

THE BREAKDOWN OF SOCIAL CONTRACTS IN MICHOACÁN, MEXICO:
MICHOACÁN'S CONTINUING PROBLEM WITH CRIME, PUBLIC SAFETY, AND
CIVIL UNREST

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ABSTRACT

Michoacán, Mexico has become a breeding ground for public corruption, drug trafficking organizations, vigilante gangs, and other large-scale criminal enterprises. U. S. Congressional research, data provided by the Drug Enforcement Agency, and responses from the Obama White House administration recognize these problems in Mexico and suggest that the rising crime epidemic in Mexico will continue to grow.

The continued discovery of public corruption, accompanied by a growing violent crime rate in Michoacán, has created a backlash from its citizens. Some of these citizens have gone to extreme lengths in combating their current criminal environment, forming vigilante self-defense groups, which occasionally act more similarly to some terrorist organizations, sometimes carrying out public executions of heads of major drug trafficking organizations.

Historically, similar vigilante self-defense groups have operated in Michoacán with promises to protect the people of Michoacán as the government continues to fail its citizens. However, these self-defense groups later transitioned from self-defense groups to criminal organizations and large-scale drug traffickers.

In addition to the problems of vigilante self-defense groups, Mexico's government has seen an increase in the number of criminal organizations operating within the country. The increase in criminal organization numbers is in part due to a splintering of the largest drug trafficking organizations into smaller independent groups.

The splintering of large-scale drug trafficking organizations, combined with the growing number of vigilante self-defense groups, have created an environment conducive to violent "turf wars" between gangs. These turf wars affect the citizens of Michoacán

more than ever before. The splintering of gangs and the subsequent turf wars have resulted in an increase in violent crimes such as homicide, vehicle theft, and business theft.

The citizens of Michoacán are no longer able to trust the government after continued incidents of public corruption poor education for Michoacán's children, and failures in public safety. These failures signify a complete breakdown of the social contracts between citizens and the government. However, research suggests that increased education to its citizens, and law enforcement actions directed towards areas where there is statistical higher crime rates may help reduce the states overall crime rate, while having a positive impact on public safety. Increased spending in these areas may help combat the current criminal environment in Michoacán.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page	I
Abstract	III
Table of Contents	V
Statement of the Problem	1
Theoretical Considerations on Collective Behavior & Law Enforcement Response	7
i. Deterrence Models	7
ii. Smelser's Theory Collective Behavior in Michoacán	13
iii. Law Enforcement Response and Continued Backlash in Michoacán	21
The State of Michoacán	23
i. Violence, Public Corruption, and Law Enforcement in Michoacán	23
ii. Impact on Agriculture	30
iii. Turf Wars, Increased Violence, & Predictions on Drug Trafficking Organizations	33
Investments in Education as a Response	39
Reformatting the Strategy on Drug Trafficking Organizations	45
Conclusion	49
References	52
Endnotes	57

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Social contracts can prove to be a difficult business. The success of a nation's social benefits is largely dependent on the state of the nation. Citizens of the United States, England, France, Germany, and nations around the world have a mutual agreement between the state and the citizens within the nation. The agreement stems from a philosophical thought that the members of a society should cooperate with each other, and the state, in order to enjoy certain benefits and protections. The agreement, while relatively simple, can be expanded upon. For example, in the United States, citizens expect the government to provide elementary education for its children. This social benefit provided by the government creates a certain reliance and confidence in the government. Additionally, the majority of citizens agree to give their children this education, and live within that state or nation, while others can choose to pay additional fees for education that is farther away or private in nature. The success and the overall benefits of a social contract vary across nations and states.

To be clear, not all nations are afforded the social benefits of a social contract between the state and its citizens. Some nation states, such as nations in the midst of war, unrest, or other forms of violence and conflict, do not have the resources or environment needed in order to create an atmosphere that would be conducive of certain benefits found in social contracts. Nations like Somalia, Syria, Egypt, Libya, Colombia, and parts of Mexico are not granted all of the social benefits that sometimes exist in other countries.

Nations, outside government agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGO's) will sometimes classify the nations that exist without social benefits or social contracts as "failed" or inherently dangerous to visit, and Michoacán is approaching some of the elements found in a failed state. In the case of Somalia, organizations like The Foreign Policy and The Global Fund for Peace have consistently ranked Somalia as "the most failed state in the world" ahead of nations like Congo, Sudan, South Sudan, Chad, Yemen, and Afghanistan.ⁱ Economics, crime rates, and current political environment play an enormous role in how outside nations recognizes a state as "failed." Michoacán continues to fail its citizens in all of these categories.

