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Primeiro Comando da Capital and Comando Vermelho

Genesis, Evolution and Their Impact through Narco-culture

The era of the military junta left a legacy of draconian laws and inhumane prison conditions. The lack of effective reforms led to the rise of the prison gangs Comando Vermelho in the city of Rio de Janeiro and Primeiro Comando da Capital in the city of São Paulo. Ineffective state government policies based on relocation of problem prisoners and initial denial of their existence not only accelerated the expansion of the CV and PCC gangs in the prisons themselves but also enabled them to infiltrate the favelas. Members of the Comando Vermelho and the Primeiro Comando da Capital gangs took advantage of inequalities and racial discrimination that had existed since colonial times to maintain a negative image of the state and white elites while gaining support and potential recruits. The cocaine boom of the 1980s and the associated development of the narco-business provided the gangs with a lucrative source of income, but at the same time became a flashpoint between them, generating conflicts. Parallel with the emergence of organized crime, a multidimensional phenomenon called narco-culture arose and began to permeate popular culture. Though it, members of gangs and drug cartels sought to legitimize and gain social acceptance for narco-business, drug consumption, and their own criminal operations at the expense of lowering the authority of the state.

Key words: Primeiro Comando da Capital, Comando Vermelho, narco-culture, narco-business, mega-rebelião

Introduction

The origins of modern organized crime in Brazil can be traced, on the one hand, to the military junta (1964-1985) implementing the 1958 National Security Doctrine,

related to the suppression of opponents of authoritarian rule¹ (Freire 21), and to the creation of two types of security services to support the dictatorship: the *polícia civil*, responsible for investigations, and the *polícia militar*, guarding public security. On the other hand, organized crime in Brazil derives, among other things, from restrictive and draconian prison laws, overcrowding, and the inhumane treatment of prisoners by correctional staff, which have not improved significantly after the restoration of democratic rule (Freire 20-22). The repression of inmates and the lack of any dialogue between them and the management, led to frequent inmate rebellions, often bloodily suppressed, which consequently facilitated the formation of alliances between groups of inmates to ensure their survival. This resulted in the emergence of the first gangs: the Comando Vermelho and the Primeiro Comando da Capital, which today not only pose the greatest threat in Brazil itself but are a serious challenge in the Latin American region. One such challenge is the phenomenon of narco-culture, which arose with the growth and evolution of organized crime in both Brazil and Mexico, which drug cartels and gangs use to increase the legitimacy and social acceptance of narco-business.

The Purpose of the Article

This article was written for two purposes. The first is to present the origins and evolution of Brazilian gangs: the Primeiro Comando da Capital and the Comando Vermelho originating from prison environments and to show the impact they have on society. The second one is to present a fragment of the narco-culture phenomenon used by the members of gangs and drug cartels to legitimize their narco-business, reinforce their criminal identity or transmit encrypted messages through narco-language.

The first part of the article will discuss the genesis, evolution, and expansion of the Primeiro Comando da Capital, emphasizing the role played by Marcos Willians Herbas Camacho 'Marcola' in the modernization of the gang. The second part will present the genesis, evolution, and expansion of the Comando Vermelho and the impact of the gang in the favelas through the implementation of the *boa vizinhança* policy. The last part will allow for a condensed overview of the phenomenon of narco-culture in Brazil and Mexico by presenting its small section in the form of a comparison of images and social media activity of Mexican *sicarios*, *narcos*, and members of Brazilian gangs. Narco-music as an aspect of this culture will also be briefly presented.

When mentioning narco-culture, Mexico cannot be left out for several reasons. First, narco-culture is closely linked to the development of the narco-business and the emergence of the first drug cartels in this country around 1974. Second, it was in Mexico that narco-culture began to develop dynamically, including through narco-music (*narco rap*, *narco trap*, etc.) and especially its specific type, *narcocorridos*,

¹ The National Security Doctrine identified as the main threat to countries in the Latin American region the so-called 'internal enemy' in the form of local communist groups supported by Fidel Castro's regime after he seized power in 1958. In addition, the doctrine called for the earliest possible identification and repression of any leftist groups.

through narco-films including *narco-dramas*, or in the form of the cult of *narco santos* such as Santa Muerte or Jesús Malverde. It should be noted that the activities of the *sicarios* and *narcos* led to the spread of the phenomenon of narco-culture first within Mexico to penetrate later the broader Latin American region. It should be borne in mind that Colombia is an exception since the narco-culture developed there in parallel with the emergence of the Medellín and Cali cartels in the early 1970s. Today, narco-culture is already available on a global scale, if only through narco-series of *narcotelenovelas* (*Narcos*, *El Patrón del mal*, *La Reina del Sur*, etc.). Third, the phenomenon of narco-culture in Mexico is a subject of the ongoing research, so it is from here that one can obtain the most reliable information and data (Jański 7, 143).

I will conduct my research using several methods. The historical method will allow me to present the origins and evolution of the Primeiro Comando da Capital and the Comando Vermelho gangs. The comparative method will help me to illustrate the differences and similarities in the application of selected aspects of narco-culture by members and leaders of Mexican drug cartels and Brazilian PCC and CV gangs. I will also use the method of content analysis and interpretation of audiovisual materials.

Furthermore, the paper will answer three research questions:

- What changes were made to the PCC operational model by Marcola and what were their effects?
- What was *estilo de comportamento* and how did it contribute to the strengthening of the Comando Vermelho gang control in the controlled favelas?
- How do the PCC and CV gangs use narco-culture?

Literature Overview

Literature relating to organized crime in Brazil including narco-business is abundant in both English and Spanish. Key in understanding the origins, evolution, operation, and strategy employed by the PCC gang are: *Entering the Underworld: Prison Gang Recruitment in São Paulo's Primeiro Comando da Capital* by Danilo Freire, *The Evolution of the Most Lethal Criminal Organization in Brazil-the PCC* by Leonardo Coutinho, *Sharing this walk. An Ethnography of Prison Life and the PCC in Brazil* by Karina Biondi, *De la fragmentación de las estructuras criminales a una proto-mafia: un análisis del Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) en Sudamérica* by Carolina Sampó and Marcos Alan Ferreira, *Inside Out: The Challenge of Prison-Based Criminal Organizations* by Benjamin Lessing, and *The Rise of the PCC: How South America's Most Powerful Prison Gang is Spreading in Brazil and Beyond* published by Insight Crime and American University's Center for Latin American & Latino Studies. For an understanding of the origins, evolution, strategy, and operation of the Comando Vermelho gang, consult the following: *Children of the Drug Trade. A Case Study of Children in Organized Armed Violence in Rio de Janeiro* by Luke Dowdney, *The Bastard Child of the Dictatorship: The Comando Vermelho and the Birth of 'Narco-culture' in Rio de Janeiro* by Ben Penglase, *Drug-trafficking and Security in Contemporary Brazil* by Thiago Rodrigues, *In the Middle of an Urban War: Middle-Classness and Fear of Violence in Rio de Janeiro* by Gustavo Segat, *Nemezis. O człowieku z faweli i bitwie o Rio* by Misha Gleny, *Conviviality and Survival. Co-Producing Brazilian Prison Order* by Sacha Drake, *Beyond Pacification. Competition*

State-making in Rio's Favelas by Esteban Arratia Sandoval, *Drugs and Democracy in Rio de Janeiro: Trafficking, Social Networks, and Public Security* by Enrique Desmond Arias, and materials on the CV, ADA, TCP gangs published by Insight Crime.

