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**The Reconfiguration of the State in an Era of Neoliberal  
Globalism: State Violence and Indigenous Responses in the  
Costa Chica-Montaña of Guerrero, Mexico.**

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## ABSTRACT

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The Reconfiguration of the State in an Era of Neoliberal Globalism: State Violence and Indigenous Responses in the Costa Chica-Montaña of Guerrero, Mexico.

Key words: State formation, State violence, indigenous peoples, neo-liberalism, globalisation, Guerrero.

The adoption of the neo-liberal model in the mid-1980s has forced the governing elites to reconfigure the Mexican State. However, the consolidation of a neoliberal State continues to be incomplete and it has been problematic to fully integrate the Mexican economy in the global market due to the increasing organized crime, the dismantling of previous post-revolutionary control mechanisms, and the growing mobilisation of organised indigenous opposition ranging from the peaceful obstruction of hydroelectric mega-projects in their territories to armed struggle.

In view of the State crisis, this thesis argues that there has been a shift in the system of control mechanisms of the State that is leaning towards a more recurrent use of open violence to implement its neo-liberal State project.

From a theoretical perspective, the research proposes an innovative approach to understanding the formation of the post-revolutionary State, which transcends the State violence dichotomy established between the 'corporatist' and the 'critical' approaches in the contemporary literature. The research highlights the wide spectrum of control mechanisms from hegemonic domination to violence used by the governing elites to compensate the unfinished State formation process in order to maintain socio-political stability without profound structural changes. It explores the enhanced tendency of State violence to replace incorporation in State-society relations since the efforts to restructure the economy from the 1980s onwards. The thesis analyses how this tendency has grown particularly in response to indigenous movements in the South of Mexico.

The argument is substantiated empirically with two case studies undertaken in the sub-region of Costa Chica-Montaña of Guerrero with data from 79 semi-structured interviews with a wide range of social and political actors, and participant observation in ten indigenous communities. The case studies explore the different State control mechanisms used to advance the State formation model in the post revolutionary period; the impact of the crisis of those mechanisms in the sub-region; the violent resistance of local bosses to the loss of power, and the multiples indigenous responses to the implementation of neoliberal policies in their territories. This research also includes a comparative study to explain some factors that strengthen indigenous articulations, as well as their limits in an era of neoliberal globalisation.

One of the most important research findings is that neoliberalism has further weakened the "civilianisation" power of the State to deal peacefully with civil society sectors, particularly with indigenous peoples, while it has strengthened its "centralised-coercive" power to carry out the imposed State model. Another finding is that the indigenous initiatives that have reinvented themselves through a new version of their practices and broader alliances have consolidated their alternative models. In contrast, the indigenous responses that have reproduced their traditions have failed.

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Luz Paula Parra-Rosales  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Pages
<b>Abstract</b> .....	II
<b>Acknowledgments and dedications</b> .....	III
<b>Introduction</b> .....	VIII
 <b>Chapter One:</b>	
<b>The Mexican State and Indigenous Peoples: Towards a Conceptual Framework</b> .....	1
<p style="margin-left: 40px;">A) The Covert Side of the Formation of the Post-revolutionary Mexican State</p> <p style="margin-left: 80px;">Three theoretical approaches:</p> <p style="margin-left: 120px;">The Corporatism</p> <p style="margin-left: 120px;">The Critical</p> <p style="margin-left: 120px;">The Wide Spectrum of State Control Mechanisms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Hegemonic Domination</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Institutional Incorporation</i></li> <li>▪ <i>The Use of Coercion</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Indirect Control</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Direct Violence</i></li> </ul> <p style="margin-left: 80px;">A New Approach to the Formation of the Mexican State</p> <p style="margin-left: 80px;">Toward a New Formation of the Mexican State?</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">B) Recognising Policies “from above” and Political Identities “from below”: The Dialectics of the Relationships between the State and Indigenous Peoples</p> <p style="margin-left: 80px;">The Complexity of Indigenous Diversity</p> <p style="margin-left: 80px;">Current Approaches to the Emergence and Development of Organised Indigenous Peoples in Latin America</p> <p style="margin-left: 80px;">The Introduction of the Neo-liberal Model as a Catalyst for the Emergence of Indigenous Movements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Key Changes in the International Context</i></li> <li>• <i>The Shift of Relationship between the State and Society</i></li> <li>• <i>Political Liberalisation</i></li> <li>• <i>The Existence of Multi-ethnic and Multi-class Alliances and Networks</i></li> </ul> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">CONCLUSION</p>	
 <b>Chapter Two:</b>	
<b>Understanding the Mexican State Formation: From Hegemonic Domination to Violence</b> .....	48
<p style="margin-left: 40px;">The First Attempt to Build the Mexican State: The Post-Independence Era (1821-1929)</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Second Attempt to Build the Mexican State: The Post-Revolutionary</p>	

Era (1929-1982)	
The Rural Level: The Biggest Pillar of the Stability and Formal Peace under the PRI	
The INI: The Official Attempt to Mexicanise Indigenous Peoples	
Authoritarian Sub-national Regimes: <i>Caciques</i> and Local Political Bosses	
The Mexican Army: The Silent Companion in the Formal Post-Revolutionary Peace	
The Discretionary Use of Law to Inhibit Social Mobilisation	
The Beginning of the Crisis of the Post-Revolutionary State	
CONCLUSIONS	