Since the 1970's and the United States' "war on drugs," Mexico has been synonymous with public corruption, drugs, and crime. The war on drugs further impacted Mexico's economy by affecting its tourism industry. To this day, Mexico's tourism industry continues to be impacted by the growing epidemic of a high crime rate, high homicide rate, and the number of violent crimes in states throughout Mexico, affecting the countries economics as a whole. Overall, the war on drugs has brought continued attention to Mexico's problem with violent crime and public corruption.

The Department of States and the Department of Justice recognize the crime rate and overall public safety in Mexico as an area of concern for their venturing tourists. According to the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Diplomatic Security, "Armed robberies, kidnappings, car thefts, credit card fraud, and various forms of residential/street crime are daily concerns. The low rate of criminal convictions contributes to the high crime rate."ⁱⁱ

Further, The State Department recognizes that certain parts of Mexico are worse than others. The State Departments assessment on Mexico found in the agency's "Crime and Safety Report" affirms:

"According to the Procuraduria General de Justicia del Distrito Federal and the Secretaria Publica del Distrito Federal, the following city boroughs routinely have the highest number of crimes reported in 2014: Iztapalapa, Cuauhtémoc, Gustavo A. Madero, Benito Juárez, Coyoacan, and Tlalpan. The Embassy strictly controls U.S. government employees' travel to several parts of the Embassy's district, including the states of Guerrero and Michoacán."ⁱⁱⁱ

These comments by the State Department indicate the states of Guerrero and Michoacán are areas of great concern for U.S. travelers. Additionally, the State Department warning indicates the state of Guerrero and Michoacán struggle with public safety for its citizens.

Violent crime and the lack of the rule of law have greatly impacted Mexico in recent years. According to WorldAtlas.Com, of the 50 most dangerous cities in the world Mexico is home to 5 of them, with Acapulco, Mexico being the fourth most dangerous city in the world with a murder rate of 104.73 per 100,000. The high murder rates and lack of public safety have become a constant fear for many of the citizens in Mexico.

Over the past two decades, the problem of crime and public safety in Mexico has become an enormous area of concern for its citizens, and there are little indications that the problem will subside in the coming years. According to a 2014 Crime and Safety report, since the 1990's the power of Colombian drug cartels was on the decline.^{iv} Subsequent to this decline, the power of Mexican drug cartels rose. This dynamic demanded a response from the Mexican government, and while some government responses did occur, the overall effectiveness of the government's response does not appear to have affected the growing problems of public safety and crime rate. This is at

least in part due to public suspicion that some of Mexico's government officials have links to drug trafficking organizations (DTO's), which continue to plague Mexico.

Moreover, the economic impact behind the Mexican government's role and relationship with the DTO's continues to be an area of concern for the Mexican citizens to this date. Economist Milton Friedman has argued that the role of the government is to "protect drug cartels" simply through a function of its economics.^v Friedman explained that within an ordinary free market, goods are imported and exported by hundreds, if not thousands, by business like entities.^{vi} However, in the drug production world, government interdiction efforts make it enormously costly for the individual to enter the market as a seller. Governments establish this high cost, or high-risk market, through jail time, fines, and the shutting down of small drug businesses. Therefore, the only businesses that can survive the government interdictions are large Medellin cartels that have enough capital to invest in sophisticated, or costly, measures for selling and producing drugs.

As the government punishes street level drug dealers and local neighborhood based gangs, but avoids prosecution on larger DTO's, the long-term effects are monopolized DTO's. The inherent danger in drug trafficking, now with a government raised awareness for punishment, makes the prices rise and creates this monopolist environment for large corporation like drug trafficking organizations. Milton Friedman described this environment as, "He's [leaders of the drug trafficking organizations]¹ got a government who makes it very hard for all his competitors and who keeps the price of his products high. It's absolutely heaven."^{vii}

In Michoacán, the problem is exponentially worse. For years there was superficial economic monopolistic support for the DTO's, and the overall mistrust in the government

¹ Writer inserted brackets in order to clarify the intended subject from the direct quote.

is at an all-time high. More recently, DTO have splintered into smaller cells but still reap some of the initial benefits of these monopolies and social mistrust. Because of the increased levels of mistrust in government officials, Michoacán's citizens have participated in peaceful and violent protests. While the majority of the protests were peaceful in nature, some protests turned confrontational and "became violent."^{viii} In some of the protests, the demonstrators have blocked city streets, major highways, or taken control of government toll roads on major highways. In some instances, the violent protesters have demand unofficial tolls from travelers.^{ix} These protests, along the violent reactions by citizens and Mexican police forces, served as a forewarning to vigilante justice in Mexico.