The literature related to Brazilian narco-culture is quite limited, at least in English and Spanish, making it very difficult not only to fully show both the diversity of Brazilian narco-culture and the impact it has on society, but also the ways in which PCC and CV gangs exploit it. The most visible difference from the narco-culture originating in Mexico is a specific type of narco-music called *funk proibidão*. Here, the most accurate source at the moment is the monograph *Machine Gun Voices: Favelas and Utopia in Brazilian Gangster Funk* by Paul Sneed. Also of note are *Living with Insecurity in a Brazilian Favela: Urban Violence and Daily Life* and *The Bastard Child of the Dictatorship: The Comando Vermelho and the Birth of 'Narco-culture' in Rio de Janeiro* by Ben Penglase, which take a closer look at general issues related to Brazilian narco-culture. *The Cartilha de Orientação Policial. Tatuagem Desvendando Segredos* material published by Secretaria da Segurança Pública do Estado da Bahia is also useful.

The Origins of the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC)²

There are many different versions of the so-called founding myth of the Primeiro Comando da Capital, but it seems the most credible one was presented by investigative journalist Josmar Jozino in his 2004 text *Cobras e Lagartos*. According to this version, the gang was formed on August 31, 1993 in the Taubaté prison in the city of São Paulo, inspired by a group of inmates belonging to a soccer team called Primeiro Comando da Capital, who planned a match with another rival group called Comando Caipira. The match never took place because members of the Primeiro Comando da Capital team murdered two of their rivals, cut off their heads, and dumped them on the playing field to proclaim that from now on they would be the ones in control of the prison³ (Freire 23-24; Biondi 35-36, 61; Insight Crime and American University's Center for Latin American & Latino Studies (CLALS) 11). There is a clear parallel here to the early days of the Mexican drug cartel, La Familia Michoacana, whose *sicarios* dumped the severed heads of their rivals on the dance floor of a disco club in Uruapan in 2006 (Flanigan 73-74).

Initially, the goal of the Primeiro Comando da Capital was to protect members from reprisals by guards and police or attacks by other prison gangs, to provide support for the families of incarcerated members and supporters of the gang, and to establish a communication network between gang members incarcerated in different

² Also known as Partido do Crime, Família, Quinze, and 15.3.3, referring to the 'P' and 'C', which the 15th and the 3rd letter of the alphabet, respectively. There is a similarity with the Mara Salvatrucha gang, also known as MS-13, where the '13' is related to the letter 'M' associated with their affiliation with the *Sureños* gang coalition formed around the prison gang, the Mexican Mafia.

³ Primeiro Comando da Capital was founded by 8 inmates: Mizaél Aparecido da Silva 'Miza,' Wander Eduardo Ferreira 'Cara Gorda,' Antônio Carlos Roberto da Paixão 'Paixão,' Isaías Moreira do Nascimento 'Esquisito' - 'Weirdo,' Ademar dos Santos 'Da Fé,' Antônio Carlos dos Santos 'Bicho Feio,' César Augusto Roris da Silva 'Cesinha' and José Márcio Felício 'Geleião.'

prisons⁴ (Ward 76-84). The idea promoted was to prevent another Carandiru massacre⁵ (Insight Crime and CLALS 7-12; Freire 22; Coutinho 57) from happening and to strive to improve prisoners' living conditions and solidarity against white police violence towards Afro-Brazilians. Due to the tardy and ineffective actions of the São Paulo state authorities and the policy of intended marginalization of the threat by the federal authorities, the Primeiro Comando da Capital gained the opportunity to expand first in other prisons in the state of São Paulo, and later in other parts of Brazil, while exterminating rivals and gaining support for its dominant position in prison community⁶ (Biondi 36-37; Freire 23-28; Insight Crime and CLALS 11). This strategy proved successful and within a few years the Primeiro Comando da Capital began to take control of prisons throughout the state of São Paulo. In addition, the PCC gang used its position to legitimize its actions by, among other things, creating a new code of law to regulate inmate behavior, mediating negotiations between inmates and prison authorities, preventing escalation between inmates and prison staff, and monopolizing the inmate use of violence in controlled prisons. The Primeiro Comando da Capital has spread the use of cell phones among its members in various prisons, making it much easier to coordinate the gang's criminal operations.

It should be noted that there was a power struggle between two factions of the Primeiro Comando da Capital itself: the founding members and the new generation. The leader of the latter faction was Marcos Willians Herbas Camacho 'Marcola'⁷ (Insight Crime and CLALS 11), and the rivalry led to a rebellion in Taubaté prison in December 1999. During the rebellion, Marcola's allies managed to assassinate most of the founding members of the PCC, thus strengthening their own influence within the gang structure (Coutinho 58-59; Insight Crime and CLALS 11; Freire 29-31). Around 2001, state authorities decided to transfer five leaders of the Primeiro Comando da Capital to Taubaté prison. At the same time, the authorities transferred commanders and more important members of the PCC to prisons in the periphery

⁴ Some similarities can be drawn to the origins of the Mara Salvatrucha gang in the 1970s in Los Angeles, California, which was also initially intended to provide safety and support for its members and their families.

⁵ The Carandiru Massacre was the bloodily suppressed prisoner rebellion at Casa de Detenção, also known as Carandiru Penitentiary, which took place on October 2, 1992. Armed state police were sent to control the rebellion and murdered 111 unarmed inmates. The event was considered a major human rights violation since Brazil's democratic transition.

⁶ Information about the operations of the PCC gang was not publicized, due to the censorship imposed by the authorities, which prohibited the use of words and acronyms referring to the Primeiro Comando da Capital in the press and television. It is worth quoting here the statement of the then Secretary of Penitentiary Administration João Benedito de Azevedo Marques regarding the PCC gang: 'fiction, idiocy. It's complete garbage. I am completely convinced of this. I've been Secretary for almost two years and I've never seen any signs of this group.' Moreover, the transfer of PCC leaders and members to other prisons in the state of São Paulo accelerated their expansion.

⁷ Marcos Willians Herbas Camacho 'Marcola' was born in 1968. He was a pickpocket as a child and served time in a detention center for minors. As a teen, he became a bank robber, and was first arrested as an adult at the age of 18. He has been in jail for almost all of his adult life, except for a year and a half in the 1990s, a period during which he escaped five times from state jails. A voracious reader, he claims to have read Sun Tzu, Dante, Nietzsche, and a variety of other classics. His sentences to date total 330 years.

or to other states in order to weaken the PCC in this way. All this contributed to the outbreak of the first *mega-rebelião*, which took place in February 2001. Not only did gang members take control of prisons, displaying banners or creating graffiti indicating their criminal affiliation, but they also took thousands of hostages from among people visiting their loved ones in prisons⁸ (Lessing 8-10; Bailey and Taylor 13-14; Coutinho 58-49; Freire 30-32). This event was an excellent demonstration of the power of the Primeiro Comando da Capital and its capabilities not only against rivals, security forces, and the authorities but also to a public, which until then was unaware of the threat the PCC gang could generate. Not only did the gang consolidate its dominance and control in the prisons of the state of São Paulo, but it managed to strengthen loyalty and identification among its own members. The challenge thrown by the Primeiro Comando da Capital did not go unanswered by the state authorities. As early as May 2001, prison laws were tightened with the introduction of the Differential Disciplinary Regime (*Regime Disciplinar Diferenciado*, RDD), which allowed, among other things, restrictions on conjugal visits, media access, and furloughs for problematic prisoners and allowed them to be placed in solitary confinement. It was also designed to isolate PCC leaders to prevent them from directing the criminal operations of the gang. In addition, the new law strengthened surveillance of inmates by upgrading monitoring systems (Insight Crime and CLALS 9,12; Bailey and Taylor 14-15). More restrictive prison policies led to a sharp increase in the number of inmates in the state of São Paulo.