**Chapter Three:**  
**Unmasking the Post-Revolutionary Regime and Building a New Neo-Liberal State** ..... 89

International and National Context	
Key Consequences of the Shift in State Model towards Neo-Liberalism	
Towards a New Formation of the Mexican State	
<i>Rupture with the Post-Revolutionary State</i>	
<i>The New Role of the Mexican State</i>	
<i>The New Relationship between State and Society</i>	
From Exploitation to Exclusion: The Impact of Economic Liberalisation at the Rural Level	
<i>The Accelerated Penetration of Capitalism in the Rural Areas</i>	
<i>Amendments to Constitutional Article 27</i>	
The Principle Effects of the Reform of Constitutional Article 27 on the Countryside	
<i>Impact of the Commercial Opening on Indigenous Peoples</i>	
<i>Different Rural Strategies for Survival</i>	
<i>The Flourishing of Autonomous Social Organisations</i>	
New Governmental Strategies to Face the Legitimacy Crisis	
<i>Salinas' Neo-Corporatism</i>	
<i>The Beginnings of Neo-Indigenism</i>	
CONCLUSIONS	

**Chapter Four:**  
**From Neo-indigenism to Indianism: Multiple Approaches to the Reconfiguration of the State in the Southeast of Mexico** ..... 127

The Politics of the “Absent State” in the Southeast of Mexico	
The Mexican Southeast: A Region of Great Contrasts and Complexity	
<i>Rational Capitalism versus Political Capitalism</i>	
<i>The Rich Diversity versus the Poverty in Ethnicity</i>	
Multiple Manifestations of Violence	
<i>Authoritarian Enclaves versus Self-management Enclaves</i>	
Organisational Responses in the Southeast to the Neo-liberalisation of the Mexican State	
The Armed Response of the EZLN	
The Impact of the EZLN’s Uprising	

<i>The Dignifying of the Indigenous peoples</i>	
<i>The New Dimension of the Indigenous Movement in Mexico</i>	
<i>The Struggle for the Reconfiguration of the Mexican State</i>	
THE RESPONSE OF THE ZEDILLISTA REGIME	
Strong Military Institutions, Weak Social Political Institutions	
The Zedillista Crossroad in the Face of International Pressure	
The Accords of San Andrés Larráinzar: the First Attempt at a New Relationship between the State and Indigenous Peoples	
The Initiative of the Cocopa Law	
CONCLUSIONS	

**Chapter Five:**

<b>The PAN Era: the Interrupted Transition towards a New State and the Uninterrupted Indigenous Rebellion .....</b>	<b>167</b>
---	------------

The Indigenous Counter-reform	
The Attitude of the Zapatistas and Other Indigenous Movements to the Counter-reform	
Divisions amongst National Indigenous Movements	
Different proposals regarding the exercise of autonomy	
The Danger of Manipulated Autonomies	
The Continuity of the Fox Regime and Neo-liberal Multiculturalism	
The Violent Omission: The Policy of “Why me?”	
The Relationship between the Mexican State and the Indigenous Peoples in the Foxista Era of Neo-liberalism	
CONCLUSIONS	
Three Possible Scenarios for the Relationship between the Mexican State and Indigenous Peoples	

**Chapter Six:**

<b>Brief Introduction to the State of Guerrero .....</b>	<b>194</b>
--	------------

Geographic and Socio-Economic Characteristics	
History of the Political and Social Struggle	
The Organisation of Indigenous Peoples	
Guerrero: An Armed State	
Results of the Formal Political Shift	

**Chapter Seven:**

<b>The Community Police in Costa Chica-Montaña de Guerrero: Reinventing Traditions as an Alternative Response to Justice and Security .....</b>	<b>208</b>
---	------------

Creation of the Community Police	
The Community System of Security, Justice and Re-education	
<i>Judicial Dimension of the Community Process</i>	
<i>Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Region</i>	
Quantitative and Qualitative Results	
The Ambiguous Relationship with the Mexican State: Between Hidden Tolerance and Repression.	
Relations with Municipal Authorities	

The Impact of the Alternation of Political Parties in the State of Guerrero	
Conceptualisations of the Reformulation of the Mexican State Between Tradition and Change: Strengths and Challenges of the Community Police and the System	
Main Strengths	
Main Internal and External Challenges	
Conclusions	
<b>Chapter Eight:</b>	
<b>The Community Struggle for the Reconstruction of a Self-Governing Identity of the Amuzgo Peoples in Xochistlahuaca (Suljaá)</b>	243
Geographical Conditions of the Municipality and Distribution of the Population	
Socio-Economic Characteristics	
The Relationship between Ethnic Groups in the Municipality	
The Historical Struggle for Land and Community Life	
The Creation of the Traditional Government of Suljaá	
The Creation of Radio Ñomndaa “The Word of Water”	
The Implications of the Alternation of Political Power in Guerrero	
Strength and Challenges of the Community Process	
Main Strengths	
Main Challenges	
Conclusion	
<b>Chapter Nine:</b>	
<b>Strengths and Challenges of the Indigenous Responses to the Mexican Neo-liberal State: A Comparative Study in Costa Chica-Montaña, Guerrero ....</b>	282
Similarities and Contrasts	
Main Similarities	
Main Contrasts	
Main Internal and External Challenges	
Internal Challenges	
External Challenges	
<b>General Conclusions .....</b>	296
Conceptual and Empirical Contributions	
Principle Findings	
Political Implications	
Future Lines of Research	
<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix I: List of interviews and communities visited .....	310
Appendix II: Glossary of Spanish Terms and Acronyms .....	314
Appendix III: Statistics of Guerrero.....	316
<b>References and Bibliography .....</b>	327



Military incursion in La Realidad, Chiapas, México. Picture by Pedro Valtierra, *La Jornada*, 4<sup>th</sup> January 1998.

