

Working



**KELLOGG INSTITUTE**  
FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

*exploring* DEMOCRACY *and* HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

**WHO PROTECTS WHOM? POLITICIANS, POLICE AND THE  
REGULATION OF DRUG TRAFFICKING IN ARGENTINA**

HERNÁN FLOM

426

January  
2018

paper



*exploring* DEMOCRACY *and* HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The Kellogg Institute for International Studies  
University of Notre Dame  
130 Hesburgh Center for International Studies  
Notre Dame, IN 46556-5677  
Phone: 574/631-6580  
Web: [kellogg.nd.edu](http://kellogg.nd.edu)

The Kellogg Institute for International Studies at the University of Notre Dame has built an international reputation by bringing the best of interdisciplinary scholarly inquiry to bear on democratization, human development, and other research themes relevant to contemporary societies around the world. Together, more than 100 faculty and visiting fellows as well as both graduate and undergraduate students make up the Kellogg community of scholars. Founded in 1982, the Institute promotes research, provides students with exceptional educational opportunities, and builds linkages across campus and around the world.

**The Kellogg Working Paper Series:**

- Shares work-in-progress in a timely way before final publication in scholarly books and journals
- Includes peer-reviewed papers by visiting and faculty fellows of the Institute
- Includes a Web database of texts and abstracts in English and Spanish or Portuguese
- Is indexed chronologically, by region and by research theme, and by author
- Most full manuscripts downloadable from [kellogg.nd.edu](http://kellogg.nd.edu)

**Contacts:** Elizabeth Rankin, Editorial Manager  
[erankin3@nd.edu](mailto:erankin3@nd.edu)

# WHO PROTECTS WHOM? POLITICIANS, POLICE AND THE REGULATION OF DRUG TRAFFICKING IN ARGENTINA

Hernán Flom

Kellogg Institute for International Studies  
Working Paper #426 – January 2018\*

**Hernán Flom** (PhD, UC Berkeley) studies the relationship between politics and organized crime, violence, and security institutions in Latin America. A former Kellogg Visiting Fellow (2016–17), he is currently working in the Argentine Ministry of Security, as the head of the *Instituto Conjunto de Conducción Estratégica*, charged with the training of police commanders from the federal and provincial forces. He is also writing his book on the regulation of drug trafficking in Latin America.

---

\* An early draft of this paper was presented at the Conference on Organized Crime and Large-Scale Criminal Violence, held at the Kellogg Institute on May 17–18, 2017. I sincerely thank for their comments and feedback: Juan Albarracín, Desmond Arias, Ana Arjona, José Miguel Cruz, Stefanie Israel de Souza, Leslie MacColman, Camilo Nieto Matiz, Lucía Tiscornia, and Guillermo Trejo, as well as two anonymous reviewers. I also thank Elizabeth Rankin for her impeccable editorial guidance and extend my gratitude to all of the Kellogg Institute's faculty, staff, and students who made my stay so pleasant.

## **ABSTRACT**

In many developing countries with weak formal institutions, sectors within the state protect organized criminal activities, allowing illicit markets to thrive. This article posits that how state actors regulate drug trafficking affects the levels of violence associated with such criminal activity. I argue that political competition influences coordination within the police and leads to different types of regulatory regimes. On the one hand, coordinated forces implement protection rackets that contain violence. On the other, uncoordinated police carry out particularistic negotiations with drug traffickers that exacerbate criminal violence. I illustrate this argument with a subnational comparison of two Argentine provinces, Buenos Aires and Santa Fe, during a period in which both witnessed a surge in drug trafficking but only one (Santa Fe) suffered a dramatic increase in criminal violence. These cases show how corrupt states can obtain relative order in highly fragmented drug markets, and how the police shape the evolution of drug dealing in metropolitan areas.

## **RESUME**

En muchos países con instituciones formales débiles, la protección estatal es necesaria para que florezcan distintos mercados ilegales, incluyendo la distribución de drogas ilícitas en áreas urbanas. Este artículo sostiene que la regulación del narcotráfico por parte de la política y las fuerzas policiales condiciona los niveles de violencia asociados a esta actividad. Propongo que la competencia política afecta el nivel de coordinación dentro de las fuerzas policiales y genera distintos regímenes regulatorios del narcotráfico. Por un lado, fuerzas con mayor coordinación pueden implementar arreglos de protección del delito y así mitigar la violencia. Por otra parte, fuerzas policiales menos coordinadas realizan negociaciones particularistas con narcotraficantes que aumentan los niveles de violencia. Ilustro este argumento con una comparación subnacional entre las provincias argentinas de Buenos Aires y Santa Fe. Mientras que ambas experimentaron un aumento considerable en sus mercados de distribución de drogas en la última década, solo en una –Santa Fe— se incrementaron dramáticamente los homicidios. Estos casos demuestran cómo estados con altos niveles de corrupción pueden mantener baja la violencia con mercados ilegales altamente fragmentados- y cómo la policía moldea la evolución del narcotráfico en áreas metropolitanas.

## WHO PROTECTS WHOM? POLITICIANS, POLICE AND THE REGULATION OF DRUG TRAFFICKING IN ARGENTINA <sup>1</sup>

Organized crime both requires *and* provides protection. Criminal organizations provide recourse to individuals who, due to the nature of their activities, cannot rely on the state to settle disputes or enforce contracts. However, in many developing countries with weak formal institutions, important sectors *within* the state offer the same service to criminal actors, whether in exchange for material payoffs, information, or the promise of order on criminals' turfs.<sup>2</sup> In other words, state actors *regulate* criminal markets and thus shape the development of organized crime.

How does such regulation work? Many scholars and journalists suggest that informal arrangements between state and criminal actors require cohesive, if not monopolistic, counterparts to endure (Snyder and Duran-Martinez 2009; Grillo 2012; Cruz and Duran-Martínez 2016; Denyer Willis 2015). However, drug trafficking in Latin America displays increasingly fragmented criminal networks rather than hierarchically cohesive cartels. Most analyses also tend to neglect potential conflicts between the state actors charged with enforcing these arrangements, especially politicians and police forces, assuming rather than problematizing police subordination to political incumbents. I argue that political control over the police shapes different regulatory regimes of drug trafficking and subsequent levels of criminal violence.

I illustrate this argument through a most-similar comparison of two Argentine provinces: Buenos Aires and Santa Fe. During the 2000s, Argentina experienced a major surge in drug consumption and distribution;<sup>3</sup> however, associated drug-related violence evolved unevenly. The two provinces demonstrate how different drug trafficking regulatory regimes result in varying levels of violence. In Buenos Aires, the government's capture of police rents from crime enabled the implementation of *protection rackets* with relatively low violence. In contrast, in Santa Fe, the government's inability to control police corruption—even by appropriating it—destabilized the drug market, with the police engaging in *particularistic negotiations* with criminal actors and extracting rents for themselves while criminal violence soared.

---

<sup>1</sup> This research was reviewed and approved by the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects Protocols #2011-06-3286 and #2014-06-6407.

<sup>2</sup> Of course, state and criminal actors are often indistinguishable. For the sake of simplicity, I use the term “criminal actors” to refer to those that do not occupy a formal role in the state.

<sup>3</sup> According to the OAS Drug Observatory, cocaine consumption tripled between 2001 and 2011. (CICAD-OAS 2015)

I rely on primarily qualitative evidence to support this argument. Between 2013 and 2015, I conducted over 90 interviews with politicians, police officers, and other state and civil society actors in Buenos Aires and Santa Fe. These interviews, along with document analysis and observation, reveal contrasting patterns of police corruption and the mechanisms that link it to criminal violence.

This paper seeks to make several theoretical and empirical contributions. In theoretical terms, I introduce the concepts of *regulation and regulatory regimes* to explain different state responses to drug trafficking. I conceptualize regulation as the promulgation and enforcement of rules through a public agency (Baldwin, Cave, and Lodge 2012) and distinguish between two regulatory regimes, protection rackets and particularistic negotiations, differentiated by the degree of coherence within and between enforcement agencies. While both regimes involve corruption as the primary tool to regulate drug trafficking, political control of the police and coordination within the force are higher in protection rackets than in particularistic negotiations. This difference is crucial to police capacity to stabilize the drug market and maintain order.

Empirically, this paper focuses on Argentina, a relatively unfamiliar case in the drug-related violence literature, and specifically on two of its main metropolitan provinces. These cases show how order can exist in highly fragmented criminal markets without monopolistic criminal organizations as long as there is sufficient coordination between and within state actors (cf. Buchanan 1973; Schelling 1971).

The next section presents the theoretical framework outlining the relationship between politicians, police and the regulation of drug trafficking. The third section presents the research design. The fourth section illustrates how the regulation of drug trafficking and its associated violence plays out in Buenos Aires and Santa Fe, using primarily qualitative evidence to show contrasting outcomes and mechanisms and discard competing explanations. The conclusion discusses the main theoretical and normative implications of these findings.

## **POLICE POLITICS AND DRUG TRAFFICKING REGULATION**

I argue that in democracies with weak formal institutions, political competition determines the extent to which politicians can control the police and subsequently influences coordination within the force. The degree of police coordination generates different drug trafficking regulatory regimes, i.e., how informal rules seeking to govern this illicit activity are enforced. Finally, criminal violence varies according to which regulatory regime prevails. This theoretical framework builds on existing literatures on the relationship between political competition and government performance, as well as on the link between state coordination and criminal violence. It differs from these in its focus on the police's role as regulator of organized crime and on the interaction between state actors at the same level of government, rather than across government tiers.

### **When Do Politicians Control the Police?**

In weak institutional contexts, police officers' professional trajectories often depend on supplying rents to superiors and political patrons rather than on objective performance criteria (Fogelson 1977; Hinton and Newburn 2009). However, this supposes a collective action problem. Any individual officer could easily shirk her contribution, letting other officers pay their share while keeping a larger piece for herself. Furthermore, politicians typically require not just rents but also that the police prevent certain crimes from taking place on their turf. Why would the police consent to this agreement?