Consolidation of Power and Further Expansion of Primeiro Comando da Capital

Despite the elimination of most of its rivals during the prison mutiny at Taubaté Penitentiary in December 1999, Marcola faction still did not hold full power in the gang, but this was soon to change. The next leaders of the PCC were two founding members, César Augusto Roris da Silva 'Cesinha' and José Márcio Felício 'Geleirão' the authors of the alliance signed back in the 1990s between the Primeiro Comando da Capital and another prison gang located in Rio de Janeiro, the Comando Vermelho. The agreement provided for the division of the sphere of influence in Brazil, with Rio de Janeiro as the territory of Comando Vermelho and São Paulo as the *plaza* of Primeiro Comando da Capital, and mutual support in criminal operations, including those related to smuggling and drug trafficking between the two gangs⁹

⁸ The official reason for the rebellion was the transfer of the leaders of the Primeiro Comando da Capital from São Paulo to the periphery. This was a precisely planned and coordinated gang operation involving the creation of simultaneous rebellions in 29 prisons in the state of São Paulo, which took the security services and state authorities by surprise. During the rebellion, which involved from 25,000 to 29,000 inmates, the criminals took hostage families, including children, who were visiting their relatives; in Carandiru prison, for example, inmates took 5,000 hostages. A total of 16 people were killed as a result of the events.

⁹ Some similarities can be seen here to the pact created by drug baron Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo 'El Padrino,' the leader of the Guadalajara cartel during a secret meeting of *narcos* in Acapulco in 1989. El Padrino divided his drug empire among the drug barons: the Caro Quintero brothers, the Arellano Félix family, and Joaquín Archibald Guzmán Loera

(Freire 32; Saviano 37-42). Geleirão and Cesinha were isolated from the rest of the prisoners, so in order to exercise full control of the PCC, they involved their wives. Marcos Willians Herbas Camacho 'Marcola' decided to act and started a successful campaign to discredit and undermine the authority of Geleirão and Cesinha, which led to the accusation of the then PCC leaders of collaborating with other gangs and with security services and acting to the detriment of the gang, using gang operations only for their own benefit.¹⁰ After the elimination of his rivals in 2002, Marcola took full power in the structures of the Primeiro Comando da Capital and began the process of modernizing the gang (Freire 32-33; Lessing 12; Bailey and Matthew 14-15).

Not only did he diversify the Primeiro Comando da Capital's sources of income by expanding them from the previous membership fees paid monthly to involvement in narco-businesses such as trafficking, smuggling and distribution of drugs (cocaine, crack, marijuana), organized bank and convoy robberies, kidnapping for ransom, prostitution, arms smuggling, and controlling the prison black market, among others. He also changed the structure of the gang by allowing all members to be vertically promoted based on their usefulness to the PCC and their talents in the criminal world. In addition, he reduced the inequality between the different members of the gang by, among other things, making full members, called *irmãos* (Brothers), equal in rights and responsibilities and increased their scope of autonomy (Freire 36-38). It can be said that Marcola flattened the pyramidal hierarchy of the PCC, leaving only its core in the form of command and leaders. Previously, a criminal career within the gang was only possible based on acquaintances and connections with the leaders.

Marcola also led to greater inclusiveness in the rules for accepting new members into the PCC. From then on, a candidate had first to attend meetings organized by the PCC and become a *batismo* (Baptist), that is, show a willingness to join the gang and be incarcerated in a prison controlled by the PCC. Moreover, the *batismo* had to demonstrate his suitability in the criminal world. If he successfully passed this stage and thus gained a positive reputation in prison community and among members of the Primeiro Comando da Capital, he was automatically considered a potential member, called a *primo* (Cousin). *Primos* were allowed to proceed to a stage called 'creating' a new *irmão*, which could take several months. During this period, the *primo* had to demonstrate the greatest possible usefulness to the gang by performing tasks assigned by PCC members. It should be noted that only the best were admitted into the gang and only those accepted by the gang members. If two *irmãos* deemed a *primo* worthy of joining the Primeiro Comando da Capital, he received an official invitation to the ranks of the PCC death syndicate. Moreover, the brother-promoters, thereafter called *padrinhos* (godfathers), were responsible for all actions of the newly admitted member (Freire 36-38).

'El Chapo' and Ismael Zambada 'El Mayo,' who would work together on cocaine smuggling and other operations with mutual respect for each other's *plazas*.

¹⁰ Paradoxically, the São Paulo State Police turned out an ally of the Marcola faction when in March 2002, it carried out a successful ambush (the so-called Castelinho attack) on commanders and members of the Primeiro Comando da Capital on a highway near the city of Sorocaba. During this clash, twelve PCC gang members lost their lives. In addition, thanks to the deception of the ex-wife of Marcola, lawyer Ana Maria Olivatto, the phone number of Cesinha was planted with the police.

It is worth pointing out that 'Marcola' also expanded the motto of the Primeiro Comando da Capital from 'peace, justice, and freedom' to 'peace, justice, freedom, and equality.' With this move, the Primeiro Comando da Capital increased its support among the favelas population, initially only in the state of São Paulo. The PCC took advantage of the state's lack of interest in the favela inhabitants and the white police's repression of Afro-Brazilians to gain new gang members and social acceptance for their activities. PCC members also corrupted police officers, and prison guards who smuggled cell phones and other essentials into prisons and did not intervene during prison executions and other operations carried out by PCC members. It should not be forgotten that Marcola perfected the mechanism for coordinating the criminal operations of the Primeiro Comando da Capital both inside and outside of the controlled prisons. On the other hand, thanks to the arrest by the Brazilian authorities of the Chilean terrorist and member of the Patriotic Front Manuel Rodríguez (FPMR) Mauricio Hernández Norambuena 'Comandante Ramiro,' the Primeiro Comando da Capital gained knowledge of asymmetric warfare, urban guerrilla warfare, and the organization of bombings¹¹ (Coutinho 59-60).

The modernization of the Primeiro Comando da Capital by Marcola allowed the gang to continue to expand. PCC members would intentionally cause small riots in correctional centers so that state authorities would move them to distant prisons and later to prisons in other states, where the Primeiro Comando da Capital did not yet have influence. Due to such decisions of the authorities, the gang's expansion was rapid, which would allow it to develop ever more extensive operations in the future. For example, as early as March 7, 2002, the PCC carried out the first terrorist attack in São Paulo, blowing up a car with 40 kg of explosives next to the Barra Funda Forum, where five thousand people worked. Fortunately, no one was killed. In addition, members of the Primeiro Comando da Capital tried to influence the outcome of the 2002 São Paulo state governor election by, among other things, getting their families to vote for the gang-backed leftist candidate in the first round. In the second round, the leaders of the PCC death syndicate planned an unsuccessful bombing of the stock exchange to undermine support for the right-wing candidate and simultaneously bias the presidential election (Coutinho 60-61). Furthermore, in March 2003, PCC gang members killed two judges in charge of security at prisons in the states of São Paulo and Espírito Santo. In addition, that same year, the Primeiro Comando da Capital launched an attack on approximately 50 police stations, during which gangsters murdered three police officers (Coutinho 60-61; Insight Crime and CLALS 9). And in August 2005, members of the PCC Death Syndicate are believed to have stolen over \$70 million from the Central Bank in the city of Fortaleza, Ceará (Insight Crime and CLALS 9).