## Introduction

The third attempt to build the Mexican State was initiated by the ruling elites in the wake of the adoption of a neo-liberal economic model in the mid-1980s.<sup>1</sup> At the beginning, the shift of the previous corporate state apparatus was gradual and measured. It started to gather considerable speed during the Carlos Salinas' administration (1988-1994), generating profound transformations in the relationship between the State and civil society, and accelerating economic integration to the global market. However, the governing elite have been increasingly less able to consolidate the neoliberal state model. This has been due to both the significant erosion of the wide spectrum of control mechanisms that for decades underpinned Mexico's socio-political stability; and the emergence of multiple indigenous peoples' responses challenging the new reconfiguration of the State, and seeking to avoid the legal, or illegal, incorporation of their lands and other resources into the market.

The image on the front page of this research is a paradigmatic illustration of two prominent phenomena that have taken place throughout the process of State reconfiguration in the neoliberal era. On the one hand, there is a reaffirmation of the increasing presence of indigenous peoples in the political reality of the country as new socio-political actors, empowered and determined to defend both their rights and their dignity. In the photograph, indigenous people bravely and resolutely confront the Mexican army in an organised way to avoid being evicted from their lands. This new reality raises the following questions: Why are their presence and demands becoming more apparent now? Which factors strengthened and encouraged indigenous peoples to

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<sup>1</sup> The first attempt to build the Mexican Nation State was carried out during the post-Independence era by Benito Juárez (1857). Subsequently, Porfirio Díaz (1889-1910) gave continuity to that process. The second attempt was carried out during the post-revolutionary regime (1929-1982) and was led by the State party: the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI).

directly confront the armed forces of the State? Which factors contribute to the consolidation of their processes and struggles?

On the other hand, this photograph shows a new face of the Mexican State: the violent face of the army that responds to sudden indigenous empowerment by arming itself more heavily and reveals its willingness to use violence more openly. What has been happening to the Mexican State? What happened to its diverse and effective control mechanisms? In particular, what is happening with the relationship between organised indigenous peoples and the Mexican State?

Although there were important indigenous rebellions and mobilisations in the past, they were confined within other socio-political identities and did not represent a significant challenge to the power of the governing elites. It was only with the uprising of an indigenous based armed group: the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, EZLN (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional EZLN) on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1994, and the subsequent surge of indigenous rebellions all around the country that indigenous rights emerged on the national political agenda. Since then, indigenous articulations and mobilisations have become one of the most serious challenges to the development plans of the neo-liberal State model in the South of Mexico. At the same time, although the Mexican State employed public security forces to repress social movements and opposition leaders in the past, direct violence was used as a last resort. The State preferred to prioritise a wide range of control mechanisms such as the incorporation and coercion of different social sectors.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The best known cases of open repression occurred in 1958, against the protests of rail workers; in 1965 against doctors; in 1968 against students; and during the 1970s in the so called dirty war against guerrilla movements in Guerrero. However, as some authors have pointed out, these events were exceptional

The principal argument of this research is that the variety of State control mechanisms has not been sufficiently recognised in the history of the formation of the post-revolutionary State. On the contrary, an emphasis has been placed on the successful system of political and institutional incorporation. Ironically, neo-liberalism has unveiled both the violent components of the state apparatus and its renewed attempts to incorporate different social sectors based on the logic of the market. However, the governing elites have faced problems in the consolidation of their State model and the process of integrating themselves into the dynamics of the global market in an effective manner. The phenomena could be explained because of the crisis of the post-revolutionary social pact, the erosion of the State's control mechanisms, and the emergence of multiple responses from indigenous peoples, who are increasingly better organised, and empowered by national and international factors. These peoples have reached an unprecedented level of awareness regarding their rights, and they are responding to the imposition of the neo-liberal State model by using diverse forms of mobilisation in different regions, ranging from peaceful protests to impede the construction of hydroelectric dams in their territories to armed struggle. Consequently, there has been a shift in the system of control mechanisms of the State that is leaning towards a more recurrent use of open violence to implement its neo-liberal project.

In this context, this research revolves around two main objectives: 1) exploring how the State reconfiguration triggered, by the adoption of the neo-liberal model, has unveiled a complex system of post-revolutionary State control, and at the same time has inflamed

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because the post-revolutionary regime prioritised other control mechanisms (Knight 1999; Knight 2002; Middlebrook 2004; Meyer 1995).

State violence; and 2) identifying which responses from organised indigenous peoples represent a challenge to the neo-liberal State model.

### **Research gaps to be filled**

This research intends to contribute towards filling a gap in the literature dealing with two main topics with original conceptual and empirical information. On the one hand, it seeks to unveil the complex system of controls used by the post-revolutionary governing elite to build the Mexican State, particularly at the rural level and amongst indigenous peoples. In this sense, this study seeks to broaden the analytical understanding of the mechanisms of formation and control of the State beyond the dichotomy of the 'corporatist approach' -which minimises the use of violence- and the 'critical approach' -which emphasises the use of violence at the local level. Therefore, it highlights the wide spectrum of control mechanisms used by the governing elite, apart from incorporation and violence, which have either been ignored or studied in a separate way within contemporary literature on the formation of the Mexican State.