Overall public safety and crime, specifically the crime of drug trafficking and crimes associated to drug trafficking, is a major problem in Mexico, specifically Michoacán. Both U.S. citizens and the U.S. State Department recognize this problem. Certain citizens in Michoacán have also recognized the expanding problem of crime and public safety and responded with "self-defense groups." However, despite their perhaps justified and reasonable initial intentions, some self-defense groups have more closely aligned with extremist vigilante groups, sometimes firing upon, capturing, torturing and executing leaders of drug trafficking organizations.

This paper argues the Mexican government first needs to repair the broken social contracts that exist in Mexico before any substantial progress can be made towards crime reduction and the removal of drug trafficking organizations and vigilante groups. The Mexican government will be unsuccessful if the people do not trust the government, the government fails to provide citizens with basic essential rights and safeties, and if the

basic needs of the people are not met. In order to gain this trust back, elemental social benefits like public safety and education need to be established.

At this time it cannot be determined what the long-term impact of the rise of vigilante groups in Mexico will be; however, it is important to note that vigilante groups in Michoacán have previously existed and these groups later became drug trafficking organizations of their own. The current vigilante groups, comprised of local villagers and farmers, have provided some interim relief; however, their protection is limited and the groups do not address any of the problems at the root of the crime world, such as large scale drug trafficking. If the current vigilante groups transition into drug trafficking organization, similar to prior groups, the result will be violent “turf wars” between the vigilante groups, local neighborhood based gangs, and larger drug trafficking organizations.

The Mexican government needs to recommit to the social benefits of education, protection for local business, and safe areas for children to play and learn in order to impact the growing crime rate and criminal environment. At a minimum, the citizens of Michoacán need education for its children and basic human security. Until at least parts of these needs are met, Mexico’s government will continue to struggle with crime, political corruption, and vigilante justice.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR & LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONSE

Deterrence Models

Government policies regarding punitive and compensatory damages are meant to deter crime on the individual and collective level. The threat of government response to crime is not only meant to dissuade the number of incidents of crime, but it is also meant to discourage the seriousness of crimes (LaFree, Dugan, Korte 2009). However, the utilization and credibility of the government's threat dictates the effectiveness of the government policies regarding the deterrence models. Overall, the use of deterrence based crime models has dominated government policies regarding the response to all types of criminal and civil threats (LaFree, Dugan, Korte 2009).

Deterrence models are most often divided into two categories: specific and general (LaFree, Dugan, Korte 2009). Specific deterrence is individual in nature. Specific deterrence stops an individual from repeatedly committing the same offense because the individual fears the penalty of the violation (LaFree, Dugan, Korte 2009). Alternatively, general deterrence occurs at a collective level instilling fear of punishment before a violation takes place (LaFree, Dugan, Korte 2009). The use of these models extends into multiple types of law and criminal justice policies, including sentencing and punishment. Further, the use of deterrence models impacts the effectiveness of methods used by law enforcement officials in combating individual and collective crimes, such as the use of law enforcement patrol as deterrence to crime. Deterrence models, on the collective and individual level, impact government policies and the effectiveness of law enforcement officers.

Despite the effectiveness of deterrence models, the threat of punishment has also been used in the mobilization of sympathizers and supporters, most notably in the field of terrorism (LaFree, Dugan, Korte 2009). This point, argued by criminology theorist Gary LaFree, maintains responses to terrorism can sometimes be as dangerous as the act of terrorism inciting incidents of backlash from would be sympathizers. In these incidents, punishment helps bring about more incidences of crime, as well as sometimes elevating the seriousness of the offense, which is in complete contrast to deterrence models intended goal.

Historically, incidents of deterrence models meant to repress, or to force collective reform, have created a backlash against government policies, inciting more rioting and protests. For example, British government policies meant to deter incidence of rioting and force reform in Northern Ireland from 1968 to 1973 had no effect on reducing the occurrence of riots (Peroff and Hewitt 1980). Additionally, failures in responses to riots has resulted in continued repression and continued incidents of rioting. In a separate incident, coercive repression was ramped up in response to the Black urban riots in the 1970s; however, failures in government policies incite further rioting and protests (Oliver 2007). These incidents argue towards alternative policies when combating issues on social change, strain on a collective group, and issues of reform.