The year 2006 saw the true scale of the threat posed by the Primeiro Comando da Capital as well as the total failure of both the *Regime Disciplinar Diferenciado* system and the policy of marginalizing the growing PCC gang. From March to May 2006, 82 prison revolts broke out not only in the state of São Paulo but also in neighboring states. In May 2006, the federal authorities decided to move some 750 PCC gang

¹¹ Mauricio Hernández Norambuena 'Comandante Ramiro' also gained status as one of the leaders of the Primeiro Comando da Capital, despite not becoming an official member of the gang.

members incarcerated in the city of São Paulo to maximum-security prisons in the interior. This step, scheduled for May 14, 2006, was intended to weaken the influence of the PCC and prevent further rebellions. Thanks to a corrupt employee with access to Congressional documents, PCC gang leaders learned of the plans to weaken the PCC as early as May 10. Marcola made the decision to start confronting the state authorities a few days earlier to surprise the authorities (Bailey and Taylor 15-16). Therefore, on May 12, 2006, the carefully planned Primeiro Comando da Capital operation began, which escalated into clashes between gang members and security forces, the second *mega-rebelião*. The actions of the gang members not only instilled terror and led to an escalation of violence but also paralyzed the city of São Paulo. For about a week, schools, universities, shopping-malls, businesses, and stores were closed with retail sales dropping by 90% during this time (Freire 34-35). In addition, PCC gang members launched 293 attacks on police stations and public buildings, and burned over 100 buses in nine days. Furthermore, members of the Primeiro Comando da Capital carried out bombings or grenade attacks on police stations, banks, offices of key businesses, and a subway station (Coutinho 61-62; Bailey and Taylor 16-18). Gangsters belonging to the PCC carried out street executions of police officers and prison guards at correctional facilities as well as murdering civilians. The surprised state authorities responded by reinforcing the police force in the city and calling in death squads, which fueled the spiral of violence. The worsening situation in the city of São Paulo forced the authorities to enter into secret negotiations with the leaders of the Primeiro Comando da Capital. At an informal meeting with state authorities on May 15, 2006, Marcola demanded, among other things, more rights for prisoners and guarantees that a special police unit to suppress rebellion in prisons called the *Tropa de Choque* would not have access to prisons (Freire 35). The São Paulo state authorities agreed to the conditions of the leader of the Primeiro Comando da Capital and so, on May 17, 2006, the gang ended its operation. It should be noted that from 492 to 505 civilians were killed by the gang (Bailey and Taylor 16; Insight Crime and CLALS 12). In addition, the scale of terror and violence unleashed by the PCC has led to a significant erosion of the public respect to the state authorities and São Paulo Governor Gerardo Alckmin himself – a supporter of restrictive prison policies – and has consolidated the domination of the PCC among other gangs the state of São Paulo. From now on, the state authorities will have to take into account the interests of the leaders of the Primeiro Comando da Capital when creating policy.

As the PCC gang continued to grow and increase its influence not only in the state of São Paulo but also neighboring states, it gained the opportunity for more serious involvement in narco-business and international expansion. By 2010, the PCC had expanded its influence in western (Paraná, Mato Grosso do Sul, and Mato Grosso) and northern (Rondônia, Acre, and Roraima) Brazil, without breaching the sphere of influence of its ally, the Comando Vermelho¹² (Insight Crime and CLALS

¹² The alliance between the Comando Vermelho and the Primeiro Comando da Capital ended shortly after PCC members assassinated Paraguayan *narco* Jorge Rafaat Toumani and his associates who controlled smuggling along the Paraguay-Brazil border in the town of Pedro Juan Caballero in June 2016. This was a carefully planned move by PCC commanders that ensured they not only gained control of the Paraguayan-Brazilian smuggling route through that city, but also enabled them to limit access to eastern Paraguayan smuggling routes for the Comando Vermelho. The PCC's aggressive expansion worried the CV leaders, who began to

9, 14, 19-20, 25, 49; Coutinho 63-64). The growing criminal activity of the PCC in the border Brazilian states with key smuggling routes was not left without response from the authorities, which focused on arresting and incarcerating as many PCC members as possible in an effort to restore stability and stop the expansion of the gang. Unfortunately, this strategy had the opposite effect, that is, it only strengthened the gang's position. This can be seen in the course of the expansion of the PCC in the states of Paraná and Mato Grosso do Sul. The spreading wave of violence generated by the gang caused authorities in both states to lock up more and more of its death syndicate members. This enabled the Primeiro Comando da Capital to gain a dominant position in the prisons in the states of Paraná and Mato Grosso do Sul, secure a monopoly on local criminal markets, and seize control of the lucrative drug routes through these states that connected Paraguay to Brazil (Insight Crime and CLALS 13-14).

It is important to note that between 2012 and 2016, the Primeiro Comando da Capital began operations within Paraguay, thus becoming a Transnational Criminal Organization (TCO). Moreover, in order to increase its influence in Paraguay, the PCC used the same strategies that allowed it to expand rapidly first in the state of São Paulo and later in other Brazilian states.

Currently, the Primeiro Comando da Capital has over 32,000 members in 27 states and the Federal District of Brazil, the vast majority of whom are in prison, and hundreds of thousands of criminals affiliated or collaborating with the PCC gang mainly in the narco-business. The PCC death syndicate is powerful enough to influence the results of elections for governors of individual states by, among other things, financing the campaigns of candidates linked to the PCC as well as fully controlling local criminal markets by fighting rival criminal organizations and corrupting security services. Additionally, it generates popular support in the favelas it controls by substituting for the state in, for example, providing basic assistance and providing an apparent sense of security. For instance, the PCC gang creates special tribunals in the favelas under their control to mediate all sorts of conflicts from business to interpersonal, which functions as a makeshift justice system (Coutinho 62; Sampó and Ferreira 108; Biderman, et al. 580). Furthermore, the Primeiro Comando da Capital controls most of the drug routes from Bolivia and Paraguay to Brazil. Here, a good example is the Caipira cocaine route leading from Bolivia through Paraguay to the Brazilian port of Santos, from where *pichicata*¹³ (Hernandez 61) enters Africa, Europe, and Asia by sea (Sampó and Ferreira 108-109; Insight Crime and CLALS 36). The PCC has a dominant position in eight strategic states for narco-business: São Paulo, Paraná and Mato Grosso do Sul (bordering with Paraguay), Acre (bordering with Peru), Roraima (bordering with Venezuela), and Piauí, Alagoas and Sergipe (access to the Atlantic Ocean) (Sampó and Ferreira 107-109; Insight Crime and CLALS 36-41). In addition, the Primeiro Comando da Capital has influence in Peru, Colombia, and Venezuela, allowing it both to sell cocaine within Brazil and

fear that further moves by the PCC gang could lead to the monopolization of key drug routes from Paraguay to Brazil, in particular the one through the city of Rio de Janeiro. All this led to an open war between the PCC and the CV (2016-2019), which resulted in the deaths of both members of the two gangs and civilians.

¹³ *Pichicata* is a word derived from narco-language, meaning 'cocaine'.

serve as a wholesaler for other criminal organizations (Sampó and Ferreira 109-112). It should also be noted that the PCC recruited former FARC members to gain access to the drug market in Colombia (Coutinho 62; Insight Crime and CLALS 14).