In addition, it explores the emergence of the multiple responses that organised indigenous peoples have given to the reconfiguration of the State and to the recent attempts of socio-political incorporation of the neo-liberal model. In this regard, since the mid-1990s, there has been a surge of literature on indigenous peoples in Mexico. As one of the most important Mexican writers, Carlos Monsiváis, has mentioned during the Zapatista uprising in 1994 and up until 1999, more books and articles on this topic have been produced than during the whole of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Otero 2003:24). Despite this growth in research, this thesis argues that there remains a deficiency in historical and

empirical analyses on the emergence and development of indigenous peoples' organisations and mobilisations, and their relationship with the State and other sectors of Mexican society. The realisation of such studies would contribute to a better understanding of the factors that both benefit and hinder the consolidation of the articulation of those groups and the construction of multiple responses to the neo-liberal State model. Deborah Yashar (2005), in her recent book, *Contesting citizenship in Latin America: The rise of indigenous movements and the postliberal challenge*, has presented a valuable scheme for the analysis of the emergence and development of indigenous movements in Latin America. However, so far, there has not been empirical evidence to evaluate such a scheme in a way that is appropriate for the Mexican case. Therefore, this thesis hopes to contribute to a better empirical understanding of the indigenous articulations that challenge the State neoliberal model, and generate alternative approaches to the State building process.

### **Personal Interest in the Topics of Research**

This research is a reflection of the national and international political role that indigenous peoples have assumed and played since the mid-1990s in Latin America, in general, and in Mexico, in particular. Organised indigenous peoples have become relevant political actors that increasingly call the attention of political scientists,<sup>3</sup> lawyers and international studies specialists<sup>4</sup> -as in the case of the author- who had previously excluded the ethnic question from the analysis of the State and the social and political national transformations. In Latin American, since the 1960s and well until the

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<sup>3</sup> Amongst political scientists who have studied the indigenous phenomenon, the following are particularly salient: Deborah Yashar (2005), Donna van Cott (2000), Rachel Sieder (2002; 2005), Edward Cleary (2005) and Timothy Steigenga (2004).

<sup>4</sup> Amongst the specialists in international relations, the following are particularly important: Alison Brysk (2000), José García-Aguilar (1999) and Frank Wilmer (1993).

1980s, studies on indigenous peoples and their struggle to maintain their own culture and identity were carried out by anthropologists, historians and sociologists. These scholars mainly focused on the analysis of socio-cultural changes at the intra-community level and prioritised class studies over ethnic differences (van Cott 2003:221-4).

However, as political scientist Donna van Cott (2003) points out, in the 1990s there was a shift in indigenous movements and the way in which they were studied. Since then, indigenous peoples have been seen not only as cultural or social actors, but also as political actors who want to participate and effectively influence the redefinition and transformation of the nation State. In different countries in Latin American, organised indigenous groups have assumed the role of political actors in order to guarantee their rights and their existence as peoples. Due to these changes, political scientists that study indigenous movements and their organisations increasingly use theories such as ‘new social movements’<sup>5</sup> and State formation theory. These allow a greater understanding of this new phenomenon of collective identities, which in different ways is influencing the configuration of nation State because “the traditional ‘lens’ or approaches with which indigenous peoples used to be studied are now insufficient” (van Cott 2003:227).

At a more personal level, the researcher’s interest in the topic of this investigation has its origins in the expression of “*Ya basta*” (“that’s enough” or “no more”) used by the Zapatistas during their armed uprising in Chiapas on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1994, which had

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<sup>5</sup> Since the beginning of the 1980s, there has been a shift of approach to studying social movements. Before, research revolved around the study of industrialised capitalised societies and social classes in a struggle for citizenship and equality through traditional unions and political parties. The new theory of social movements focuses on new groups independent from traditional intermediaries, who mobilise around values such as civil, environment, reproductive, sexual, gender and ethnic rights, and the survival of the planet in the nuclear era. Some of the most representative authors of this new trend are Laclau and Mouffe (1985); Melucci (1980) and Tarrow (1988).

a significant impact on the personal and professional life of the researcher. As is the case for many Mexicans, the Zapatista uprising had a strong impact on the researcher, acting as an alarm call to a reality that had previously been ignored, but that became starkly and violently evident on the same day that Mexico fully embraced neo-liberal globalisation.<sup>6</sup> Since then, nothing has been the same in Mexico and processes that used to move at a lethargic pace have gained momentum, such as the gradual transition to democracy and the demands to respect indigenous peoples' rights. In the same year, the crisis of the post-revolutionary control mechanisms also began to manifest itself, and violence began to be used more openly against opposition movements that were critical of the neo-liberal model.

### **Methodology of Investigation**

The complexity of the Mexican State and the high levels of heterogeneity of indigenous organisations make it very difficult to generalise. Hence, the author concurs with researchers from the critical approach<sup>7</sup> regarding the need to conduct regional case studies that explain the non-monolithic nature of the State and the particular conditions for the emergence, development, consolidation or failure of different indigenous organisations. It is necessary to demystify the homogeneity of the political culture and highlight the great multiplicity of expressions and variables in different regions, even within the same indigenous communities.