I argue that the arrangement depends on politicians' capacity to control the police, which in turn stems from the level of competition that politicians face. Assuming politicians care primarily about winning elections and enacting their preferred policies, they will try to reduce violent crimes to enhance their electoral prospects. Additionally, some politicians will prefer to acquire police rents from crime to strengthen their political machines, dole out informal payments, or line their own pockets, each of which could provide an electoral advantage.<sup>4</sup> Politicians may also tolerate police corruption because it allows the police force to finance itself without raising its budget.

---

<sup>4</sup> A broad literature shows how political parties in weakly institutionalized democracies often resort to informal funds to support electoral machines. See, among others, Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007; Freidenberg and Levitsky 2006.

Elected leaders' ability to capture illicit rents and maintain order depends on their competition with other parties or factions during their terms and over time. During a given term, incumbents face greater competition if they do not have a legislative majority or need to form a coalitional cabinet. Partisan or factional entrenchment over time signals and furthers incumbency advantage, making it more difficult for opposing parties to gain office.

The greater the concentration of political power by elected officials, the stronger the incentives for police to comply with them, because they perceive incumbents as the only ones who can influence their career trajectories. With lower competition, incumbent politicians also face fewer obstacles in appropriating funds from corruption, given the lack of effective accountability institutions.<sup>5</sup> Relatedly, political rivals have fewer chances of harnessing police rents from crime, since they cannot offer the police credible protection. Finally, incumbents' entrenchment is more likely to increase interactions and generate trust between politicians and police.<sup>6</sup>

In contrast, with greater competition, incumbents' control of the police is weaker, and police are less likely to provide rents to incumbents. If a strong opposition inclines toward police reform, governing politicians are less capable of protecting corrupt police officers due to increased scrutiny.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, the opposition is better equipped to expose police corruption scandals that might undermine the incumbent and cost police their jobs.<sup>8</sup> Alternatively, if the opposition does not support reform, police might have stronger incentives to supply rents to opposition politicians, who might have greater bearing on police career trajectories. Finally, when political power is dispersed, political decisions are more likely to be incoherent or suffer implementation problems, giving police unclear signals and decreasing political control.

In short, police will provide rents and contain crime when their political superiors face lower political competition, since these incumbents can credibly influence their career prospects

---

<sup>5</sup> See Grzymala-Busse (2003) for an application of this argument to state politicization. Chavez (2003) makes a similar argument that greater interparty competition increases judicial independence and hence accountability.

<sup>6</sup> Post (2014, 33) applies this notion with regard to the relationship between subnational incumbents and public service providers.

<sup>7</sup> One should consider, as Armesto (2015) points out, whether the legislative opposition has sufficient technical and material resources to exercise its role as a veto player in this regard. I discuss this situation in the case analysis.

<sup>8</sup> See Yanilda González's (2014) work on the interaction between political competition and police scandals as the trigger for police reform in Latin America.

and, most importantly, protect those who engage in corruption from prosecution, dismissal, or incarceration.

### **When Do Police Coordinate to Extract Rents and Contain Crime?**

In many post-transition democracies with weak formal institutions, police forces are characterized by inefficiency, disregard for the rule of law, systematic corruption and human rights violations.<sup>9</sup> Police officers, especially those involved in criminal activities, prefer this status quo, where they have greater informal discretion to manage crime, to the prospect of police reform, which is likely to reduce their prerogatives and potentially cost them their jobs. Officers know that they need to supply the incumbent with minimum levels of order, and possibly a certain share of rents from criminal activities, to avoid reform.

Therefore, police *regulate* crime to capture rents, contain violence, and avoid a potential political backlash. For crime to produce rents, there must be sufficient criminal activity, i.e., a functioning illicit market. Regulation means that police enforcement of drug control fluctuates between repression, toleration, rent extraction, and direct participation in criminal activity.

Effective regulation of drug trafficking requires police to resolve their internal collective action problems. Given that larger rents provide more career advantages—e.g., supplementary income, desirable promotions and transfers, etc.—the individual officer or unit has an incentive to extract the largest possible amount of rents from illegal activities, without regard to what other officers or units do. For example, police unit A might try to “poach” gang X, currently under the protection of unit B, to increase its own revenues. This action is likely to spur retaliation by unit B, which may shut down the racket of gang Y, unit A’s initial clients. Moreover, if all protectors (police units) preyed on their clients (dealers), protection rackets would not be sustainable. Criminals would lack the funds to comply with police demand; to purchase protection, they would have to (violently) compete for market share and profits, perhaps by raiding each other’s territory.

Ultimately, when these coordination problems result in greater violence, politicians are likely to implement some variant of reform, leaving police racketeers worse off than before. Therefore, police need to restrain their capture of protection rents to avoid destabilizing the illicit

---

<sup>9</sup> See Hinton and Newburn (2009).

market. Like Gambetta's Mafiosi, police may either split the profits supplied by a given gang or divide up the territory in which one or more gangs operate (Gambetta 1996).

Where politicians can also credibly protect their agents, police have a stronger incentive to cooperate—i.e., contain crime and supply rents to incumbents—even if cooperating means foregoing a larger short-term profit. Political protection is both a carrot and stick that can deter defection or shirking. On the one hand, cooperating officers or units have a greater probability of protection should they be investigated. Commanders might shield contributors from administrative sanction, while politicians may influence the judiciary to steer the inquiry away from the suspected officials. Politicians and commanders can also reward good earners with promotions or valued transfers. On the other hand, police commanders and politicians can punish defectors through similar mechanisms, ranging from administrative sanctions, such as reassignment to dull duties or unattractive destinations, to physical or psychological violence. The stronger (and the more evident) the accommodation between commanders and politicians, the more credible these sanctions will appear to the rank-and-file and the greater their incentive to comply.

In short, police racketeers have two primary motives to cooperate internally in regulating illicit markets. First, they can circumvent reforms that are likely to reduce their prerogatives. Second, they can enjoy (suffer) the private rewards (punishments) that result from cooperating (not cooperating) with their commanders and political patrons.

### **How Does Regulation Affect Criminal Violence?**

When police coordinate in extracting rents from crime, they can also more effectively contain criminal violence. In the terms of regulatory regimes, this constitutes a *protection racket*. In contrast, where police broker inchoate deals with criminal actors, we are in the realm of *particularistic negotiations*. Each of these regimes has different implications for overall levels and specific dynamics of criminal violence.

**Protection rackets** imply that police collect and distribute rents hierarchically or divide up territories of protected gangs—or both. This activity induces criminal compliance because it provides greater predictability and stability. If criminals know how much money they need to pay to the police on a regular basis, they are less likely to raid their rivals' turf to increase their market share and revenue or venture into other criminal activities, such as kidnapping, theft, or

trafficking of other materials. Similarly, if gangs know they must surrender a certain number of drugs to police each month, they will be less inclined to raise the price of the drugs they sell. Stable prices, in turn, could prevent large increases in property crimes by addicts who steal to support their habit (Goldstein 1985). Occasionally, police may also eliminate a particular drug gang by arresting members or shutting down their operations. In protection rackets, such events are less likely to generate successional violence since the protector paves the way for a new client to be the dominant player (cf. Reuter 2009; Vargas 2016). Furthermore, criminals know that staying in business requires avoiding police attention due to unnecessary or “visible” violence (Duran-Martinez 2015). Thus, they have an incentive to refrain from arbitrary violence, especially against civilians who are not in the drug trade, whose injury or death will cause greater social clamor. Finally, protection rackets may display a “positive” feedback loop. If police contain a gang’s territorial expansion, they also reduce the likelihood that the gang will become powerful enough to attack its neighbors or confront the police. In short, protection rackets are more likely to reduce criminal violence.

In contrast, **particularistic negotiations** increase criminal violence, for the opposite reasons. Lacking coordination, police are more likely to prey on their clients and/or poach those of other protectors. This reduces the relative certainty drug groups need to conduct their business operations, likely driving criminal groups to attack one another in an attempt to conquer their competitors’ turfs. When violence erupts, it is not contained, as police are not credible enforcers of dispute settlements: having large incentives to maximize their short-term rents, they will most likely play one group against the other. Dealers are also more likely to punish citizens in their communities for ratting them out to the police.

The inchoate mixture of police corruption and repression can reinforce the fragmentation of the drug market. This not only makes it more difficult for police to regulate crime, but it can also inhibit learning. The new and inexperienced players who pour into the market are more likely to make mistakes that get them arrested or killed, contributing to a negative feedback loop that inhibits stability.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

### Case Selection

This paper employs a subnational comparative study with a most-similar design. The police forces and drug markets of the metropolitan provinces of Buenos Aires and Santa Fe exhibit comparable characteristics, which allow controlling for various alternative explanations for the relationship between drug trafficking and criminal violence (see Seawright and Gerring 2008). After laying out case narratives of the two provinces, I will address the most recurrent alternative explanations for variation in drug related violence, including drug geography, the availability of resources, and the reform (or lack thereof) of police forces.

These provinces exhibit a number of comparable features. First, in terms of socioeconomic structure, they are the primary centers of agricultural production in the country. At the same, progressive deindustrialization has resulted in high levels of unemployment and urban inequality, combining informal neighborhoods and grandiose boulevards and palaces.

Second, the provincial police forces have similar organizational structures and legacies. Both have two different career paths—*oficiales* (upper-level officers) and *suboficiales* (lower-level sub-officers)—and officers in both forces, especially the rank-and-file, have low incomes and precarious working conditions. Furthermore, the forces share a history of human rights violations and corruption, especially during the last authoritarian regime (1976–1983). Finally, both forces have survived multiple failed reforms that attempted to make them more accountable to the rule of law (Eaton 2008; G. González 2007).

Finally, both provinces were under continuous Peronist rule for at least 20 years before the period under study here (2007–2015). The Peronists (through their Justicialist Party, Partido Justicialista or PJ) have governed Buenos Aires since 1987, while in Santa Fe they had held the provincial executive since democratization in 1983 (with different factions alternating in both provinces). As we will see, the fact that the Socialists took power in Santa Fe in 2007 while the Peronists remained in office in Buenos Aires would be crucial in subsequent relationships with the police and regulation of drug trafficking.