Comando Vermelho (CV)¹⁴

This gang was formed in 1971 at the maximum-security prison Cândido Mendes on the island of Ilha Grande, a few hours from the city of Rio de Janeiro, as a result of an alliance between the inmates of Block B, or criminals associated with armed bank robberies and theft, and the leftist guerrillas MR-8 and Aliança Libertadora Nacional (ALN). Initially, a group, modeled on the structure of a guerrilla militia unit called the Falange Vermelha, was formed to provide protection for its members from violence and reprisals by prison guards and other prison gangs, provide necessary assistance, and support planning and executing escapes from the Cândido Mendes prison. The members of the Falange Vermelha began to create structures of a political nature to fight for the rights of prisoners by hiring lawyers to represent them, to ensure that conditions in the prison improved, and also to mediate negotiations between prisoners and prison management.¹⁵ It can be argued that the Comando Vermelho would never have existed, or at least not in the form we know it today, had it not been for the influence of middle-class leftist guerrillas who not only taught ordinary criminals the tactics of asymmetrical warfare and urban guerrilla warfare that would later perfect their skills of kidnapping for ransom and armed robberies of banks and state institutions, but also indoctrinated them with the ideas of Ernesto 'Che' Guevara and the French Marxist Régis Debray. Additionally, they mobilized the prisoners to create structures that allowed them to fight for their rights and empower them. The understanding of these two disparate groups of inmates was also facilitated by their common life as LSN prisoners who were regularly beaten by guards and confined to crowded cells almost around the clock (Glenny 60-63; Penglase "The Bastard Child of the Dictatorship" 125-127; Dowdney 29; Drake 238-242; "Red Command," *Insight Crime*). It should be noted that were it not for Article 27 of the National Security Law (*Lei de Segurança Nacional*, LSN) of 1969, enacted by the military junta to counter the increased number of armed bank robberies by opponents of the right-wing dictatorship, it would have been virtually impossible for leftist guerrillas to come together with common criminals in maximum security prisons¹⁶ (Dowdney 29; Drake 242-244).

¹⁴ Interestingly, the name 'Comando Vermelho' was not invented by the members themselves, but was given to them by the press due to the fact that the gang partly derived from the leftist guerrilla community. Only later would the gang adopt this name while creating the acronym CV. However, the CV gang members themselves used the names Falange Vermelha, Falange LSN, or Fundão.

¹⁵ The Comando Vermelho's organizational model would initially serve as a model for the Primeiro Comando da Capital that was forming in Taubaté prison in São Paulo state.

¹⁶ Article 27 of the *Lei de Segurança Nacional* allowed any suspect in an armed robbery of banking, financial or credit institutions to be charged and sentenced by a military court to 10-24 years in maximum security prison or the death penalty if there were fatalities during the robbery. This was a great tool in the hands of the military junta to eliminate political enemies.

The Comando Vermelho ideology implanted by the leftist guerrillas, based on fighting in the name of social justice, did not initially win many followers, but as the CV gang grew, this would change. The first major operation organized by the Comando Vermelho was the assassination of the leaders of a rival gang in 1979, which allowed CV members to take control of the Cândido Mendes penitentiary and infiltrate some members into the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. It should be noted that members of the Comando Vermelho introduced a common code of prison rules, called *estilo de comportamento*, which was designed to:

- a) maintain iron discipline and loyalty among members by, among other things, the death penalty for murder, theft, assault or rape of fellow inmates and for collaborating with the police, prison guards (*alcaguetar*) or joining another gang;
- b) team up CV members around common goals such as improving prison conditions, organizing escapes, fighting abuse and repression;
- c) reduce the level of violence and give the Comando Vermelho a monopoly on its use;
- d) guarantee a certain autonomy to individual members, allowing them to pursue their own microinterests.

These principles were rapidly adopted in the Cândido Mendes prison and in subsequent prisons to which Comando Vermelho members were sent in Rio de Janeiro, generating support for the gang (Drake, 239-246; Penglase "The Bastard Child of the Dictatorship" 125-128; Dowdney 30; "Red Command," *Insight Crime*). Gang members at large began committing kidnappings for ransom, house robberies, and bank robberies to financially support those in prison. This assistance was not voluntary but forced by intimidation by the members of the Comando Vermelho located in Rio de Janeiro prisons. Gang members at large were supposed to live in the belief that if they did not regularly deliver money to the prisons controlled by the CV as a form of membership fee and were recaptured by the security forces, they would be tortured and later murdered as potential traitors (Dowdney 30-31). This policy of terror proved to be extremely effective, allowing the CV to strengthen its position and control in the prisons by corrupting guards, police officers, and members of the judiciary. At the same time, with the first successful escapes of the gang members from prisons in the early 1980s, the Comando Vermelho began to take over local criminal markets, using terror and violence against rivals and locals. Seeing the effectiveness, degree of organization, and the strength of the gang, some local criminals decided to join the Comando Vermelho, hoping for patronage if arrested and to increase their own criminal income ("Red Command," *Insight Crime*; Penglase "The Bastard Child of the Dictatorship" 128; Rodrigues 241).

The cocaine boom of the 1980s caused Colombian drug cartels (Medellín and Cali) and guerillas (FARC, ELN) to seek new markets for the substance. Brazil became one of the main transit countries for cocaine produced in Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia to Europe, including Italy, the Netherlands, Turkey, and Spain¹⁷ (Rodrigues 241; Dowdney 26-29; "Red Command," *Insight Crime*; Glenny 83-85). As the CV

¹⁷ At the time, two cocaine routes to Europe passed through the Brazilian territory: the first ran from Colombia through Brazil to Suriname, and the second from Peru, Colombia or Bolivia through Paraguay to the Brazilian port of Santos.

continued to grow, a second faction of leaders gathered around a faction of Brazilian drug traffickers, known as the second *grupo dirigente*, emerged in one of the prisons to engage the gang fully in the narco-business. With the founding faction, consisting mainly of bank robbers, out of power, the CV became involved in the narco-business of smuggling, distributing, and trafficking first marijuana and later the more lucrative cocaine. The Comando Vermelho leaders of the *narcos* faction set themselves to the task of monopolizing the entire drug market in Rio de Janeiro and exterminating the independent *narcos*. This would make the Comando Vermelho the sole retailer and thus a suitable partner for the Cali and Medellín cartels. By 1984, the Comando Vermelho had gained the upper hand by exterminating or absorbing other criminal groups. By the end of 1985, the gang already controlled 70% of the drug market in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro (Penglase "The Bastard Child of the Dictatorship" 128; Dowdney 31-33). It should be noted that the Comando Vermelho was able to establish cooperation with the Cali cartel and later, through the efforts of one of the CV leaders Luiz Fernando da Costa "Fernandinho Beira-Mar," with the FARC guerilla. Moreover, thanks to the operations of Fernandinho Beira-Mar, the CV began to expand to other Brazilian states and managed to take control of one of the smuggling routes from Paraguay to Brazil in the 2000s ("Red Command," *Insight Crime*; Arias 32-33; Dowdney 41).