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<sup>6</sup> Mexico began its transition towards neo-liberal globalisation in 1985 when it joined the Ronda de Uruguay (GATT, General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) but it became further reinforced when it signed the NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) in 1992.

<sup>7</sup> Amongst the authors that subscribe to this trend are Jeffery Rubin (1994; 2004), Will Pansters (1999; 2005), Alain Knight (1999; 2002; 2005) and Jonathan Fox (1994; 2000).

Therefore, in order to answer the research questions, a qualitative methodology based on two case studies was conducted in the sub-region of Costa Chica-Montaña of Guerrero. The case studies illustrate two independent responses of organised indigenous people to the reconfiguration of the State toward a neoliberal model. Both cases look critically to these responses in order to explore some of the challenges as well as potentials of these articulations to consolidate themselves and engage with the State. The first case presents the Community Police and its System of Security, Justice and Re-education in chapter seven. The case of Traditional Authorities in Suljaá (Xochistlahuaca) is exposed in chapter eight.

The case studies were useful tools for the empirical exploration of the following factors: the incomplete State formation process; the different State control mechanisms used by the post-revolutionary governing elites for the advance of their modernising model; the impact of the crisis of those mechanisms in the sub-region, and the violent resistance of local bosses to losing power. These two cases are then compared and analysed in chapter 9 to understand the most important factors for strengthening and challenging the consolidation of these indigenous articulations in relation to the implementation of the neo-liberal State project.

### **Why the subregion of Costa Chica-Montaña de Guerrero?**

This particular sub-region was chosen because, together with some regions in Chiapas and Oaxaca in the South East of Mexico, it has witnessed some of the most important organised indigenous resistances to the implementation of neo-liberal policies. However, in contrast with neighbouring states, the state of Guerrero has not been as fully researched; despite the continuing uneven penetration of the State's institutions

and a legacy of authoritarian enclaves dominated by local elites now threatened by the economic and political liberalisation. Hence, local elites violently resist the loss of power and privileges (Cornelius, Eisenstadt et al. 1999; Lawson 2000). Historically, this state has been called *Guerrero bronco* (savage),<sup>8</sup> due to the high level of violence and the presence of armed struggle. Nevertheless, this research seeks to highlight an aspect that has been understudied, which are indigenous organisations and movements interested in vindicating their claims for social and political transformation of the State in a peaceful way.

Between 2003 and 2004, the period in which this investigation took place, civil organisations and leading media groups focused significant attention on the two initiatives of indigenous organisation included in this research. Similarly, the possibility of a political transformation in the state of Guerrero was being discussed due to the unprecedented victory in 2005 of the candidate for the left-wing Democratic Revolutionary Party, PRD (Partido de la Revolución Democrática).<sup>9</sup> All this represented an opportunity to explore the research questions and additionally evaluate whether a political party shift in the state government would contribute to the transformation of its relationship with indigenous peoples.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

As it was mentioned above the methodological approach of this research is qualitative and based on two case studies that led to a comparative study. Three main research methods were used for the research analysis: a) a broad and multidisciplinary review of

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<sup>8</sup> The highest number of intentional homicides per year in Mexico takes place in Guerrero, with an average of 45.6 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants (Conapo 2002, INEGI 2004). This is particularly disturbing considering that the average for homicides in high-income countries is 14.4 and in low-income countries is 32.1 (World Health Organization 2002: 10 cited in Pearce 2007:7).

<sup>9</sup> The opposition party to the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI).

literature; b) 79 semi-structured interviews with different socio-political actors; and c) participant observation in several indigenous communities. Following a brief explanation of each method will be presented.

This investigation was founded on an interdisciplinary approach with diverse bibliographical resources amongst which there was material from several disciplines such as Anthropology, Sociology, International Relations, History, Political Science, Sustainable Development, and Law (both in English and in Spanish). All these fields contributed to the establishment of a conceptual and historical framework that allowed the author to tackle the primary topics of this investigation (the formation of the Mexican State, State control mechanisms and indigenous movements) in a more comprehensive manner.

The researcher had accessed to primary and secondary sources that allowed, on the one hand, the author to reconstruct the history of violence and struggle in the municipality of Xochistlahuaca through an exhaustive review of the archives of the *Comisaría Ejidal*; and on the other hand, to document and evaluate the development of the System of Security, Justice and Re-education and its Community Police through a direct analysis of statistics and internal documents that permitted a detailed and comprehensive analysis of their processes.

In addition, the researcher gathered empirical data during two fieldwork visits to the state of Guerrero. The first visit took place between the 16<sup>th</sup> of July and the 10<sup>th</sup> of September 2004 and included exploratory research to map the primary socio-political actors and indigenous organisations in the state. During this visit, the researcher made

the first contact to access different regions in the state and collected bibliographical material and other related resources. Similarly, the researcher conducted formal and informal interviews with academics and activists from civil organisations located in Mexico City and Chilpancingo in order to better understand the general context of Guerrero and submit a preliminary research proposal. Subsequently, the researcher visited different regions in the state and initiated the first negotiations for access to potential case studies. This was a key visit which enabled the researcher to understand the history of violence and social struggle in the state, identify the main actors and finally select the case studies that were considered the most relevant to this research.