Further, coercive collective repression has resulted in the onset of some criminal enterprises whose intent is to further incite social disorder through their collective behavior. In the case of the “Black Guerilla Family,” the U.S. Federal Bureau of Prisons recognizes the Black Guerilla Family as a gang started by former Black Panther George L. Jackson with the intent “to promote Black revolution and the overthrow of the

government” (Oliver 2007). These responses highlight the significance of correct government responses to backlash, as well as emphasizing the importance of long term success.

Policies on deterrence models impact collective groups when examining issues of social order or social strain. Similar to the backlash that occurred after the failure of reformist policies in Northern Ireland, collective responses have helped create organizations based on social change. These organizations include the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in Ireland, the Black Panther Party in the United States, but also extend into some radical terrorist groups (Perry 2014). These groups often utilize political violence as a means of conveying their message, similar to the Black Guerillas Family’s promotion of revolution and the overthrowing of the government. However, the nexus between political violence to other types of crime, such as drug trafficking and arms trafficking, illustrate the importance and impact that collective groups have on the community as a whole (Perry 2014). Therefore, while the criminal organizations will use terrorism as a means of inciting violence, the organizations can also be affiliated with other types of crime, such as narcotics or arms trafficking. The formation of the collective impacts the effectiveness on social change and the implantation of new policies regarding social strain.

Backlash after social strain from government policies is most effectiveness when the collective group adapts to models of previous collective backlash groups. The effective backlash collective group forms after precipitating events form a general belief on strained groups (Weeber and Rodeheaver 2003). The mobilization of the collective group will dictate the groups’ overall effectiveness in combating the social strain

(Weeber and Rodeheaver 2003). Overall, backlash, often violent in nature, is formed when a collective group is able to mobilize after the implementation of reformist policies and subsequent social strain.

Theories on collective behavior, deterrence models, and backlash often examine issues on the failure of overbearing policies meant to deter specific crimes. Neil Smelser argued that these overbearing policies could sometimes result in the formation of terrorist groups or militia like entities. However, while deterrence models have become the dominant model for criminal justice policies, alternative policies offer alternative suggestions after the failure of deterrence models on the individual. These models act to rehabilitate the criminal through reconciliation with the community and victim.

Alternatively to deterrence models, which act to prevent incidents of crime through fear of punishment, restorative justice acts to rehabilitate offenders through reconciliation with the community. In most cases, restorative justice works effectively when combating issues of violent crime (Sherman and Strang 2007). The type of crime and specific situation largely determines the success of restorative justice; however, as a general policy restorative justice has shown to reduce crime on violent incident crimes (Sherman and Strang 2007). While restorative justice is not as effective at the initial deterrence of crime, it acts to build the relationship between the community and the violator, which decreases the likelihood of backlash.

Further, the use of crime statistics can help governments and law enforcement officials combat failures of deterrence models while preventing the likelihood of backlash. Illustrations of the failure in deterrence models and the subsequent backlash are observed through continued incidents of rioting, reflecting the failure of some reformist

policies, as well as demonstrating the potential for backlash. For example, rioting in Northern Ireland after the implementation of reformist policies should be expected to continue if the punishment for violent protests is rarely enforced. In addition to reformist policy backlash, failures in overall deterrence models can cause backlash and protesting when the threat of punishment does not exist. These failures in the threat of punishment can cause a backlash from citizens, resulting in an increase in the number of incidents involving vigilante justice. In these scenarios, deterrence models prove ineffective as the threat of punishment does not exist. Further, these incidents may incite other forms of backlash, such as rioting based on failures of the justice system.

Statistical analysis on spatial settings can assist law enforcement efforts in combating violent protest and assist law enforcement in combating high crime areas when deterrence models have failed to exhibit a true threat of punishment. Law enforcement officers struggled to combat the areas in Northern Ireland where rioting was taking place. However, law enforcement responses to rioting can be better assisted through the introduction of new policies, as well as the use of risk terrain modeling (RTM) in areas that are more likely to have violent protests. Historically, law enforcement has been assisted by the use of RTM in high risk areas of drug trafficking; however, this analysis can be expanded into areas that are more likely to have violent protests and looting, such as small grocery stores (Barnum, Campbell, Troccio, Caplan, and Kennedy 2016). Further, after the failure of deterrence models, police can combat certain crimes, such as drug trafficking, by targeting areas that have highly concentrated drug activity (Barnum, Campbell, Troccio, Caplan, and Kennedy 2016). By targeting these areas,

police can combat areas conducive of violent protest and combat issues of underlying crime problems.