Applying a subnational comparative design helps control for national-level variables, such as drug trafficking legislation (Law 23.737) and the formal role of the federal police and

judiciary in tackling this illicit market.<sup>10</sup> The case narratives will show how certain differences, such as the federal government's partisan alignment with the province of Buenos Aires—but not Santa Fe—are less relevant in understanding the variation in drug trafficking regimes and levels of violence.

While my focus is on the state-level government and police, the effects of drug trafficking are felt primarily in local neighborhoods in metropolitan areas, where there is greater drug distribution and consumption and more disputes between drug gangs. Therefore, I selected municipalities within these provinces to reveal the mechanisms of my overall argument. In Santa Fe, the evidence centers on the largest city, Rosario. In Buenos Aires, I focus on the municipality of General San Martín, which is a primary transit hub for drugs flowing into the city of Buenos Aires, as well as home to multiple drug trafficking gangs.

## **Interviews**

Establishing connections between the variables in this framework required obtaining multiple nuggets of information gained from deep case knowledge (Brady and Collier 2010). I base these findings on more than 90 semi-structured interviews conducted in both provinces. I spoke with the main government officials in charge of security, police commanders and mid-ranking officers, as well as with other state and civil society actors, such as members of the judiciary, representatives from local NGOs, and crime journalists.<sup>11</sup> To increase representativeness and decrease respondent bias, I approached individuals from different political affiliations. I then triangulated this data with newspaper archives, NGO reports, and secondary sources.

Using this qualitative data, I conducted process tracing to underscore the contrasting patterns of police-government relations, drug trafficking regulation, and criminal violence in each district and to examine the mechanisms linking them (Bennett and Checkel 2015). While I use provincial or local-level homicide statistics to measure the evolution of criminal violence, qualitative data helped score variables that are difficult to observe directly, such as the centralization of police corruption and political control of the police. While obviously imperfect,

---

<sup>10</sup> On the subnational comparative method, see Snyder (2001)

<sup>11</sup> See the Methodological Appendix that contains further description of the interviews and a list of additional sources.

homicide rates are considered the most reliable criminal statistic, as well as the most frequently used in the criminal violence literature.

### **REGULATION OF DRUG TRAFFICKING IN BUENOS AIRES AND SANTA FE**

Between 2008 and 2015, homicide rates in Argentina increased by 10%. However, in that same period, the homicide rate in Santa Fe increased by four times the national average (40%), while in Buenos Aires the increase was half the national rate (5%). I posit that these divergent trends relate to each provincial government's control of the police (or lack thereof) and police internal coordination in regulating drug trafficking. In Buenos Aires, the government politicized the police, which then regulated drug trafficking through protection rackets, containing criminal violence. In contrast, in Santa Fe, the government could not control the police force—either to reform it or to capture its rents from crime. As a result, the police regulated drug markets through particularistic negotiations, which contributed to a dramatic increase in criminal violence.

#### **Buenos Aires: Police Politicization, Protection-extraction Rackets, and Low Criminal Violence**

As in the rest of Argentina, drug trafficking flourished in Buenos Aires in the mid-2000s. Between 2006 and 2013, the volume of cocaine seized grew by 200 percent, according to the state Attorney General's Report.<sup>12</sup> While in 2002 there were only 52 persons detained for drug-related offenses in provincial prisons, in 2010 there were 2,161.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, criminal violence in the province remained relatively stable, and even slightly decreased between 2009 and 2012. This outcome, which is surprising, given the province's extremely fragmented drug trafficking market and unprofessional police force, can be explained by the government's centralization of police rent extraction from organized criminal activities.

---

<sup>12</sup> Source: Province of Buenos Aires Attorney General's Reports (2006–2013). Unpublished.

<sup>13</sup> Source: data for the Province of Buenos Aires from National Penitentiary System reports (2002–2010). Available at: <http://www.jus.gob.ar/areas-tematicas/estadisticas-de-politica-criminal/mapa.aspx>

## Politicization of the police

The Peronist party (PJ) governed Buenos Aires without interruption between 1987 and 2015. Most Peronist administrations sidelined police reform and collected police rents from various criminal activities. Intraparty disputes in the late 1990s and early 2000s temporarily destabilized this arrangement, leading to multiple reform attempts that failed due to police resistance and violent intimidation (Sain 2008; Hinton 2006; Flom and Post 2016).

Nonetheless, the PJ remained in control of the province and a new dominant faction emerged in the 2005 midterm elections, the Front for Victory (Frente para la Victoria, or FPV), which also held power at the national level. In 2007, Daniel Scioli, the FPV candidate, won the gubernatorial election, and he was reelected in 2011. During his two terms, the FPV controlled both legislative chambers. With Peronist consolidation of control, the provincial police force was no longer the politically destabilizing agent of the past. This change was reflected in the greater stability of security ministers during Scioli's tenure. While there had been 17 security ministers from 1994 to 2007, there were only three between 2007 and 2015.

During his eight years as governor (2008–2015), Scioli controlled the police albeit not through reform or formal legislative changes. In fact, he overturned his predecessor's reforms<sup>14</sup>, and rejected the opposition's reformist initiatives, such as the creation of a Judicial Police in charge of criminal investigations.

Instead, cabinet officials in Scioli's administration highlighted their control of the police through personal leadership and attention to everyday matters. Former minister Ricardo Casal told me: "Police need political control. It's impossible to think otherwise. Not just because of its functioning, corruption, and other stuff, but because security is not a reflex action; it's a policy that you apply."<sup>15</sup> He emphasized that he "constantly rotated police officers [especially high commanders] between local precincts—I didn't like it when police officers remained in the same place for a long time, so we annually rotated all personnel in strategic places."<sup>16</sup>

Police interviewees, meanwhile, interpreted these actions as politicization of the force. The former deputy police chief said that security minister Casal "placed chiefs because of

---

<sup>14</sup> Interview with former security minister León Arslanián, the architect of these reforms, implemented during Governor Felipe Solá's second term (2003–2007).

<sup>15</sup> Interview with former security minister Ricardo Casal.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

political requests, not because of their skills,” and that subsequently these appointees, “didn’t confront the minister.”<sup>17</sup>

Police subordination to the government manifested in the scant conflict between the administration and the police leadership, especially when compared to previous periods when police commanders destabilized reforms by foot dragging, staging crimes, or threatening government officials (see Ragendorfer 2002). A clear example was the police protest of December 2013. While sub-officers and police unions took to the streets to demand wage increases, police commanders did not support the protest, and the unions soon reached an agreement with the government, in contrast to what occurred in many other provinces, including Santa Fe (see below).<sup>18</sup>

### **Centralized police corruption**

Numerous unconnected interviewees and secondary sources reported extensive police corruption linked to drug trafficking and other organized criminal activities in various neighborhoods of Greater Buenos Aires (GBA). While there is no evidence of direct political involvement in managing the police rackets, it is doubtful that these could have persisted without political knowledge or protection.

A state deputy from a competing Peronist faction explained that the government and police protected a number of organized criminal activities: “I am absolutely convinced that there is generalized illegal activity—as far as allowing the installation and functioning of drug trafficking production and distribution, human trafficking, arms trafficking—with protection from the judicial power.”<sup>19</sup>

Other politicians in the province echoed this perception. Marcelo Sain, a former security vice-minister and, at the time, a provincial deputy for another Peronist faction, told me:

The *sciolismo* [Scioli’s faction] started to finance itself with [police corruption money]. The great leap in the magnitude of fundraising by the police occurs when the *sciolismo* orders greater levels of contributions by the police. This coincides with its calculus, at

---

<sup>17</sup> Interview with former provincial deputy police chief Salvador Baratta.

<sup>18</sup> See “Scioli decretó un aumento para la policía y logró reducir la protesta en Buenos Aires,” *La Nación*, Dec. 10, 2013, and “La protesta policial con más alcance de la historia argentina,” *La Nación*, Dec. 9, 2013.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Jorge D’Onofrio, provincial deputy for the Renovation Front (FR). D’Onofrio was a member of the lower chamber’s Committee on Public Security.

that time [2011], which leaned towards breaking with [President] Cristina [Kirchner].<sup>20</sup>

This last statement also denotes that, formal partisan alignment aside, there were considerable tensions between the provincial and national government.

Police interviewees shared the perception of politically organized police corruption. The former deputy chief recalled, based on his personal experience, that state and local politicians appropriated rents by appointing their preferred officers to key precincts—i.e., those that provided greater business opportunities.

When I [got back from my vacation] they had switched three bosses from the biggest precincts in San Martín–Bilinghurst, Jose León Suárez and Eufrasio Álvarez—because of a political request. Those are just the ones through which all the drug comes into the Northern Area [of Greater Buenos Aires]: it comes through routes 8 and 9, is broken down in San Martín, and from there it is distributed to the province... You can't put a fox to take care of the chicken coop."<sup>21</sup>

Three police union representatives also stressed the complicity between politicians and the organization's high command, saying they "look out for each other".<sup>22</sup>

In truth, the government did little to dissuade police corruption. State-level accountability agencies, like the Auditing Office, rarely prosecuted or even administratively punished this type of misconduct.<sup>23</sup> While previous administrations conducted purges in the wake of corruption scandals, former security minister Casal admitted that there were no such cleanup initiatives during his tenure.<sup>24</sup> Finally, the administration did not modify police selection or promotion procedures to improve the quality of the force, leaving police commanders in charge of these processes. These various pieces of evidence suggest that the government not only tolerated police corruption but also controlled it by appropriating its rents.

### **Protection-extraction rackets to regulate drug trafficking**

The government's centralized control over police corruption enabled the police to regulate the emerging drug trafficking market in the metropolitan area through coordinated protection rackets, in which police protected dealers from criminal prosecution in exchange for material

---

<sup>20</sup> Interview with former security vice-minister Marcelo Sain.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Salvador Baratta.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with three police union representatives.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with two high-ranking officials from the Auditing Office.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Ricardo Casal.

benefits, often shared with the administration. Here I provide various examples of this regulatory regime, showing the widespread involvement of the force and the different protection techniques applied by police and politicians, mostly from the municipality of San Martín, one of my fieldwork sites, although they apply to most districts in GBA.