The CV gang established its own foothold in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro by, among other things, exploiting racial divisions between persecuted Afro-Brazilians and white elites, antagonizing favela residents, who were not considered rightful residents, with the middle class¹⁸ (Segat 17). Gang members began to replace the absent state institutions, which had no interest in the fate of the residents of marginal settlements, by creating a policy of *boa vizinhança*, or neighborliness, that is forced reciprocity, based in part on the *lei do morro* or 'law of the hill'¹⁹ (Penglase "The Bastard Child of the Dictatorship" 129-131; Penglase *Living with Insecurity* 52-53) and the principles embodied in the prison code of *estilo de comportamento*. The Comando Vermelho provided an apparent sense of security and justice, for instance, by combating common crime (theft, burglary, robbery, rape) and protection from repressive police and other gangs in the controlled territory in exchange for cooperation or silence from residents in the context of narco-business. Additionally, the CV organized festivals and concerts, provided loans for housing and cars, financed school supplies for children, medicines and funerals or distributed food to the poorest (Penglase "The Bastard Child of the Dictatorship" 129-132; Glenn 37-39, 86-87, 97-108-120; Penglase *Living with Insecurity* 51-54; Arratia Sandoval 237-238). In this way, the *narcos* associated with the CV guaranteed residents who 'respected' it that they not only had no need to fear attacks from gang members, but that they could actually turn to the gang for help, thus setting themselves

¹⁸ Let us add that as late as the 1970s, favelas were still inhabited by the middle class. However, with the growth of narco-business and organized crime, violence escalated. Growing fear for personal safety forced the middle class to move to other parts of the city.

¹⁹ 'Law of the Hill' refers to the offering of protection to favela residents in Rio de Janeiro by gang members, *narcos*, police, or militia in exchange for silence or cooperation in narco-business. Any contact with rivals or security forces is prohibited, and it was illegal to leave the favela without permission from the CV gang.

apart from the old guard of *narcos* and from the police, who used violence against anyone and provided no support.

This policy applied in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro by the Comando Vermelho allowed it to gain legitimacy and acceptance for its actions from the residents of marginal neighborhoods, attract new members, and ensure the growth of the narco-business. Rocinha is a significant example of a favela where the residents have much more confidence in the Comando Vermelho members they know personally than in the prejudiced police officers, from whom they do not know what to expect. Naturally, there will be some people fond of or sympathetic to the CV gang, those who are friendly to the members of the Comando Vermelho, those with a neutral disposition, and those who are hostile to the CV. This level of trust among residents towards members of the Comando Vermelho is due to the services the gang provides: protection and policing (investigation and punishment of crimes such as murder, theft, robbery, rape, etc.), distribution of food, medicines, money to the poorest, paving of roads, repair of sports facilities, funding of local cultural projects, *fiestas funk proibidão*, soccer teams and matches. In return for all this, the residents of the favela Rocinha recognize the authority of the Comando Vermelho, they undertake to help gang members with narco-business (selling drugs, hiding them or weapons in their own homes), guarding order in the favela and remaining silent towards the police or rivals (Sneed,173-182).

The takeover of the favelas was a strategic move on the part of the CV because they had key locations for drug trafficking, including near or in the immediate vicinity of the main routes into the city and good transportation routes to Rio de Janeiro's wealthy neighborhoods. In addition, the favelas did not appear on official city maps, which made them ideal for gangsters to defend themselves against rivals and avoid arrest by the police. To ensure their impunity, the Comando Vermelho corrupted police departments by offering daily, weekly, or monthly bribes in exchange for which the security forces would turn a blind eye to the gang's activities, reduce the level of repression, or inform CV members of planned patrols in the favelas. For example, in 1997, the police received 3,000 reais a day from *narcos* in the favela of Rocinha (Penglase "The Bastard Child of the Dictatorship" 129-132, 136; Segat 17; Glennly 84-85). At the same time, the Comando Vermelho reacted swiftly to the arrests or killings of its members by organizing ambushes on police patrols, attacking public transportation, and forcing local businesses and stores to close.

Disintegration of the Comando Vermelho

From its inception, the Comando Vermelho did not have a pyramidal structure, which meant that there was no single dominant leader or faction. The gang operated by agreement between individual commanders and *narcos*, which consequently began to generate conflicts between individual leaders and their factions. Already in the mid-1980s, as the gang's income from narco-business grew, a split occurred in the ranks of the Comando Vermelho. Some of the commanders formed a new gang called Terceiro Comando (TC), which began to compete with the Comando Vermelho for dominance in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. The ruthless fighting between the gangs generated increasing levels of violence in each favela and increased

militarization of members of both gangs, who, armed with AR-15 rifles, AK-47s, and Uzi submachine guns, were far better armed than local police forces ("Pure Third Command," *Insight Crime*; Rodrigues 241-242; Arratia Sandoval 237; Dowdney 30; Segat 16-17). The 1990s brought further changes for the Comando Vermelho related to conflicts between different factions of the gang and further brutalization of the drug trade in the favelas. In 1994, one of the Comando Vermelho's commanders Ernaldo Pinto de Medeiros 'Ue' murdered another CV leader Orlando da Conceição 'Orlando Jogador,' who controlled Complexo do Alemão (a collection of favelas located in the northern part of Rio de Janeiro), for which he was expelled from the Comando Vermelho.

In 1998, Ue together with another CV gang commander Celso Luis Rodrigues, 'Celsinho da Vila Vintem' formed an alliance with a group of *narcos*, former or current soldiers, police and navy officers to start another gang: Amigos dos Amigos (ADA). The Amigos dos Amigos formed a fragile alliance with Terceiro Comando and declared war on the Comando Vermelho ("Amigos dos Amigos," *Insight Crime*; Glennly 102-104). By the early 2000s, the TC and ADA gang alliance had already begun to generate tension. In 2002, one of the commanders of the Terceiro Comando, Nei da Conceição Cruz 'Facão', who controlled the narco-business in a part of the northern zone of Rio de Janeiro called Complexo da Mare, accused a leader of the Amigos dos Amigos Paulo Cesar Silva dos Santos 'Linho' of encroaching on his territory. The lack of understanding on the part of the TC leadership caused Facão to leave the Terceiro Comando and form his own gang, Terceiro Comando Puro, which promptly declared war on Terceiro Comando and Amigos dos Amigos and joined the common struggle for domination of the favelas ("Pure Third Command," *Insight Crime*; Glennly 104).

The police departments including the military police decided to take advantage of the conflict between the various criminal groups and began selling weapons to members of the warring gangs. The security services also began practicing *mineira*, a deliberate detention of people on suspicion of drug trafficking. To avoid arrest, one had to pay a large enough bribe to officers of the military police or other police forces (Penglase "The Bastard Child of the Dictatorship" 136). In addition, death squads in the form of self-proclaimed militias composed of former members of the army, navy, and police also emerged, using terror and violence aimed at gaining maximum control over the drug business in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. The situation has clearly shown not only the upward spiral of violence, but also the fact that the state is unable to control its own security forces, which pursue their private interests that are not necessarily convergent with those of the state.

Narco-culture

The development of organized crime in Brazil, as in the case of the drug cartels in Mexico, has led to the emergence of a narco-culture, which is the key element that allows for the legitimization and social acceptance of the very phenomenon of narco-business as well as the activities of individual gangs or drug cartels. The rapid expansion and popularity of the narco-culture would not have been possible without the active participation of two important groups. *Sicarios*, who operate within the

drug cartels carrying out the orders of the drug barons, and gang members of the Comando Vermelho and the Primeiro Comando da Capital, among others, constitute the other key group for the expansion of the narco-culture that is actively involved in the narco-business. It should be noted that, like the *sicarios*, they not only become some of the main protagonists of the narco-culture, but also actively create it. Moreover, it allows them to present and popularize tattoos, gestures, and symbols related to their criminal affiliation as well as transmitting information between members of different cells. For example, the PCC uses the following symbols and tattoos: 15.33, PCC, Yin Yang, Scorpion, Carp, figure of death, phrases *morte com fuzil*, or *paz justiça liberdade*. The Comando Vermelho, on the other hand, uses: CV, CVRL, the Tasmanian Devil character as well as the phrase *justiça o liberdade*. In addition, both gangs also use images of the cross, the grave, the figures of the clown, the Joker, Caveira, the Devil, the Speedy Gonzales or the Road Runner (Secretaria da Segurança Pública do Estado da Bahia 20-26, 43-45, 53; Jański 109; TV Record Sorriso).