Overall, deterrence models are meant to dissuade citizens from committing crime; however, failures in the deterrence models can have lasting effects. These failures include incidents of backlash and the formation of collective responses to social change and disorder. New policies and analytic police strategies can help prevent the number of violent episodes, as well as addressing the underlying issue.

Smelser's Theory Collective Behavior & Social Change in Michoacán

More recent iterations of Smelser's theory have applied Smelser's original concepts of social strain and social backlash to modern terrorist organizations and some forms of militias. In the modern applications of Smelser's theories, modern and historical militias align similarly to the strain that eventually resulted in the creation of the vigilante self-defense groups in Michoacán. Weeber and Rodeheaver (2003) argued that under Smelser's framework, militias meet the backlash theory requirements because their creation is formed only after a social strain.

Weeber and Rodeheaver revisit Smelser's framework regarding the creation of militia and this same framework proposed by Weeber and Rodeheaver will apply to the vigilante self-defense creation in Michoacán to certain points with certain aspects of the theory not yet realized. Weeber and Rodeheaver recall that militias are formed under two different types of social strain. The first type of strain, which does not apply to the citizens in Michoacán, describes the formation of militias after a change in the current social community or environment. The militia is then formed when groups of people cannot "grapple" with new situations, which "sets the stage for value oriented movements."

The second type of militia formation comes after a group receives general support from antigovernment rhetoric and condemnation of specific government actions. Weeber and Rodeheaver argue that the earliest formations of U.S. militias meet this standard after the groups' unorganized but armed stand from tyranny and the standing governments. American militia groups continued to evolve since their initial creation and now function as a group that acts as protectors of the community, people, and sometimes nation.

Similarly, in Michoacán there has been a joining together of armed individuals for the purposes of protection and political reform. Collections of armed individuals now share a common goal that is focused on antigovernment rhetoric and the protection of the community and people in Michoacán. Groups of local farmers and villagers initially formed after the government continually failed to protect them from the violent actions of drug trafficking organizations. The DTO's actions, combined with a lack of response from government officials and law enforcement officers, created a heavy burden on its citizens. This social strain led to the creation of vigilante groups and met Smelser's first pillar of collective behavior and social backlash.

Weeber and Rodeheaver further argue that modern militia meet the remaining four pillars of collective behavior laid out by Smelser. The first pillar is an *underlying social strain*. In the creation of militias, a social strain caused by action or inaction by the government must be present in order to justify a social movement, or backlash as proposed by Perry (2014). The second pillar is achieved when the group has at least one *generalized belief* that identifies the source of the strain. Further, the group needs to share beliefs on the source of the strain, but they must also have a collective agreement on the best remedy of the strain(s).

Michoacán's social strain is formed around two general beliefs. The fact that Michoacán's social strain is not singular in nature can sometimes pose obstacles regarding collective beliefs. This inherent struggle between the group's size and general beliefs shared by the group's members may be the reason behind former self-defense groups' failed collective actions. However, despite the prior failures of self-defense groups, both historical and modern actions of the self-defense groups stem from

Michoacán's citizens victimization and corruption of public officials. Overall, every formation of self-defense groups in Michoacán was caused after strain occurred from DTOs, continually victimizing the community, compounded with the strain from corrupt government officials that did not assist the citizens.

These compounded centralized beliefs from the self-defense groups immediately transitioned into Smelser's third pillar, which is achieved when *precipitating events* confirm the *generalized beliefs* prior to the formation of the militia. Michoacán's backlash is now amplified by the same precipitating events from groups' prior; however it is continually advanced by the failures of the former groups. Overall, in instances of militias and vigilante self-defense groups, a shared belief in triggering events served as an initial call to action and justified their initial existence, creation, and later, their actions.

Prior to their formation, citizens in Michoacán were confronted with multiple violent confrontations with DTOs, with almost all of the confrontations being met with minimal or no law enforcement response. One media outlet reported that there are common occurrences of vans, driven by members of the DTO, coming into the city looking for an individual that failed to comply or combatted members of a drug trafficking organization. The vans approach the individual, kidnap them, and return the individual the next day dead inside of a bag or rolled up in a carpet. These violent occurrences, combined with multiple other violent confrontations with DTOs and little or ineffective responses by law enforcement, precipitated a social movement in Michoacán.