*Example I: The police chief:* An effective protection racket requires the involvement of the leadership of the organization that implements it. A provincial legislator from the opposition told me how the provincial chief of police protected one of the municipality's main drug traffickers.

I had the testimony of a police officer who told me about a drug deal in a car shop. They get in, they arrest two armed guards, and see [the dealer] speaking on the phone in the back, unfazed. [The officer] starts walking and his phone rings. The voice on the other end says, "pick up." He says, "I'll call you back boss, I'm on a job." "Pick up NOW." He had to leave the scene. The voice on the other end was the current chief of police, and he was the one speaking with [the dealer]. This is entirely corrupted from top to bottom, and it's not so generalized at the bottom, but they follow orders.<sup>25</sup>

This anecdote shows how the leadership directly influenced subordinates' behavior to protect drug trafficking. In this case, the police hierarchy enabled internal coordination. Obviously, there was no political reprimand or judicial investigation against the chief.

*Example II: The Department of Investigations:* In 2015, a Federal Police investigation uncovered a major protection ring in San Martín. Two drug traffickers supplied ARS\$5000 (around USD\$500) per week to a local precinct boss from the provincial police, in addition to ARS\$30,000 (USD\$3000) to his superiors in the Departmental Office and the Drug Trafficking Division. The police, in turn, provided the dealers with drugs seized from other raids, and alerted them about operations against their rivals.<sup>26</sup>

Two years earlier, during our interview, former vice-minister of security Marcelo Sain had described police protection of trafficking in this district in similar terms: "The large drug market [in the municipality of San Martín] is handled by Mameluco Villalba [the largest dealer] directly with the DDI (Police Department of Investigations) and the departmental boss: that's

---

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Jorge D'Onofrio.

<sup>26</sup> "Crean que policías daban a traficantes drogas para su venta," *La Nación*, Jun. 26, 2015, and "Descubren que un narco tenía a trece policías en su agenda telefónica," *Perfil*, Jun. 27, 2015.

where the big money is. Where there are better business opportunities, they [i.e., the provincial government] send better business managers. The police are a source of financing.”<sup>27</sup> This case reveals how different police sectors coordinated their extraction from dealers, as well as how police protected their clients and structured the drug market for the benefit of the government.

*Example III: The Candela Case.* The most notorious episode of alleged police complicity with drug trafficking occurred in San Martín in August 2011, following the kidnapping and murder of 9-year-old Candela Rodríguez. A legislative commission reported that the police force had manipulated the investigation to cover up its own links with the local drug traffickers who had abducted and murdered the girl.<sup>28</sup> The commission recommended the dismissal of the provincial police chief, as well as the district bosses. However, most police commanders and political authorities kept their positions, which reveals how little leverage the opposition had in denouncing the state’s links with drug trafficking. With authority concentrated in the executive, police would remain protected.

*Beyond San Martín.* Various secondary sources document police protection of retail drug dealing to finance local political machines in various municipalities of the GBA. For example, in Florencio Varela, a poor municipality in southern GBA, the Provincial Memory Commission’s Reports of 2012 and 2013 disclosed that a local Peronist broker sold drugs right next to the headquarters of a powerful local politician, naturally with police protection (CPM 2012, 248; CPM 2013, 403–405).<sup>29</sup> Auyero and Berti found similar evidence in their ethnographic research in Lomas de Zamora, another municipality in southern GBA. One of their interviewees stated that “police came every weekend to collect... **they knew we sold drugs but they did not bother us, they freed the area...** If you give them ARS500–600 [about USD\$50–60] a night they leave you alone” (2013, 120–127, my emphasis). Finally, Zarazaga’s extensive fieldwork registered that 85 out of 100 brokers stated that paying party activists with drugs was a common practice (2014, 32). Most of these brokers operate with protection from both police and the political bosses in their districts.

Even Scioli’s former security minister Ricardo Casal acknowledged police protection of

---

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Marcelo Sain.

<sup>28</sup> See [http://www.senado-ba.gob.ar/informe\\_candela.aspx](http://www.senado-ba.gob.ar/informe_candela.aspx).

<sup>29</sup> See also “Un modelo agotado,” *Página12*, Feb. 5, 2012.

drug dealing, although he doubted it was extensive: “It’s not rare that every now and then there is a cop arrested. Evidently [drug trafficking] needs certain collaboration. I don’t think it’s an institutional decision of police to participate, but some sectors do get involved. We’ve arrested precinct bosses, handcuffed and everything. Local politics also matters... Maybe a councilmember has a connection and they finance his campaign.”<sup>30</sup> In other words, the minister denied the provincial government’s involvement in the protection of drug trafficking, but he shifted suspicion to local-level politicians. The case of Buenos Aires clearly shows that political protection is always behind police protection rackets.

### **Containment of criminal violence**

While drug consumption and distribution has grown significantly in Buenos Aires since the mid-2000s, criminal violence decreased or remained stable during this period. Homicides increased by only 5 percent between 2008 and 2015 and intentional killings dropped by 10 percent between 2009 and 2012.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, during this period homicides committed during robberies decreased by 24 percent. Given that perpetrators often steal to support their drug addiction, this would suggest that drug dealers with territorial control were able to maintain order on their turf or that drug prices did not substantially increase during this period.

Police regulation of drug trafficking also prevented the proliferation of conflicts between drug gangs. During this period, violent confrontations between gangs in San Martín, one of the main drug bastions in GBA, were few and far between, especially when compared to Rosario or to what had happened in this municipality in the prior decade.<sup>32</sup> During the early 2000s, when the police had greater autonomy from the government, kidnappings and violent clashes between drug gangs in this district proliferated.

In short, police regulation of drug trafficking through protection-extraction rackets built on the government’s politicization of the police contained criminal violence in the GBA during the 2008–2015 period. This trend diverges radically with what occurred during the same years in the neighboring province of Santa Fe, especially in the city of Rosario.

---

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Ricardo Casal.

<sup>31</sup> Source: Ministry of Security Statistical Report of 2012. This is the longest period for which disaggregated crime data is available for the province of Buenos Aires.

<sup>32</sup> For an analysis of conflicts between drug gangs in San Martín, see Sain (2017).

## **Santa Fe: Police Autonomy, Particularistic Negotiations, and High Criminal Violence**

On December 10, 2007, for the first time since the return of democracy in 1983, a non-Peronist governor took power in the province of Santa Fe, with the Socialist mayor of Rosario, Hermes Binner, taking office as the head of a broad, non-Peronist coalition, the Progressive Civic and Social Front (Frente Progresista Cívico y Social, FPCyS). Although the expansion of drug trafficking preceded the Socialist government, trafficking grew considerably during the new administration. The number of drug seizures grew tenfold, from 105 in 2001 to 1234 in 2012. The volume of cocaine seizures increased even more, with the provincial police seizing only 14kg in 2001, but 490kg (3500 percent more) a decade later.

However, while drug trafficking grew in the entire country, Santa Fe experienced a distinct and unprecedented increase in criminal violence, especially in its major city, Rosario, where homicide rates doubled between 2008 and 2013. Politicians' failure to control police corruption played a major role in this outcome, as it fragmented negotiations between police and dealers and destabilized the drug market.

### **Lack of political control**

The Socialists inherited a police force that had remained essentially unchanged after 24 years but they did not implement reforms to bring the police under the rule of law. Although Binner created a Ministry of Security, the legal changes it enacted encountered administrative hurdles and police resistance. Former security minister Daniel Cuenca told me, “in setting up a ministry from scratch I wasted a lot of time on administrative issues such as [approving] promotions, transfers between locations, prisoner custody, etc., and had less time for daily operations.”<sup>33</sup> The minister rapidly encountered police resistance to his command, from passive disobedience—“some get in line, others pretend to”— to active intimidation. For example, he found notes in his office that read: “Get out, usurper,” and eventually decided to bring his own meals to the Ministry for fear that the police who worked there might put something in the cafeteria food.

---

<sup>33</sup> Interview with former security minister Daniel Cuenca.

Ultimately, the stress took its toll: Cuenca suffered a near heart attack and resigned in December 2009.

The appointment of the next security minister Álvaro Gaviola—the former director of the Civil Registry, with no prior experience in security—further diminished political control of the force, largely due to conflicts within the coalition cabinet. As soon as he took office, Gaviola appointed a former police commander as secretary of security but had to backtrack after several reformist cabinet members appointed by Cuenca threatened to resign.<sup>34</sup> After these officials left the cabinet, the administration relinquished control over the police. As a legislator from the opposition told me, “instead of politicians driving things, they were allowing police sectors to come into the government to run the force.”<sup>35</sup>

Even though the Socialists remained in power in 2011, their political clout decreased. They obtained only 40 percent of the vote, compared to 52 percent in the prior election, and lost their majority in the Provincial Senate. Binner’s successor as governor, Antonio Bonfatti, appointed the former Secretary of Penitentiary Affairs, Leandro Corti, as security minister in December 2011. Corti, another nonpartisan minister, intended to assert greater control over the police but did not find sufficient political support, showcasing the lack of internal coherence within the government. As he told me:

“You need to have a lot of political support because you will not be making any friends. Hitting these guys on the head implies having a pretty big dick, so to speak. You have no personal life, and the cops know everything: if you take drugs, if you’re gay, if you are a womanizer, if you have kids, if you are separated, everything.”<sup>36</sup>

Corti resigned in June 2012, after Bonfatti undercut his decision not to hold a soccer match in Santa Fe for security reasons. Subsequently, Bonfatti appointed long-time Socialist state deputy Raúl Lamberto as security minister. Lamberto was the first minister from the party ranks and proved to be the most stable, remaining until the end of Bonfatti’s administration in December 2015. However, this ministerial shift did not increase the government’s control of the police. Many opposition politicians and even former government officials criticized Lamberto’s “consensual” approach. Former minister Corti said, “The [Socialists] have an absolutely naïve,

---

<sup>34</sup> “Superti subió a Giacometti y lo debió bajar por la rebelión de los secretarios,” *La Capital*, Dec. 4, 2009. Superti was the Minister of Justice and, due to his power in the cabinet, oversaw appointments in the Security Ministry.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Eduardo Toniolli, state deputy for the FPV.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with former security minister, Leandro Corti.

comfortable and even irresponsible position. I know that Lamberto is not corrupt, but he has this political thing of winging it, [muddling] through, and here you need someone to make determinations and political decisions with support.”<sup>37</sup> Only in 2013, after the provincial police chief was arrested for corruption, did the government attempt a partial reform to decentralize police command.