One should understand that narco-culture permeates almost all spheres of life of the society through the creation of a specific system of values, beliefs, customs, forms of identification, ideological elements, ways of manifestation enriched with cultural segments such as art, dance, rituals, which are incorporated by people into native culture. Interestingly, the norms of this symbolic universe are largely based on the traditional components of mafia cultures originating in the Mediterranean basin, such as courage, loyalty to family and members of the criminal group, protection, revenge, generosity, hospitality, nobility and prestige, and the use of violence to leave mafia structures, to seize power, acquire certain material goods such as cocaine and other drugs, valuables²⁰ (Drzewiecka 136-137). Narco-culture can also be understood as behavioral patterns, specific lifestyles and forms of coexistence that arise around smuggling activities, which not only define the situation of organized crime within social life, but also permeate the collective social consciousness and create a bridge between the world of smugglers and that of the rest of society²¹ (Mondaca Cota and Cuamea Lizárraga 5-6).

Looking at certain elements that make up the Brazilian narco-culture, one can see clear similarities with the Mexican counterpart. It should be noted that narco-culture is a multidimensional phenomenon, and for the purposes of the following considerations, the author refers only to a very narrow section of it, which is narco-music.

Narco-music can be treated as a collection of tracks from any musical genre (e.g., reggae, reggaeton, rap, hip-hop, country, pop, jazz, trap, funk, classical, etc.) whose lyrics and/or music video contain direct, indirect or even only subliminal references to the subject matter of narco-business (e.g., *narcocorridos*), organized crime, drug use, *narco* lifestyle, etc. Therefore, for a work to be classified as narco-music, it must display two key elements:

²⁰ The emergence of narco-culture is due to the formation of a folk model of narco-business development, which is based on the social involvement of the population in criminal activity and therefore requires the creation of an aura of uniqueness and attractiveness to attract as many interested parties as possible.

²¹ It is worth adding that such a model of behavior is marked by an intensified 'thirst for power' associated with the relentless pursuit of social prestige and hedonism, and a fatalistic-nihilistic view of the world.

1. references to organized crime, members of criminal groups (e.g., *sicarios*) and their activities (e.g., elimination of enemies, contraband smuggling, corruption, etc.), gangs, death syndicates, drug barons, drug traffickers, *narco* lifestyle, etc.;
2. references to drugs in the context of drug trafficking, production, sale, consumption, promotion, etc.

Additionally, such tracks may include the following segments:

- narco-language (e.g., *cuerno de chivo*, *mota*, *levantón*, *narcomanta*, etc.), street slang, gangster jargon, vulgarities, etc.;
- the presence of weapons in the video (e.g., AK-47s, AR-15s, pistols, shotguns, etc.) and references to them, e.g., in the context of the elimination of enemies, gangster disputes, the inevitability of death, etc., in the lyrics of the song;
- exuding wealth and luxury in the video (e.g., bundles of money, expensive cars, watches, clothes, jewelry, lavish mansions, etc.) or alluding to them in the lyrics of the song;
- appearance of beautiful women, usually scantily clad and erotically charged music video and references in the lyrics (Jański 35-36).

The *narcocorridos*²² (Mondaca Cota 91) glorify drug barons such as El Chapo, leader of the Sinaloa Cartel, his sons Los Chapitos, Pablo Escobar, soldiers of death syndicates such as El Popeye as well as promoting the lifestyle of *narco*. Their authors present *narcos* dressed in expensive suits, shirts, hats, with inseparable engraved pistols on their belts, having fun with branded alcohol (whisky, brandy) and using cocaine in the company of scantily dressed women. Moreover, the videos show the opulence of the drug barons' lifestyle, including collections of cars, exotic animals (lions), watches, gold necklaces, and the stunning interiors of *narcocorridos*. In addition, most of the audiovisual material also contains references that emphasize the loyalty of the soldiers of the death syndicates to their narco barons, for whom they are ready to give up their lives. They often carry out the orders of their principals even when these are in prison. *Sicarios* who protect cartel leaders are portrayed as professionals who prevent any ambush or attack against their employers and are able to quickly find traitors within the organization and bring them before the drug baron. The *narcos* in the videos are also portrayed as caring sons and fathers and good-natured local heroes, as can be clearly seen in the videos depicting solemn funeral processions of a deceased *narco*, in which locals mourn the death of the drug baron together with the family of the deceased and the *sicarios* of the criminal organization. As a result, *narcocorridos* not only improve the image of a given drug cartel or its leader, but also legitimize the narco-business in the eyes of society, showing participation in it as a route to prestige, a quick way to wealth or power, and also a guarantee of popularity with women (Jański, 129-131).

²² *Narcocorrido* is a work of praise, often commissioned by a specific drug baron or crime syndicate, which addresses and glorifies the themes of drug wars, rivalries between drug cartels, the actions of leaders and members of death syndicates, and the production, smuggling, sale and consumption of narcotic substances. The idea is to present specific aspects of the *narco* lifestyle in the most attractive way possible to the population so as to deter potential rivals and enemies, on the one hand, while developing an approval or high tolerance for narco-business in the given community, on the other.

The *funk proibidão*²³ (Sneed, 23-25; “Funk proibidão”, *Rate Your Music*) is used by PCC and CV gang members for several purposes. First, ties are tightened between favela residents and the PCC or the CV around a common enemy such as the Brazilian government, police officials, local authorities or rivals. The key role of the CV or PCC as brave defenders of the favela and its interests is shown. Second, both the Comando Vermelho and the Primeiro Comando da Capital use the *funk proibidão* to challenge their rivals and emphasize their own superiority, dominance, and power by, among other things, presenting groups of masked gang members armed with bazooka-type weapons, AK-47 rifles, AR-15s, M-19s, pistols, etc., or by verbal references to the use of violence against traitors, emphasizing the loyalty of gang members to their leaders, etc. Third, through paid MC’s, gang members as well as their leaders are glorified while the memory of slain PCC and CV members is kept alive; consider, for instance, the praise song in honor of the boss of the favela Rocinha, Bem-Te-Vi, who was killed by the police. In addition, both gangs use the *funk proibidão* to portray themselves as modern-day Robin Hoods concerned about the future of the favela, and so they are worthy of admiration, respect and gratitude from its inhabitants. Moreover, both gangs legitimize their power and increase their support among the favela’s inhabitants through their presence at *fiestas funk proibidão*, where they play the dual role of organizers and protectors. The gang members show up in designer clothes, with gold chains, rings and engraved weapons such as machine guns and pistols, accompanied by acquaintances and beautiful scantily clad women. However, this is not an exhibition of wealth on such a scale as Mexican *narcos* do. Additionally, members of the Comando Vermelho or the Primeiro Comando da Capital distribute money, drugs (cocaine, crack, marijuana), alcohol, and nutritious refreshments to the participants of the fiestas (Sneed, 33-38, 109-112, 131-139, 159-161, 173, 183-189).