The second field trip took place between the 21<sup>st</sup> of December 2005 and the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 2006. During this visit, the following case studies were selected: a) the Community Police and the System of Security, Justice and Re-education and b) the Traditional Authorities of Xochistlahuaca located in Costa Chica-Montaña de Guerrero. In both cases, the researcher stayed for an extended visit in the municipalities of San Luis Acatlán and Xochistlahuaca, which became the logistical centres from which the researcher commuted to the indigenous communities which form part of those initiatives in order to conduct interviews and initiate the participant observation.

In each one of the case studies, an implicit agreement was established with the community leaders so that both parties benefited from the research. In the case of the Community Police, the researcher agreed with the general secretariat of the Regional Coordinator of Community Authorities (CRAC) that she would support the elaboration of statistics and graphs of the annual report for the General Assembly. In the case of the municipality of Xochistlahuaca, a commitment was established with the president of the

*Comisaría Ejidal* (part of the Traditional Authority) to carry out the general classification of the historical archive of the *Comisaría*. In exchange, the researcher could witness the community meetings and pay visits to the participant communities. Thanks to that exchange, the researcher had the opportunity to interview some of the members of the Traditional Authorities but especially managed to get access to spaces in which very few women are able to participate or indeed have a significant presence. It is important to mention that the *Comisaría Ejidal* is one of the most important spaces for the public affairs of the municipality of Xochistlahuaca because it is in charge of solving conflicts related to ejido and communal lands and the distribution of natural resources. All these topics are male dominated in the communities because men are the owners of the lands in most cases.

Both agreements and exchanges allowed the researcher to gradually build trust within the research participants and get first-hand information, as is detailed later. It is important to mention that the initial access to both case studies was achieved, in part, thanks to the support of members of civil organisations (who have significantly supported previous research related to these issues and validated this research project). This is particularly important due to a climate of harassment, distrust, infiltrations, manipulation of information and heavy repression directed against the organisations analysed.

During the field research a total of 79 semi-structured interviews were conducted (see appendix I) A conscious effort was made to include the widest possible group of relevant socio-political actors such as: state and municipal governmental authorities, community indigenous leaders, religious leaders, Community Police officers, traders,

cattle farmers, members of civil society organisations, indigenous peoples, business people, members of the Popular Revolutionary Insurgent Army, ERPI (Ejército Popular Revolucionario Insurgente), journalists, academics, immigrants, citizens and members of political parties, amongst others.

The interviews (understood in this research as the direct account of the participant) were conducted following a short questionnaire. However, the researcher placed emphasis upon allowing the participants freedom to “tell their own stories” and, should they wish to, leave aside the proposed format to allow the interview to focus on the interests of the participant.

The duration of the interview varied between 20 minutes and 2 hours, and sometimes the interviewees were interviewed on more than one occasion throughout the fieldwork period. Almost all the interviews were taped and subsequently transcribed. In all of these interviews, the participants were offered anonymity and in five cases this offer was taken. The most difficult interviews were with Amuzgo women who do not speak Spanish, and thus the interview was dependent upon voluntary interpreters who in many cases did not know about the research project. This denied the researcher the opportunity to harvest the full potential of the interviews.

Finally, **participant observation** was an invaluable method of data collection and allowed the researcher to witness and appreciate first-hand the two initiatives analysed. This way it was possible to learn and obtain information through the exchange of everyday experiences with those people involved in the initiatives that were being researched. The experiences and observations were systematically registered and

documented in notebooks (research diaries) and subsequently used to support and contextualise part of the collected data. These notebooks were extremely valuable because they allowed the researcher to document a considerable amount of data and details that would otherwise have been lost over the course of the research process due to the amount of occurrences and events during this time.

The participant observation enabled a gradual access to spaces that are traditionally reserved for local men and therefore it is very difficult for women, especially “outsiders”, to gain access as will be discussed subsequently. Moreover, the participant observation enabled many conversations and informal meetings to take place where enormously relevant testimonies were obtained. In some cases the researcher obtained information that was more relevant than that which was acquired through formally agreed and/recorded interviews. This was an essential method to gaining the confidence of and reaching a closer relationship with actors that are often not taken into account in community research such as children and the elderly.

The participant observation was conducted in different spaces in the case studies. On the one hand, in the case of the Community Police, the researcher stayed for an extended period of time in the headquarters of the CRAC in San Luis Acatlán and in the case of Xochistlahuaca, she did the same in the *Comisaría Ejidal*. However, the observation could be extended to different communities which take part in the System of Security, Justice and Re-education and in the municipality of Xochistlahuaca (see appendix I). In this sense, thanks to participant observation, the researcher had the opportunity to follow in detail a whole case in the aforementioned System- from the apprehension of an aggressor to his release in a community ceremony. Furthermore, the researcher was

able to accompany the president of the *Comisaría Ejidal*, Genáro Cruz, in visits to different participant communities in the municipality for the resolution of border conflicts and the celebration of agreements between parties. Finally, the researcher accompanied bilingual teachers in their campaign to foster voting in various communities of the municipalities of Xochistlahuaca and participated in electoral observations in several communities.

In sum, the participant observation was particularly important because it allowed the researcher to understand the enormous heterogeneity of the indigenous peoples, supporting the researcher's shift away from what was initially a romantic and idealised vision of indigenous organisations and movements.