Both political rivals and police officers pointed to the administration’s “lack of coherent messages” to the force—a consequence of the government’s high internal fragmentation. When I asked what the main conflicts between the government and the police were, a current police union delegate stated, “First, that there are no precise orders. It’s all improvised, day by day. Today there is [one secretary of security], but tomorrow you come along with other ideas and modify everything.”<sup>38</sup>

Police autonomy grew when the Socialists lost their majority in the lower chamber during Bonfatti’s term (2011–2015). A legislator from the Progressive Front claimed that police “operated with legislators, to change the course of policies, to prevent the new selection and promotion mechanisms.”<sup>39</sup> In short, the provincial police exploited the government’s internal division and reduced political strength to increase police autonomy from the administration. This decline in political control over the police affected the force’s regulation of drug trafficking in the province, resulting in a dramatic surge in homicide rates, especially in Rosario (see below).

### **Particularistic negotiations with drug dealers**

The high autonomy of the Santa Fe police resulted in the main drug trafficking regulatory regime being particularistic negotiations. Although police complicity with drug trafficking preceded the Socialist administrations (2007–2015), it became patently visible because of the government’s lack of control of the police, resulting in inchoate police corruption and ineffective regulation of drug trafficking, as the vignettes below illustrate.

*Example I: The Police Chief:* As in Buenos Aires, police corruption reached up to the highest levels of the organization. The difference is that, in October 2012, provincial Police Chief Hugo Tognoli was detained, along with officers from the narcotics division, for protecting

---

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with police union representative 2.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with provincial deputy Alicia Gutiérrez.

a wholesale dealer in exchange for ARS\$30,000 per month. The arrest, following an investigation by the Federal Police, exposed the government's lack of control of the police leadership, as both Binner and Bonfatti had promoted Tognoli because of his "impeccable record." Unlike the police racket in San Martín dismantled by a federal investigation (see above), this was neither a hierarchically organized racket nor a joint venture between police and politicians. Unlike what occurred with the protection rackets in Buenos Aires, this police corruption failed to organize the drug market.

*Example II: The Canteros:* As we saw above, the government's lack of control of police rent extraction left corrupt police officers without political protection, which facilitated their arrest by judicial authorities. For instance, in 2014, an investigation of the main drug gang in Rosario—the Cantero family, also known as "Los Monos"—led to the indictment of nearly 40 people, including 13 police officers from multiple divisions. When I interviewed the lead prosecutor for the case in his office, he told me how wiretaps revealed the depth of police complicity with this gang.<sup>40</sup> This episode also illustrates the lack of coordination within the police, and its consequences in terms of criminal violence:

In the wiretap that reveals the extent of police corruption, there is a conversation between Monchi Cantero [one of the gang leaders] and a cop who is now indicted and in prison. Monchi asks about a specific address and tells the officer to talk with the local precinct and ask him "what's going on." The officer replies: "I'll get back to you." Ten minutes later, the officer calls back and says, "I just spoke with number 2. He says it's open." What does it mean? Somebody [another dealer] was paying the Narcotics Division to run the selling point, "but you can go in, no problem. We'll settle later." The guys [the Canteros] went in, shots blazing, and a little girl was killed".<sup>41</sup>

Essentially, this police officer gave the Canteros the green light to raid a drug distribution point protected by another police unit, exemplifying the police's decentralized deals with drug traffickers.

*Example III: The bunkers.* Multiple police units engaged in uncoordinated deals with low-level traffickers to extract rents. Many interviewees pointed out that in Rosario the main drug distribution mechanism was through "bunkers"—enclosed fortifications in impoverished neighborhoods—which operated in broad daylight. A federal judge conveyed the egregious

<sup>40</sup> On the Canteros drug gang, see De los Santos and Lascano (2017).

<sup>41</sup> Interview with prosecutor Guillermo Camporini, June 2014.

police protection of these bunkers: “The emblem of impunity is the way drugs were sold in Rosario, the bunker—a Rosarian invention—a fortress so that everybody knows. The only thing missing is a neon sign.”<sup>42</sup>

The Socialist administrations' lack of control over police corruption encouraged the force's regulation of drug trafficking through particularistic negotiations. Bonfatti's undersecretary for complex crimes admitted that police protection was no longer credible since the extorted funds did not end up in politicians' pockets—hinting that this had occurred in previous (i.e., Peronist) administrations:

Some police officers are still collecting money, but they also know that it's not for any of us. That's a strong message because it says [the police] can no longer guarantee impunity. They can charge but they can't guarantee protection [to criminals]. Because I don't warn you when I'm going to raid the place. Then you'll have to be accountable, but that's your problem.<sup>43</sup>

Police corruption was not only severed from political protection but also increasingly fragmented within the force itself, with linkages between police and drug traffickers multiplying as everybody sought a piece of the action. A federal judge summarized this transition: “Drug trafficking in Rosario became scandalous because police protection, which always existed but was contained, became decentralized, so every police precinct ran three or four bunkers.”<sup>44</sup> Former security minister Corti described the force's decentralized corruption more graphically: whereas before the chiefs centralized rents from crime, “[today] even corporal Pérez [sic] asks you for the money.”<sup>45</sup>

### **Escalating criminal violence**

Particularistic negotiations in Santa Fe generated a substantial surge in criminal violence, particularly in Rosario, the province's most important city. Between 2003 and 2014, homicide rates in Rosario increased from 12 per 100,000 individuals to 21.1 per 100,000 (see figure 1), especially after 2011, following Tognoli's arrest and the unraveling of conflict involving the main drug gang (the Canteros). To put these numbers in perspective, these rates were triple the 2011 homicide rates in the GBA (7.3) and double the 2011 rates in San Martín (9.2).

---

<sup>42</sup> Interview with federal judge Carlos Vera Barros.

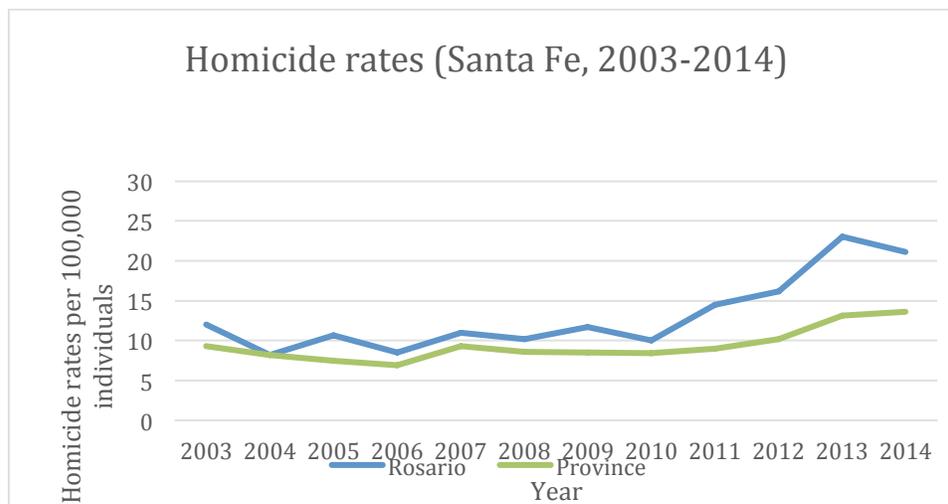
<sup>43</sup> Interview with under-secretary for complex crimes Ana Viglione.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Carlos Vera Barros.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Leandro Corti.

FIGURE 1

## HOMICIDE RATES IN SANTA FE PROVINCE AND ROSARIO (2003-2014)



Source: Homicide Report 2014, Ministerio Público de la Acusación (Provincial Security Ministry)

The Santa Fe provincial police proved incapable of containing the increased fragmentation of the drug market. According to one of the journalists most familiar with the drug trade in Rosario, the four gangs that vied for control of the city's distribution points outsourced retail selling to individuals or families in poor neighborhoods.<sup>46</sup> A study by the National University of Rosario (UNR) found more than 400 retail points in the city, most of them peddling small quantities of drugs. A social movement activist in an informal neighborhood in Rosario explained this link between police autonomy, decentralized drug trafficking, and criminal violence:

Today, what's happened with drug trafficking is a product of deregulation, of the de facto self-government of the police; the business has grown horizontally. Small and mid-size family companies have proliferated that devote themselves to drug trafficking without being heavyweight drug dealers. It is even becoming a problem for the police to regulate

<sup>46</sup> Interview with journalist Carlos del Frade.

all this. There is a horizontal spread of violence. All kinds of conflicts, in most cases, are solved with guns.<sup>47</sup>

Between 2007 and 2012 the number of weapons seized by the police increased by over 300 percent, from 36 to 162. However, the flow often went the other way: many weapons and ammunition were stolen from police precincts or military facilities. In 2014, there were 560 reports of stolen firearms in Santa Fe, of which 110 belonged to police officers. Many could not explain how the theft happened.<sup>48</sup>

In previous years, as in Buenos Aires, the police had effectively regulated drug trafficking and other organized criminal activities through protection rackets. A police union representative told me that in the past, “the police controlled the streets, and if something happened, it was minimal, or it had a license to happen.” In contrast, he stated, “Today, there are areas where the police cannot enter. The police are irrelevant.”<sup>49</sup> In other words, the police’s disorganized corruption ultimately diminished its capacity to control crime and violence.

