 drug assessment submitted to the American Congress in March 1999. Ed Carter, “White House stresses drug war cooperation”, The News (Mexico City), February 9, 1999. The United Nations Secretary-General referred to drug abuse as a threat to human life and “basic human security”. “UN secretary-General appeals for action to combat drug scourge”, M2Presswire, June 26, 1997.
Conclusions

It seems that at the end of 20th century, it is very difficult for any state to maintain the three dimensions of sovereignty. On the one hand, the momentum of the liberal-internationalism paradigm makes it difficult to preserve state-centered sovereignty when it clashes too blatantly with popular sovereignty. Those states that reject liberal pressures are frequently overwhelmed by the international community. On the other hand, the importance of drug trafficking for a country like Mexico, which shares a 2,000-mile-long border with the United States, makes it difficult for the Mexican government to resist American pressure on the drug issue, even when some of that pressure clearly violates Mexico's internal and external sovereignty. Mexico has neither the capacity nor the legitimacy to deal with these pressures. Besides, the threats to sovereignty posed by drug trafficking itself are more serious than the threats posed by U.S. pressure, because they affect also popular sovereignty. In this globalized world, it seems that the only way to handle such a "sovereignty dilemma" is to make popular sovereignty the last bastion to defend. After all, states were created because of popular sovereignty, and to protect that sovereignty; perhaps it is time to re-emphasize and return to that original mandate.
Documentos de trabajo de reciente aparición

División de Administración Pública

Arellano Gault, David, La transformación de la administración pública en México: Límites y posibilidades de un servicio civil de carrera. AP-117

Carter, Nicole y Leonard, Ortolano, Subsidies for Public Services at an International Border: Implementing Government Assistance for Environmental Infrastructure in Texas Colonias. AP-118

Del Castillo, Arturo, Building Corruption Indexes. What Do They Really Measure?: AP-119

Del Castillo, Arturo, BUREAUCRACY and CORRUPTION. An Organizational Perspective. AP-1

Arellano, David, Coronilla, Efraín, Coronilla, Raúl y Alberto Santibáñez, Hacia una política de transporte en el Distrito Federal: propuestas de reforma institucional y organizacional. AP-121

Rowland, Allison, La seguridad pública local en México: Una agenda sin rumbo. AP-122


División de Economía

Mayer, David, Global Divergence. E-250


Mayer, David, Salud, crecimiento económico y trampas de pobreza. E-252

Mayer, David and Andrew, Foster, Scale, Technological Change and Human Capital: Manufacturing and Development in Mexico. E-253

Castañeda Sabido, Alejandro, Mexican Manufacturing Markups: Procylical Behavior and the Impact of Trade Liberalization. E-254

Castañeda, Alejandro y Georgina Kessel, Autonomía de Gestión de PEMEX y CFE. E-255

Rubalcava y Graciela Teruel, Luis, Escalas de equivalencia para México. E-256

División de Estudios Internacionales

Schiavon, Jorge A., Sobre contagios y remedios: la heterodoxia economica del New Deal. La politica exterior correccion de Roosevelt y su impacto sobre la administracion cardenista. EI-81.


Velasco, Jesús. Caminando por la historia intelectual de Seymour Martin Lipset. EI-86.

Chabat, Jorge, The Combat of Drug Trafficking in Mexico under Salinas: The Limits of Tolerance, EI-87.

Chabat, Jorge, Mexico’s War on Drugs: No Margin for Maneuver, EI-88.

Schiavon, Jorge A., International Relations and Comparative Politics: Cooperation or Conflict?, EI-89.

Jones, Adam, Reforming the International Financial Institutions. EI-90.


División de Estudios Políticos


Nacif, Benito, El Congreso propone y el presidente dispone: Las nuevas relaciones entre el ejecutivo y el legislativo en México. EP-145.


División de Historia


Meyer, Jean, *¿Quiénes son esos hombres?*. H-11.


Favre, Henri, *Chiapas 1993: intento de análisis de una situación de insurrección*. H-14

Pipitone, Ugo, *La región europea en formación*. H-15

Meyer, Jean, *Guerra, violencia y religión*. H-16

Meyer, Jean, *Guerra, religión y violencia, el contexto salvadoreño de la muerte de Monseñor Romero*. H-17

Pipitone, Ugo, *Caos y Globalización*. H-18


Barrón, Luis, *La tercera muerte de la Revolución Mexicana: Historiografía reciente y futuro en el estudio de la revolución*. H-20

García Ayluardo, Clara, *De tesoreros y tesoros. La administración financiera y la intervención de las cofradías novohispanas*. H-21


Sauter J. Michael, *Visions of the Enlightenment: Johann Christoph Woellner and Prussia’s Edict on Religion of 1788*. H-23