### **Ethical Questions**

As previously noted, at the beginning of this process, the researcher had a romantic and idealised vision of indigenous organisations and movements, in particular of the Zapatista movement. The researcher was aware that this situation could affect the process of data collection and analysis and this was discussed with Professor Jenny Pearce, who supervised this thesis and posited a key phrase which became the guiding principle throughout the research process, but particularly throughout the fieldwork: "Do not see what you want to see, see what there is so that you can understand it and subsequently do something about it". This basic principle was complimented by rigorous systematisation and application of the research methods in order to manage the initial subjectivity during the process.

One of the main concerns that the researcher was aware of during the research is the great level of criminalisation and harassment conducted by different State authorities and local elites against indigenous organisations in order to diminish their movements and demands. Indeed, they have been accused of being clandestine, belonging to guerrilla groups or linked to drug trafficking. These organisations have made a significant effort to refute the accusations and malicious rumours. For this reason, the researcher has elected to omit material which could be sensitive or otherwise manipulated by individuals or institutions for nefarious purposes. In addition, the author decided to send drafts of the case studies to the different community leaders or representatives so that they could review the material, make comments and flag any concerns over sensitive information prior to publication. The most important issue was that the information which was produced for this research did not generate ambiguities which could be distorted or used to diminish the importance of the issues being addressed.

A further ethical question relates to the balance that the researcher had to find between her intellectual curiosity and her personal safety. In this sense, it is important to point out that the fieldwork was conducted in a period of significant militarisation with multiple permanent checkpoints, tension with the government authorities, electoral uncertainties and social and political polarisation in the Guerrero. Therefore, during her visits to some communities, there were moments of trepidation, to the extent that two visits to communities in the municipality of Xochistlahuaca had to be cancelled because of a higher level of militarisation in the area following recent attacks by “armed groups”. These events inevitably limited and influenced the results of the research.

## Research Limitations

In Guerrero, social and political organisations remain polarised and fragmented. In such an environment, there are significant limitations on the researcher's ability to access parties in conflict. For example, in Xochistlahuaca, it was not possible to have personal contact with some relevant actors such as some bilingual teacher because they had problems with the Traditional Authorities and the researcher's "gatekeepers". In such circumstances, it was not easy to contact some key people due to internal division in the communities.

As a young, professional, mestizo woman travelling alone and, arguably, a beneficiary of the model promoted by the post-revolutionary State, the researcher was often perceived as a "fuereña" (outsider) and met with a degree of mistrust and suspicion in some communities, especially in the municipality Xochistlahuaca, where the researcher's personal situation led to challenging traditions and customs which caused disruption to the "normality" of the community, and slightly delayed the period of time required to gain trust and conduct the research as planned.

The lack of deeper knowledge and a wider understanding of the indigenous *cosmovision* (world view) limited the understanding of cultural and social phenomena that took place during the fieldwork and that could have further enriched this research.

## Some Research Results

The adoption of a neo-liberal economic model and the subsequent reconfiguration of the Mexican State have weakened its “civilianisation” power,<sup>10</sup> especially its political institutions to interact peacefully with different civil society sectors. Meanwhile, the governing elites have strengthened its “centralised-coercive” power through a more visible and frequent use of State violence to carry out its development policies, particularly against indigenous peoples who are in the forefront of the opposition to the neo-liberal state model.

These phenomena could be explained because of 1) the weakness and/or gradual disappearance of different post-revolutionary mechanisms of political and social control, and the incapacity of the governing elites to efficiently replace them; 2) the pressures on the government to liberate resources that used to be “protected” in order to comply to the demands of the global market; and 3) the growing emergence of multiple indigenous organisations and mobilisations, which have been strengthened by national and international factors. These indigenous organisations have set themselves up in response to the imposition of neo-liberal policies that represent a threat to their resources and their way of life, and the increasing abandonment of their needs by the State. In addition, some of these indigenous organisations demand full participation in the design and implementation of those governmental policies that affect them.

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<sup>10</sup> Charles Tilly uses the term “civilianisation of power” as one of two necessary conditions for a complete State formation process. It refers to the creation of political institutions to routinely negotiate with different sectors of civil society in order to guarantee citizen rights in exchange for duties, as well as the segregation of the military from civilian life (Tilly 1990).

Another finding is that amongst the multiple forms of indigenous organisation, those that represent a significant challenge to the neo-liberal State are those that have reinvented themselves through a new version of their practices and traditions. This is the case of the Community Police and its System of Security, Justice and Re-education, which has created an alternative and sustainable model in strategic alliance with other social and political actors. Hence, this indigenous organisation has transcended its ethnic and geographic boundaries. As such the collective identity of this organisation has expanded, along with its repertoire of collective actions; and its ability to interact independently with the State representatives through a democratic and community based leadership. These features along with others have strengthened this initiative. In contrast, the case of the Traditional Authorities of Xochistlahuaca (Suljaá) illustrates that their promoters mainly reproduced their traditions, and thus failed to consolidate its processes of self-governing.

In summary, the indigenous responses that challenge the neo-liberal State model are those that struggle for an active participation in the structural reconfiguration of the Mexican State. They have tried to engage with the State instead of just being reincorporated in a governmental structure designed from above, and they have independently created alternative models that benefit their members through further expansive processes.