### **Alternative Explanations**

The case narratives above showed how the state regulation of drug trafficking affected criminal violence in the metropolitan provinces of Buenos Aires and Santa Fe. This section discusses other recurrent explanations in the criminal violence literature that could account for these divergent outcomes, focusing on economic and political factors.

#### **Economic factors: resources, structure and geography**

A first group of studies argues that violence increases as criminal groups obtain greater resources—especially high-caliber weapons and young men recruited as foot soldiers—to attack each other or the state (Dube, Dube, and García-Ponce 2013; Sampson 2006). However, these factors do not sufficiently explain the variation between these cases. In both provinces, most homicides are committed with low-caliber weapons, which were readily available given the

---

<sup>47</sup> Interview with social movement activist, Rosario. The provincial general prosecutor expressed a similar point in my interview with him.

<sup>48</sup> *Página12*, January 18, 2015, “La policía perdió 100 armas en un año.”

<sup>49</sup> Interview with police union delegate, Rosario.

country's large domestic arms industry—and police participation in selling weapons in the case of Rosario.<sup>50</sup>

In terms of manpower, criminal groups in both provinces have abundant labor forces in poor young males from informal neighborhoods, often children less than 13 years old. Due to their small scale and lack of monetary resources, gangs in neither Buenos Aires nor Santa Fe have outsourced protection to private militias, notwithstanding a few homicides conducted by hired hit men in Rosario.

A second group of studies posits that centralized drug markets—i.e., where there is only one or a few dominant drug trafficking organizations—helps reduce violence, as state actors can broker sustainable pacts with criminals. However, market structure is a poor predictor of variation in violence since both markets are highly fragmented and there are no dominant gangs capable of enacting centralized pacts with the state (cf. Snyder and Duran Martinez 2009; Cruz and Duran Martinez 2016). If anything, we would expect violence to be higher in Buenos Aires, which has more local-level drug gangs—and a greater territory and population for the police force to control—yet the opposite occurs.

Finally, other authors suggest that violence is greater close to international borders or, more relevant to this study, along drug transit routes (Reuter 2014; Castillo, Mejia, and Restrepo 2013). However, both provinces are key transshipment hubs for illegal drugs entering Argentina, particularly marijuana from Paraguay and cocaine from Bolivia. While Rosario clearly is the largest port in Argentina, San Martín and other GBA municipalities are weigh stations for drugs entering the city of Buenos Aires, one of the country's largest consumption markets.<sup>51</sup> Additionally, most violent episodes involve gangs dedicated to retail domestic distribution rather than wholesale international commerce.

### **Political factors: protection networks and state strategies**

This paper posits that political competition affects government control of the police and through it, the regulation of drug trafficking and criminal violence. Several scholars have made a similar argument that violence increases when informal protection networks collapse, especially at the end of authoritarian regimes, due to two main mechanisms. First, regime transitions decentralize

<sup>50</sup> For an analysis of the incidence of small arms in Argentina, see Spinelli et al. (2015).

<sup>51</sup> For drug consumption trends in the City of Buenos Aires see the report by the Social Debt Observatory of the Argentine Catholic University (OSDA 2015).

political authority and disrupt protection arrangements with criminals, whether due to coordination problems, partisan conflict, or incongruent jurisdiction between state and criminal actors (Rios 2015; Trejo and Ley 2016; Snyder and Duran-Martinez 2009).

This paper offers a slightly different perspective. Unlike in Mexico, where drug cartels preceded democratization, drug trafficking did not become prominent in Argentina until two decades after the democratic transition. Furthermore, both provinces under study exhibited a “one protector (provincial police), many organizations” scenario, given the absence of local police forces and the sporadic intervention by the federal police (Snyder and Duran-Martínez 2009, 258). Therefore, the main difference between these cases is not the formal jurisdiction of state actors—which did not change—but the extent of coordination *within* each police force. As we saw in Santa Fe, the greatest surge in violence occurred when it became clear that the government did not control the police, and the police did not control crime.

One could argue that partisan alignment between the state and federal government influenced the evolution of organized crime. However, Scioli’s Peronist government in Buenos Aires also experienced multiple tensions with the federal administration of Cristina Kirchner, including the struggle for funds to pay provincial salaries.<sup>52</sup> At the same time, political conflict in Santa Fe between the Socialists and the federal government spiked *following* the growth in police autonomy and deregulation of drug trafficking, which took place during the first Socialist administration (2007–2011). For example, the provincial government complained of the removal of the national military police from Santa Fe, yet this occurred in September 2013, after homicides had already begun to increase.<sup>53</sup>

Finally, other scholars argue that democratic transitions end impunity for specialists in violence—i.e., police and military forces—who handle protection rackets during authoritarian regimes and thus make criminal violence run amok (Tilly 2003; Volkov 2002). Cruz, for example, argues that whether or not public security reforms occurred during democratization shaped levels of criminal violence (Cruz 2011). However, as we have seen above, the growth in drug trafficking took place long after Argentina’s democratization. More importantly, *both* Argentine provincial police forces underwent numerous failed, or at best incomplete, reform processes during the late 1990s and early 2000s, which failed due to political obstacles and

---

<sup>52</sup> See, for example, La Política Online, March 1, 2013, “Scioli volvió a pedirle a Cristina que le envíe más fondos.”

<sup>53</sup> *La Capital*, September 5, 2013, “Santa Fe se quedó sin la mitad de la dotación de Gendarmería.”

police resistance. In fact, the Scioli administration in Buenos Aires (2007–2015) *reversed* the partial reforms implemented by its predecessor, yet, the Buenos Aires police force was more effective in regulating drug dealing than the Santa Fe force.

## CONCLUSION

The contrast between Buenos Aires and Santa Fe shows how state actors' regulation of drug trafficking affects criminal violence. The precariousness of most drug dealers in both provinces placed them in dire need of state protection to persist and thrive. State actors, especially the police, through their different types of arrangements with drug dealers, shaped the development of this burgeoning criminal market.

The finding that political competition can decrease political control of the police should not be interpreted as a preference for non-competitive regimes. As history shows, such regimes are most likely to employ the police for their own benefit, including rent extraction and persecution of political opponents. Furthermore, elected officials can reform the police in scenarios of high political fragmentation, and other types of (societal) competition can intervene in the policy making process, to accelerate police reform, for example.<sup>54</sup> The key issue is whether governments and societies can reach a minimal consensus on criminal justice policies to deal with organized crime that transcend electoral rotation.

Many theories of organized crime neglect the state or simply refer to its absence or weakness to explain this phenomenon. The subnational cases of Argentina, like many others in Latin America, at least nuance this notion. Important sectors within the state are often key facilitators for organized crime. In many instances, their behavior resembles the classical theoretical expectations of organized crime so much that it forces us to rethink this concept and its empirical implications.

This paper describes how state actors regulate organized crime. It differs from analyses that center on confrontation or collusion between state and criminal actors: confrontation and collusion are not mutually exclusive, but often mutually reinforcing. Furthermore, the dynamics of corruption, rather than its scale, influence the stability of illicit markets and subsequently affect levels of criminal violence. Police (or political) corruption is not the solution, nor pacts

---

<sup>54</sup> On the importance of participation alongside electoral competition see Cleary (2007).

with criminal actors, for that matter. However, policy makers (and scholars) need to be aware of the consequences of the institutional context in which government actors operate and the political decisions they make.

## METHODOLOGICAL APPENDIX

This document summarizes the sources for the data used for this paper, which relied primarily on 88 in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted in the provinces of Buenos Aires and Santa Fe, mostly between July and December 2013, with a second round between June and July 2014.

All interviewees were informed of the intent and scope of the project and asked for their consent to record the interview and cite them accordingly in ensuing publications. Most of the interviews took place in a public location, or in the individual's home or work office, and lasted between 20 minutes and more than 3 hours. To protect the anonymity of low-ranking police officers, who could face reprimands for speaking without formal authorization from their superiors, their names and other potential identifiers have been excluded, as have those of social activists and other private citizens who do not occupy a high-level political position—or where subjects requested this condition.

The subjects of interest in my research were state officials in charge of public security in each province, both from the government and the police. Therefore, I targeted the provincial security ministers and their immediate subordinate officials during the period under study (2007–2015), as well as for prior years, for greater contextual information. In addition to politicians in the executive branch, I also included legislators who participated in their respective chambers' committee on public security. With respect to police officers, I chose to include high-ranking officials from various administrations as well as low-ranking officers (or under-officers) to ensure greater representativeness within the force, and see how the leaders' decisions were implemented on the ground. The formal restrictions on officers' statements to outsiders made it very difficult to secure interviews with police officers without first going through political authorities.

Politics in Argentina operates primarily through networks of personal connections. After securing a given interview, I asked the interviewee for referrals, typically within his or her political group. Aware of the potential biases this might cause, from the beginning I reached out to individuals with different political or partisan affiliations. Finally, I complemented this information with interviews with other state and civil society actors, mainly judges and prosecutors (from both the state and federal judiciary), as well as journalists and social

movement activists with deep knowledge or direct involvement with the issues of police, drug trafficking, and criminal violence.

Interviews began with an exploration of the current situation vis-à-vis security, policing, or drug trafficking in the district, and then, as the conversation evolved, delved into the more sensitive subject of the politics behind these topics.

I then triangulated this information with other sources, such as national and local newspapers, government and NGO reports, and specialized literature on this subject (see list below). During this period, there was an extreme polarization between media outlets that praised the Kirchner administration (e.g., *Página 12*) and those that vehemently opposed it (particularly *Clarín*). Therefore, I included both newspapers and other national and local outlets that do not present such a decided division between pro- and anti-government sources.

**BUENOS AIRES****Interviews**

All interviews took place in the province of Buenos Aires (municipality specified), unless otherwise indicated.