Smelser's theory then dictates that after a *general belief* is formed, which is justified by *precipitating events*, leaders are formed and a *mobilization* of citizens act to combat the strain (1963). This is arguably the most difficult task to for militias and

vigilante self-defense groups to accomplish because, in their very nature, they are an unorganized collection of individuals with little or no centralized leader(s). However, modern militias and self-defense groups can be aided by media and some internet platforms (Weeber and Rodeheaver 2003). New advancements in encrypted messaging, anonymous internet platforms, and messages that are heavily coded in order to conceal the identity of the originator, have complicated Smelser's argument on leaderless cells and present new data arguing towards an internet platform creator and monitor serving as an encrypted digital leader (Weeber and Rodeheaver 2003).

Despite their failures in a formal leader, the vigilante groups' mobilization has evolved from an individual level to a collective level, indicating the group is more organized than they initially appear. Some indicators of collective mobilization are opportunism and coordinated destruction (Perry 2014). Michoacán's coordinated and planned attacks are the initial indicators that the group's actions are ones of opportunism and coordinated destruction. Further, large group actions against law enforcement and current government intervention, suggest the group acts at a collective level and has evolved from their individual aggression stage.

In addition to their coordinated destruction, the group has started to adopt other features that are indicative of collective groups, specifically an armed militia. For example, in 2013 some of the vigilante self-defense groups began paying their members (Heinle, Mozahn, Shirk 2015). Additionally, some of the groups have developed a hierarchy of armed leaders, some individuals equating to lieutenants in charge of 10 groups of armed individuals (Heinle, Mozahn, Shirk 2015). Overall, the group's

organization and advancements in leadership confirm the organizations actions as a collective group.

Lastly, Smelser argues that the success of the social movement is dependent on powerful leaders in the government, or groups with heavy political influence, recognizing and supporting the social change. This final political support from the elite demand a social change, and this elitist support allows for the success of the initial movement.

Smelser, Perry, Weeber and Rodeheavers arguments are presented with an interesting dynamic when the groups that are demanding a social change become increasingly violent, difficult to organize or sustain, and result in increased criminal actions similar, or identical to, the initial strain. In Michoacán, a second and third group was formed following the initial failed blowback from social strain. These second and third groups were both formed to combat the same initial challenge, resulting in continued strain and continued social backlash from Michoacán's citizens. In Michoacán, these original groups became increasingly violent and powerful, which later led to their own engagement in criminal activity and eventual transformation into a drug trafficking organization.

Drug trafficking organization like the Knights Templar and La Familia Michoacána (La Familia) are incarnations of this relatively new dynamic to Smelser's backlash theory. Initially the two groups began as vigilante self-defense groups and militias, formed out of social strain, but the groups later transitioned into a second and third strain on Michoacán. Additionally, these groups claim to have overcome certain aspects of the initial social strain and vow to continue their efforts in maintaining the achieved social change.

Michoacán's initial social change came after the formation of La Familia. La Familia began as a group committed to "doing the Lord's work" in their efforts to eliminate all crimes. La Familia monitored and reprimanded all types of crimes, from punishing young thieves to combatting some of the major drug trafficking organizations (Grayson 2010). Some of the groups more brutal tactics challenged the initial concept of a *generalized belief*, questioning whether or not the groups' actions would result in the desired social change. Grayson argues that the group's brutal tactics that included the capture, torture, dismembering, and decapitating of members in DTOs, are no longer aimed at social change but they are now aimed at eliminating drug trafficking competition. La Familia continues to claim they are combating crime in Michoacán; however, public displays of their brutal tactics wage war on the psyche of Michoacán's citizens.

As La Familia continued to grow in size, disagreements among its top members resulted in the formation of a second vigilante group- the Knights Templar. Both groups were formed under the same framework of collective behavior; however, both groups continue to plague Michoacán with the social strain of routine murder and public displays of their brutal tactics. Further, some of the groups' connections to public corruption with law enforcement and government officials attack any belief that any positive social change can be maintained in Michoacán.