### **Thesis Structure**

This research is divided into nine chapters, which follow a chronology of different processes of formation of the Mexican State. The **first chapter** establishes the

conceptual framework necessary for contextualising and linking the two main axes of this investigation: the increased use of State violence, and the emergence of organised indigenous responses to the reconfiguration of the State in an era of neoliberal globalisation. For this purpose, the chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section explores the main approaches of contemporary literature analysing the formation of the Mexican State. In particular the 'corporatist' and the 'critical' approaches, suggesting a continuation of the discussion initiated by the latter through analysis of the wide spectrum of control mechanisms used by the post-revolutionary governing elites in the construction of the State, something insufficiently recognised in the literature. The second section analyses the debates around the main national and international factors that explain the emergence and development of indigenous movements in Latin America in general and Mexico in particular in the 1990s, and the heterogeneous responses to the neoliberal State model.

This chapter argues that these two literatures help to unveil the conventional conception of the monolithic character of the Mexican State, and show the need to create a new analytical framework for a better understanding of the its incomplete formation process, which has entered into a profound crisis because of the introduction of the neoliberal project that has been the catalytic element for the increased use of State violence and the emergence of organised indigenous articulations.

The **second chapter** offers a historical narrative of the two attempts to build the Mexican State prior to the neo-liberal phase. The respective control mechanisms that the governing elites used to guarantee social and political stability in order to implement their economic model are analysed. Special emphasis is placed on examining the impact

of these on rural areas and on the indigenous population in particular. This chapter is divided into two sections that coincide with the two key historical periods in the formation and partial consolidation of the Mexican State: a) the post-Independence era (1821-1917); and b) the post-revolutionary era (1917-1982).

The **third chapter** explores the key consequences of the crisis of the post-revolutionary State model, particularly the dismantling of the corporative state apparatus. The latter implies an evident rupture in the relationship between State and society and the establishment of new governmental alliances between the State and trans-national elites. All these have had severe implications for peasants and indigenous populations, which were traditionally subordinated to the post-revolutionary regime as a key element in the achievement of national stability. Similarly, this chapter analyses some governmental strategies of control and legitimisation to alleviate the negative effects of the neo-liberal model such as neo-corporatism and neo-indigenism.

The **fourth chapter** studies the impact of the shift in the State model in the South East of Mexico formed by the states of Chiapas, Oaxaca and Guerrero. The crisis of the Mexican State has been more starkly reflected in these places in an attempt to legitimise, mediate and control organised indigenous peoples in the neo-liberal era. It is in this region where there has been an “awakening of indigenous movements” that, with a long tradition of struggle, have played a significant part in confronting the neo-liberal restructuring of the State and the advance of its policies and mechanisms of re-incorporation. Indigenous responses have been multiple, from collaboration with the government in the implementation of concrete local projects, to armed struggle. This chapter explores the 1994 armed uprising of the EZLN and the subsequently peace

negotiations, which for the first time forced the indigenous topic onto the national agenda; opening up the possibility of establishing a new relationship between the Mexican State and indigenous peoples.

The **fifth chapter** analyses the impact of the alternation of political power and the “new” relationship between indigenous peoples and the Mexican State. Particularly, it discusses the lack of capacity and willingness of the governing political class of the National Action Party, PAN (Partido Acción Nacional) to create efficient mechanisms to allow democratic interactions with independent groups, such as indigenous organisations. This chapter covers the discussions over constitutional reforms to acknowledge indigenous people’s rights, which led to formal peace negotiations between the government and the Zapatistas. Concluding in what some analysts and indigenous organisations consider as a counter-reform, which has left serious legal voids and a high level of dissatisfaction amongst the sectors involved. This situation together with the increasingly violent responses of the State, and accumulated social frustration has radicalised the civil and political indigenous struggle that, in some cases, have challenged the State through *de facto* autonomies established in different regions of the country.

**The sixth chapter** provides a brief introduction to the state of Guerrero, which serves as a referential framework for the two cases studies that form part of this research. Guerrero is a micro-example of the unfinished State formation process, where diverse control mechanisms have been implemented to maintain local stability in sub-regions where the State institutions had an uneven presence. Particular reference is made to local authoritarian enclaves that, despite political and economic changes at the national

level, remain almost intact. These enclaves persist thanks to traditional informal practices such as reactionary *cacicazgo* (local bosses), the use of discretionary powers, coercion of the opposition, electoral fraud, assassinations, and complicity with central authorities, corruption, political illegal pacts, among many others. In contrast, this chapter highlights the history of the struggle, and peaceful demands, of different indigenous and peasant organisations despite a hostile and non-conducive climate for their development and the political and social transition in the state.

**Chapters seven and eight** present the two case studies conducted in the sub-region of the Costa Chica-Montaña of Guerrero. These case studies illustrate the current crisis of the State control in the sub-region, and how different mechanisms have been used by the governing elite – in addition to incorporation and use of direct violence- to construct the Mexican State. They also show empirically different factors that have strengthened the multiple responses to neo-liberalism of indigenous organisations, and the renewed governmental attempts to incorporate such organisations, together with the main challenges they pose.

**Chapter nine** presents a comparative analysis of the two case studies, examining similarities and differences. Furthermore, the factors that favour the development of such initiatives are reviewed together with the main challenges that they face in their path to growth and consolidation. The principal objective is to identify which of these responses represent a significant challenge to the consolidation of the neo-liberal State model. This chapter also highlights the lack of interest on the part of the governing elites in conducting a fundamental reform of the State conducive to the construction of a genuinely democratic and multicultural State.

Finally, in the **conclusion** the main conceptual and empirical conclusions of this research are presented. This chapter summarises the most important findings of this study and subsequently points out their main political implications. The final part of this chapter includes some suggestions for further lines of research.