- BA01 Felipe Solá, former governor of the province of Buenos Aires (2002-2007), July 3, 2011, City of Buenos Aires.
- BA02 León Carlos Arslanián, former security minister (Duhalde and Solá administrations), July 4, 2011, City of Buenos Aires,
- BA03 Alberto Piotti, former security secretary (Duhalde administration), July 4, 2011, City of Buenos Aires.
- BA04 Eduardo de Lazzari, former security secretary (Duhalde administration), June 2012, La Plata.
- BA05 Marcelo Saín, state deputy (Nuevo Encuentro, coalesced with the national government of Cristina Kirchner but opposed to the provincial government of Scioli) and former deputy security minister, July 20, 2013.
- BA06 Federico Suñer, security secretary of San Isidro municipality, September 27, 2013, San Isidro, Buenos Aires province.
- BA07 Low-ranking National Military Police officer, September 27, 2013, City of Buenos Aires.
- BA08 Gustavo Sibila, former director of planning, National Security Ministry (Cristina Kirchner administration), October 1, 2013, City of Buenos Aires.
- BA09 Claudio Izaguirre, president of Argentine Antidrug Association, October 2, 2013, Malvinas Argentinas.
- BA10 Laura Piana and Norberto Tirendi, deputy directors of External Auditing Office, October 3, 2013, La Plata.
- BA11 Alberto Giordano, advisor for Frente Renovador Senator (Peronist faction that first supported, then opposed Governor Scioli), October 3, 2013, La Plata.
- BA12 Carlos del Frade, journalist, October 5, 2013, La Plata.
- BA13 Marcelo "Oso" Díaz, state deputy (Social-democratic, non-Peronist party opposed to Governor Scioli), October 8, 2013, La Plata.
- BA14 Julio César Frutos, former high-ranking officer of the Provincial Police, October 8, 2013, La Plata.

- BA15 Rodrigo Pomares and Angela Oyhandy, State Memory Commission (NGO) directors, October 8, 2013, La Plata.
- BA16 Mirta Juárez and Mario Santillán, municipal directors of community security for San Martín, October 11, 2013, San Martín.
- BA17 José María Fernández, secretary of security, Municipality of San Martín, October 11, 2013, San Martín.
- BA18 Norberto Emmerich, expert on drug trafficking, October 15, 2013, City of Buenos Aires.
- BA19 Local neighborhood NGO director, Greater Buenos Aires municipality, October 2013.
- BA20 Alfredo Meckievi, state senator (Peronist faction opposed to Governor Scioli), October 15, 2013, La Plata.
- BA21 Eduardo Amadeo, national deputy (Peronist faction opposed to the national and provincial governments of Cristina Kirchner and Daniel Scioli), October 16, 2013, City of Buenos Aires.
- BA22 Prosecutor, anti-drug prosecution office of San Martín, October 18, 2013, San Martín.
- BA23 Roberto Siminián, San Martín municipal councilmember, October 18, 2013, San Martín.
- BA24 Natalia Gambaro, national deputy (Peronist faction opposed to the national and provincial governments of Cristina Kirchner and Daniel Scioli), October 24, 2013, City of Buenos Aires.
- BA25 State deputy from FPV-PJ, supportive of Governor Scioli, October 30, 2013, La Plata.
- BA26 Ana Museri, researcher with the Center for Legal and Social Studies (CELS) November 21, 2013, City of Buenos Aires.
- BA27 Virginia Messi, journalist for *Clarín* newspaper, November 30, 2013, City of Buenos Aires.
- BA28 Judicial official, Federal Judiciary Office of Greater Buenos Aires municipality, December 16, 2013.
- BA29 High-ranking officer in Drug Trafficking Division, Federal Police, December 16, 2013, City of Buenos Aires.
- BA30 Héctor D'Aquino, Florencio Varela municipal councilmember (FPV-PJ), December 11, 2013, Florencio Varela.

- BA31 Laura Vivas, under-secretary of security for Florencio Varela, December 11, 2013, Florencio Varela.
- BA32 Dardo Ottonello, Florencio Varela municipal councilmember (Frente Renovador, opposing Peronist faction), December 11, 2013, Florencio Varela.
- BA33 Sergio Torres, federal judge, December 12, 2013, City of Buenos Aires.
- BA34 Silvio Álvarez, Florencio Varela municipal councilmember (FPV-PJ), December 13, 2013, Florencio Varela.
- BA35 Andrés Watson, Florencio Varela councilmember and former secretary of government (FPV-PJ), December 13, 2013, Florencio Varela.
- BA36 Social worker at Varela Center for Social Rehabilitation (CEVARESO), December 13, 2013, Florencio Varela.
- BA37 Jorge Sica, federal prosecutor, San Martin, December 16, 2013, San Martin.
- BA38 Police union representatives (3), December 17, 2013, La Plata.
- BA39 Parish priest in poor neighborhood of City of Buenos Aires, December 18, 2013, City of Buenos Aires.
- BA40 Daniel Ivoskus, San Martin municipal councilmember and former secretary of government, December 20, 2013, San Martin.
- BA41 Police district chief, San Martin municipality, December 23, 2013, San Martin.
- BA42 Ricardo Casal, former state security minister (Scioli administration), January 16, 2014, La Plata.
- BA43 Eugenio Burzaco, Former Chief of Metropolitan Police of the City of Buenos Aires (Macri administration); June 12, 2014, City of Buenos Aires.
- BA44 Salvador Baratta, former deputy chief of the State Police (Scioli administration), June 16, 2014, Lanus.
- BA45 César Albarracín, State secretary of Crime Policy (Scioli administration), June 17, 2014, La Plata.
- BA46 Eduardo Duhalde, Former Governor of the Province of Buenos Aires (1991-1999), July 3, 2014, City of Buenos Aires.

- BA47 Jesús Celis, Florencio Varela Municipal Security Secretary, August 6, 2014, Florencio Varela.
- BA48 Neighborhood political and social worker, Municipality of Greater Buenos Aires, August 11, 2014.
- BA49 Ricardo Ivoskus, Former San Martin municipal mayor (1999-2011), August 12, 2014, San Martin.
- BA50 Jorge D'Onofrio, State Senator (Frente Renovador), August 13, 2014, La Plata.
- BA51 High ranking official, State Prosecutor's Office, August 13, 2014, La Plata.

### ***Other Sources***

#### **Newspapers**

*La Nación*

*Clarín*

*Página12*

*La Política Online*

*Perfil*

#### **Government Agencies**

Ministerio de Seguridad de la Provincia de Buenos Aires (Buenos Aires State Security ministry) – [www.minseg.gob.ar](http://www.minseg.gob.ar)

Procuración General de la Provincia de Buenos Aires (Buenos Aires Attorney General's Office)

Auditoría de Asuntos Internos de la Provincia de Buenos Aires (Internal Affairs Office)

Sistema Nacional de Información Criminal (SNIC, National Criminal Information System)

Sistema Nacional de Estadísticas de Ejecución de la Pena (SNEEP, National System of Imprisonment Statistics)

#### **Nongovernmental Organizations**

Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS, Center for Legal and Social Studies) – [www.cels.org.ar](http://www.cels.org.ar)

Comisión Provincial por la Memoria (State Memory Commission) –  
[www.comisionporlamemoria.org](http://www.comisionporlamemoria.org)

Coordinadora contra la Represión Policial e Institucional (CORREPI, Association  
 Against Police and Institutional Repression) – [www.correpi.lahaine.org](http://www.correpi.lahaine.org)

## SANTA FE

### Interviews

- SF01 Fernando "Chino" Rosúa, former high-ranking official in both of Governor Obeid's administrations, November 7, 2013, Rosario.
- SF02 Alberto Martínez, former police officer and president of APROPOL police union, November 7, 2013, Rosario.
- SF03 Social Movement activists in based in poor Rosario neighborhood, November 7, 2013, Rosario.
- SF04 Maximiliano Pullaro, state deputy (Frente Progresista Cívico y Social or FPCyS), November 8, 2013, Rosario.
- SF05 Oscar Urruty, state deputy (Frente para la Victoria – Partido Justicialista, FPV-PJ), November 8, 2013, Rosario.
- SF06 Alberto Cortés, councilmember in Rosario (Socialist), November 8, 2013, Rosario.
- SF07 Former high-ranking police officer, November 8, 2013, Rosario.
- SF08 Gonzalo Del Cerro, councilmember in Rosario (Unión Cívica Radical, UCR), November 11, 2013, Rosario.
- SF09 Mariano Savia, former state police chief during Reutemann and Obeid's administrations, November 11, 2013, Rosario.
- SF10 Lisandro Enrico, state senator (UCR-FPCyS), November 11, 2013, Rosario.
- SF11 Alicia Gutiérrez, state deputy (FPCyS), November 12, 2013, Rosario.
- SF12 Eduardo Toniolli, state deputy (FPV), November 12, 2013, Rosario.
- SF13 Former high-ranking police officer, Rosario unit, November 12, 2013, Rosario.
- SF14 Juan Murray, federal prosecutor in the Rosario office, November 12, 2013, Rosario.
- SF15 Roberto Bruera, councilmember in Rosario (Partido Demócrata Progresista, PDP-FPCyS), November 13, 2013, Rosario.

- SF16 Gabriel Ganon, lead public defender of the province of Santa Fe, November 13, 2013, City of Santa Fe.
- SF17 Diego Poretti, undersecretary of security (Bonfatti administration), November 14, 2013, City of Santa Fe.
- SF18 Leandro Corti, former security minister (Bonfatti administration), November 14, 2013, City of Santa Fe.
- SF19 Matías Drivet, secretary of public security (Bonfatti administration), November 15, 2013, City of Santa Fe.
- SF20 Ana Viglione, undersecretary for Complex Crimes (Bonfatti administration), November 15, 2013, City of Santa Fe.
- SF21 Héctor Aguiar, current police officer and ULTRAPOL (police union) delegate, November 15, 2013, City of Santa Fe.
- SF22 Luis Acuña, state deputy (FPV-PJ), November 18, 2013, City of Santa Fe.
- SF23 Máximo Sozzo, university professor, expert in criminology and police reform, November 18, 2013, City of Santa Fe.
- SF24 Pablo Cococcioni, undersecretary of penitentiary affairs, November 18, 2013, City of Santa Fe.
- SF25 Raúl Lamberto, state security minister during Bonfatti's administration, November 19, 2013, City of Santa Fe.
- SF26 Paula Ballesteros, analyst at Center for Municipal and Provincial Studies (CEMUPRO), November 19, 2013, Rosario.
- SF27 Luis Caterina, state judge, November 19, 2013, Rosario.
- SF28 Jorge Barraguirre, lead prosecutor before the State Supreme Court, November 19, 2013, Rosario.
- SF29 Jorge Pérez de Urrechú, state judge, November 20, 2013, Rosario.
- SF30 Daniel Cuenca, former state security minister (Binner administration), November 20, 2013, Rosario.
- SF31 Francisco Broglia, former member of Secretary of Community Prevention (Binner administration), November 20, 2013, Rosario.