When looking at the use of narco-culture by *sicarios* associated with Mexican drug cartels, there are clear parallels to members of Brazilian gangs. This can be seen for instance by analyzing their image and social media activity, which are quite similar in the cases of *sicarios* belonging to Mexican drug cartels (including Los Zetas, Jalisco Nueva Generación, Noreste, Del Golfo, Sinaloa, Los Caballeros Templarios) and members of Brazilian gangs (including the Primeiro Comando da Capital, the Comando Vermelho, the Terceiro Comando Puro, the Amigos dos Amigos). Soldiers of Mexican drug cartels including *sicarios* publish videos and photos through social media showing them in full armament (machine guns, AK-47s, AR-15s, etc.), in bulletproof vests, in tactical outfits resembling those of the special services, the army or the police, against the backdrop of SUVs, armored vehicles (known as narco-tanks) or other vehicles, both during operations of death syndicates and while presenting their military superiority (propaganda videos). Additionally, they publish audiovisual footage of brutal interrogations, torture, and executions of rivals and civilians.

²³ *Funk proibidão* is an underground variety of funk carioca that developed in the 1990s in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. It refers to violence, crime, sex, drug trafficking, fights between gangs and pacification in favelas, and is primarily associated with promoting the activities of gangs, among others, Comando Vermelho, Primeiro Comando da Capital, Amigos dos Amigos, Terceiro Comando Puro, etc., their leaders and members, or attacking rivals by sponsored funk MCs. It should be noted that the Brazilian government has banned *funk proibidão* from the radio due to its violent or pro-criminal lyrics.

Besides, *sicarios* also post videos/reports of *narcofiestas* during which they have fun, perform challenges and dance in full armor, as well as selfies and photographs with other members of the criminal organization, friends, and family. It is worth mentioning that some of them do live broadcasts and answer questions from their viewers (Garcia 97-100; Grayson and Logan 129-130; Jański 116-119).

Similarly, members of Brazilian gangs publish videos and photos showing them performing criminal operations or being armed with pistols, Uzi submachine guns M16 or AR-15 or AK-47 rifles. However, their clothing does not resemble the uniforms of the security and special services. They usually wear baseball caps, T-shirts with their favorite football club, short or long pants, sports shoes, and sometimes bulletproof vests. Occasionally, an audio-visual footage depicts an interrogation or execution of rivals or contains a typically informational footage regarding gang activities. In addition, Brazilians more often appear against the backdrop of a gang-controlled favela, displaying signs and symbols associated with their criminal affiliation. However, they also upload videos/reports where they play, perform challenges and dance in arms, as well as selfies and photographs with other members of the criminal organization, friends, and family. They also post accounts and videos of *fiestas funk proibidão*, which, unlike Mexican *narcofiestas*, are parties open to all favela residents and their friends. They also create profiles, fun pages or groups on social networks dedicated to their criminal organizations, with the aim of integrating and strengthening the sense of identification among the gang members and their immediate environment (Robb Larkins 1-2, 12-13; PIVETE TCP; UNITEL Pando; CL DOS PROIBIDÃO TUDO 2; Oliveira; "Facção Dos Ada," Facebook; Maicon Films). In this respect, the activity of PCC, CV, TC, TCP, ADA gang members is no different from the use social media by gangs such as Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and La Florencia (Womer and Bunker 82-85; García "The Role of Music in the MS13"; Jański 122-123).

When analyzing narco-culture in Mexico and Brazil, it is also worth looking at the images of Mexican drug barons and Brazilian gang leaders and their social media activity. Drug barons are portrayed in two ways. The first relates strictly to *narcomoda*: sunglasses, facial hair, Texan hat, denim shirt trimmed with silver piping, denim pants tied with a gold belt with a magnificent buckle, snake skin boots, thick gold chains with heavy pendants depicting a marijuana leaf, a bulldog, Christ, Santa Muerte, etc., gold rings with seals, and an engraved gun set with precious stones (Varela Rodriguez 16-19). The second image shows elegant suits, jackets, shirts, coats, and watches. Inherent in both cases are posing with scantily clad beautiful women, with exotic animals (tigers, lions), against a backdrop of *narcocresidencias*, a collection of luxury cars or a private jet.

The social media activity of *narcos*, like that of *sicarios*, largely depends on the strategy adopted by the drug cartel in question. There are often profiles on Instagram, Facebook fun pages, etc. However, it can be assumed that the drug barons of the Sinaloa Cartel, among others, mostly show on social media the opulence with which they live, including their collection of luxury cars such as Rolls-Royce, Bugatti, Ferrari, Lamborghini, Maserati, Pagani, Bentley, Audi, private jets, Rolex, Patek Philippe and Breitling watches, sets of expensive spirits, cigars, diamond- and gold-studded engraved weapons (pistols, rifles), jet skis and ATVs. Moreover, they also share photos of themselves wearing expensive clothes, posing while traveling in

a helicopter or an armored convoy, partying on *narcofiesta*, surrounded by tigers, lions, jaguars and beautiful women. In addition, they also post footage of cocaine, marijuana and money from the narco-business, and proudly display their criminal affiliation. Drug barons also use social media to present their thoughts through Twitter, for example, or they give interviews where they speak about narco-business and socio-political issues (Garcia 64-66, 119-122; Jański 120-122).

The image of Brazilian gang leaders is based on displaying their wealth and dominance, but not on as massive a scale as Mexican *narcos*. Gang leaders, called *donos do morro*, are dressed in designer clothes, wear heavy gold chains with pendants with the initials of their nicknames, a collection of rings adorned with precious stones, and gold-plated weapons. Here it is customary to pose with armed members of their own gangs and scantily clad beautiful women against the backdrop of a controlled favela. The social-media activity of the leaders of Brazilian gangs is not very intense, but there are cases of giving interviews to journalists in which they talk about their wealth and the power they have in the favelas they control. One may come across their fun pages or private profiles on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter, but their function is to share thoughts, maintain authority, and remind of the presence of the respective gangs. They seem to serve the function of controlling and simultaneously bonding gang members rather than display wealth (Robb Larkins 36-38; "Fernandinho Beira Mar intellectual," *Facebook*; "Fernandinho Beira-Mar," *Facebook*; "Marcos Willians Herbas Camacho 'Marcola,'" *Facebook*; *vulgo_marcola*; "Antonio Francisco Bonfim Lopes," *Facebook*; Glenn 110-113, 152-153, 227-229, 231).

Summary

Restrictive policies and repression by the Brazilian military junta led to a sharp increase in the number of prisoners who became targets of repression and violence by correctional officers. The lack of prison reforms and laws resulted in the formation of the prison gangs: the Primeiro Comando da Capital and the Comando Vermelho, which were the inmates' responses to the inhumane treatment. The initial policy of marginalization of the growth of the PCC and CV gangs and the ill-considered relocation policies of gang members by federal and state authorities proved to be a complete failure. Instead of preventing the expansion of the Primeiro Comando da Capital and the the Comando Vermelho, they only accelerated it and strengthened the position of the two criminal organizations, which gained enough strength to become a threat not only the management of the prisons, but also ordinary citizens, state and federal authorities, among others, by organizing coordinated rebellions based on bombings that were able to temporarily paralyze a city or part of it.

Undoubtedly, the cocaine boom of the 1980s and the associated growth of the narco-business contributed to the development of Brazilian gangs. The growing narco-culture has been used by members and leaders of the Primeiro Comando da Capital and the Comando Vermelho not only to glorify the actions of their criminal groups, transmit encrypted information or show their superiority, dominance, and strength over their rivals, but also to emphasize the close ties between favela residents and members of the PCC or CV. This comradeship is built around the notion of a common enemy: a rival gang, police officers, government and local authorities.

The organization and active participation in *fiestas funk proibidão* by members and leaders of the Primeiro Comando da Capital and the Comando Vermelho further reinforces their power and legitimizes their support in the eyes of favela residents. Additionally, PCC and CV use such festive events to promote drug consumption, thereby increasing social tolerance for the drug business.

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