- SF32 Guillermo Camporini, state lead prosecutor in the case against the Canteros (Los Monos), June 24, 2014, Rosario.
- SF33 Héctor Vera Barros, federal judge, June 24, 2014, Rosario.
- SF34 Hernán Lascano, journalist for *La Capital* newspaper, June 24, Rosario.
- SF35 Three members of Red Antimafia (AntiMafia network), June 24, 2014, Rosario.
- SF36 Juan Carlos Vienna, state judge in charge of the case against the Canteros (Los Monos), June 25, 2014, Rosario.
- SF37 Fernando Asegurado, secretary of government, Municipal Government of Rosario, June 25, 2014, Rosario.

### ***Other Sources***

#### **Newspapers**

##### ***National***

*La Nación*

*Clarín*

*Página12*

*La Política Online*

##### ***State***

*La Capital*

*El Litoral*

*El Ciudadano*

*Periódico Pausa*

*Rosario3*

#### **Government Agencies**

Ministerio de Seguridad de la Provincia de Santa Fe

Tribunales provinciales de Santa Fe

Sistema Nacional de Información Criminal (SNIC, National Criminal Information System)

#### **Nongovernmental Organizations**

Red Antimafia

Universidad Nacional del Rosario – Proyecto Calles

## REFERENCES

- Armesto, María Alejandra. 2015. "Competencia Política y Gasto Particularista de Los Gobiernos Subnacionales En México y Argentina." *Latin American Research Review* 50 (1): 160–183.
- Auyero, Javier, and María Fernanda Berti. 2013. *La Violencia En Los Márgenes: Una Maestra y Un Sociólogo En El Conurbano Bonaerense*. Buenos Aires: Katz.
- Baldwin, Robert, Martin Cave, and Martin Lodge. 2012. *Understanding Regulation: Theory, Strategy, and Practice*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bennett, Andrew, and Jeffrey T. Checkel, eds. 2015. *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool. Strategies for Social Inquiry*. Cambridge; NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Brady, Henry E, and David Collier, eds. 2010. *Rethinking Social Inquiry Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Buchanan, James M. 1973. "A Defense of Organized Crime." *The Economics of Crime and Punishment* 119: 119.
- Castillo, Juan Camilo, Daniel Mejia, and Pascual Restrepo. 2013. "Illegal Drug Markets and Violence in Mexico: The Causes beyond Calderón." Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law, Stanford University. Working Paper #143. Available at: <http://cddrl.fsi.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/143.illegaldrug.pdf>
- Chavez, Rebecca Bill. 2003. "The Construction of the Rule of Law in Argentina: A Tale of Two Provinces." *Comparative Politics* 35 (4): 417–37.
- CICAD-OAS (Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission). 2015. "Report on Drug Use in the Americas 2015." Washington, DC: Organization of American States.
- Cleary, Matthew R. 2007. "Electoral Competition, Participation, and Government Responsiveness in Mexico." *American Journal of Political Science* 51 (2): 283–99.
- CPM (Comisión Provincial por la Memoria). 2012. "Informe Anual 2012: El sistema de la crueldad VII". Buenos Aires: FERROGRAF.
- . 2013. "Informe Anual 2013: Diez años." Buenos Aires: FERROGRAF.
- Cruz, Jose Miguel. 2011. "Criminal Violence and Democratization in Central America: The Survival of the Violent State." *Latin American Politics and Society* 53 (4): 1–33.

- Cruz, Jose Miguel, and Angelica Duran-Martínez. 2016. "Hiding Violence to Deal with the State: Criminal Pacts in El Salvador and Medellín." *Journal of Peace Research* 53 (2): 197–210.
- De los Santos, Germán, and Hernán Lascano. 2017. *Los Monos: Historia de la Familia Narco que transformó a Rosario en un Infierno*. Buenos Aires: Sudamericana.
- Denyer Willis, Graham. 2015. *The Killing Consensus: Police, Organized Crime, and the Regulation of Life and Death in Urban Brazil*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.
- Dube, Arindrajit, Oeindrila Dube, and Omar García-Ponce. 2013. "Cross-Border Spillover: US Gun Laws and Violence in Mexico." *American Political Science Review* 107 (03): 397–417.
- Duran-Martinez, A. 2015. "To Kill and Tell? State Power, Criminal Competition, and Drug Violence." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59 (8): 1377–1402.
- Eaton, Kent. 2008. "Paradoxes of Police Reform: Federalism, Parties, and Civil Society in Argentina's Public Security Crisis." *Latin American Research Review* 43 (3): 5–32.
- Flom, Hernan, and Alison E. Post. 2016. "Blame Avoidance and Policy Stability in Developing Democracies: The Politics of Public Security in Buenos Aires." *Comparative Politics* 49 (1): 23–42.
- Fogelson, Robert M. 1977. *Big-City Police*. (Urban Institute Study Series). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Freidenberg, Flavia, and Steven Levitsky. 2006. "Informal Institutions and Party Organization in Latin America." In Helmke, Gretchen and Steven Levitsky, eds. *Informal Institutions and Democracy: Lessons from Latin America*, 178–200. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Gambetta, Diego. 1996. *The Sicilian Mafia: the business of private protection*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Goldstein, Paul J. 1985. "The Drugs/Violence Nexus: A Tripartite Conceptual Framework." *Journal of Drug Issues* 15 (4): 493–506.
- Gonzalez, Gustavo. 2007. "Reforma Policial y Política: Un Complejo Entramado de Compromisos, Resistencias y Condiciones de Posibilidad." *Urvio: Revista Latinoamericana de Seguridad Ciudadana* 2: 154–63.

- Gonzalez, Yanilda. 2014. "State Building on the Ground: Police Reform and Participatory Security in Latin America." Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation in Political Science, Princeton University.
- Grillo, Ioan. 2012. *El Narco: Inside Mexico's Criminal Insurgency*. New York: Bloomsbury Press.
- Grzymala-Busse, Anna. 2003. "Political Competition and the Politicization of the State in East Central Europe." *Comparative Political Studies* 36 (10): 1123–47.
- Hinton, Mercedes S. 2006. *The State on the Streets: Police and Politics in Argentina and Brazil*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Hinton, Mercedes S, and Tim Newburn, eds. 2009. *Policing Developing Democracies*. London: Routledge.
- Kitschelt, Herbert, and Steven Wilkinson, eds. 2007. *Patrons, Clients, and Policies: Patterns of Democratic Accountability and Political Competition*. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- ODSA (Observatorio de la Deuda Social Argentina). 2015. "Barómetro del Narcotráfico y las Adicciones en la Argentina." Informes 1 y 2. Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.
- Post, Alison E. 2014. *Foreign and Domestic Investment in Argentina: The Politics of Privatized Infrastructure*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Ragendorfer, Ricardo. 2002. *La secta del gatillo: historia sucia de la policía bonaerense*. Buenos Aires: Planeta.
- Reuter, Peter. 2009. "Systemic Violence in Drug Markets." *Crime, Law and Social Change* 52 (3): 275–84.
- . 2014. "Drug Markets and Organized Crime." In Paoli, Letizia, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime*, 359–80. Oxford, UK; Oxford University Press.
- Rios, Viridiana. 2015. "How Government Coordination Controlled Organized Crime: The Case of Mexico's Cocaine Markets." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59 (8): 1433–54.
- Sain, Marcelo Fabian. 2008. *El Leviatán Azul: Policía y política en la Argentina*. Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores.
- . 2017. *Por qué preferimos no ver la Inseguridad, aunque digamos lo contrario*. Singular. Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores.

- Sampson, Robert J. 2006. "How Does Community Context Matter? Social Mechanisms and the Explanation of Crime Rates." In Wikström, Per-Olof H., and Robert J. Sampson, eds., *The Explanation of Crime: Context, Mechanisms, and Development*, 31–60. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Schelling, Thomas C. 1971. "What Is the Business of Organized Crime?" *The American Scholar* 40 (4): 643–52.
- Seawright, Jason, and John Gerring. 2008. "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options." *Political Research Quarterly* 61 (2): 294–308.
- Snyder, Richard. 2001. "Scaling Down: The Subnational Comparative Method." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 36 (1): 93–110.
- Snyder, Richard, and Angelica Duran-Martinez. 2009. "Does Illegality Breed Violence? Drug Trafficking and State-Sponsored Protection Rackets." *Crime, Law and Social Change* 52 (3): 253–73.
- Spinelli, Hugo, Adrián Santoro, Carlos Guevel, and Marcio Alazraqui. 2015. "Time Trend Study of Firearm Mortality in Argentina, 1980-2012." *Salud Colectiva* 11 (2): 151–176.
- Tilly, Charles. 2003. *The Politics of Collective Violence*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Trejo, Guillermo, and Sandra Ley. 2016. "Federalismo, Drogas y Violencia: Por qué el Conflicto Partidista Intergubernamental estimuló la Violencia del Narcotráfico en México." *Política y Gobierno* 23 (1): 11–56.
- Vargas, Robert. 2016. *Wounded City: Violent Turf Wars in a Chicago Barrio*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Volkov, Vadim. 2002. *Violent Entrepreneurs: The Use of Force in the Making of Russian Capitalism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Zarazaga, Rodrigo. 2014. "Brokers Beyond Clientelism: A New Perspective Through the Argentine Case." *Latin American Politics and Society* 56 (3): 23–45.