The continued success of groups like La Familia and the Knights Templar is reliant on the successful recruitment of new members. In some instances of collective behavior, a positive relationship exists between backlash of a government's strategy towards collective action and the recruitment of members to the groups that represent

social change (Perry 2014). La Familia and the Knights Templar did not benefit from certain aspects of the government's reaction, such as government action causing sympathy for the group aiding new recruitment. However, the two groups strategically recruited new members, often preying upon young, unemployed, uneducated, and sometimes drug-addicted citizens (Grayson 2010). La Familia encouraged these citizens to enter rehabilitation center with the promise of meaningful opportunities upon their completion of the program (Grayson 2010). After the rehabilitation was completed, the members were entered into a 2-month program based on periods of silence, intensive Bible study, and exposure to Evangelical-style speakers emphasizing the group's role in doing the Lord's work in creating positive social change (Grayson 2010). In these instances, the young formerly drug addicted recruits were forced to join La Familia after their completion in the program.

Additionally, La Familia and the Knights Templar continue to get new recruits from issues of globalization and economic strife. La Familia reached their highest numbers of recruits after a combination of the 2008-2010 economic recession and the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (Grayson 2010). Throughout this two-year time period, thousands of young people in Michoacán, and throughout all of Mexico, were left unemployed and uneducated, which subsequently led to an increase in petty crimes and addiction to drugs and alcohol.^x La Familia seized this opportunity to recruit new members through desperation, brainwashing, and bribery.

La Familia and the Knights Templar may once again see an increase in high recruits if another recession should occur. This is at least part due to the mixed feelings behind NAFTA agreement between the United States and Mexico. These mixed feelings,

which indicate a low probability of change in Mexico's involvement in NAFTA, is illustrated by a 2006 opinion poll conducted by *Barometro Iberoamericano* which showed 43% of the citizens in Mexico agreed that globalization was having a positive impact on their country (Ferguson and Mansbach 2011). Overall, any change in economic policies affecting the globalization of Mexico's economy will continue to be dampened by the increased popularity of globalization in other major countries in Latin America such as Chile, Argentina, and Brazil (Ferguson and Mansbach 2011).

Law enforcement officials in Mexico are now attempting to maintain social order, combat major drug trafficking organizations, including drug trafficking organizations that once claimed to be champions for the people, and put an end to the vigilante self-defense groups that often operate under their own sense of justice. While the use of statistics in combatting crime only gives law enforcement partial insight into the true story of crime (Brunschof and Kennedy 2007), Mexican law enforcement officials in Michoacán face tremendous hurdles in using statistics and crime mapping to better combat issues of crime and security.

In 2013, the governor of Veracruz failed to report 299 killings that occurred as part of the violent clashes between the Los Zetas and Gulf cartels. Additionally, gun battles have killed dozens of Michoacán's citizens in recent months, while the government deleted almost 3,000 reported crimes after submitting its data to national reports, a sum that includes close to 400 killings.^{xi} The lack of proper reporting will lead to poorly allocated funding as well as creating a false sense of security by manipulating public perception and case management. Source of this information is a 2015 article by Business Insider.

Law Enforcement Response and Continued Backlash in Michoacán

When combating issues of risk and security, the public will often hold law enforcement to a high level, expecting them to prevent all occurrence of crime in the first place (Brunschot and Kennedy 2007). However, the expectations in Michoacán are continuing to decrease, as evident by the growing numbers of vigilante self-defense groups insistent on exerting their own forms of security and justice.

The public's expectations of law enforcement described by Kennedy and Brunschot are further complicated in Michoacán with citizens expecting some crimes to be prevented while allowing others to continue. Actions by the vigilante self-defense groups indicate the groups focus more on crimes of extortion and kidnapping and less on combating issues of drug distribution. Further, a spokesman for the vigilante groups was quoted saying, "We aren't going to go looking for laboratories because that's not our responsibility. We don't want there to be kidnappings, disappearances, and extortion. We aren't going to decide what each citizen does, everyone is free to do what they wish, what suits them." Another vigilante group member was quoted saying that's "the federal governments job" when asked about issues of drug distribution and trafficking. The expectations of crime prevention on some crimes and not other crimes complicate issues of law enforcement response and effectiveness. Source of this information was a 2014 article by InSight Crime.

Police are often held at high standards; however, they are not expected to lock up all potential criminals, nor are they expected to predict all potential crimes (Kennedy and Forde 1999). Kennedy and Forde illustrate this point in their example of regarding a husband fatally shooting his wife. In this instance, the family sued the police for

negligence when the police did not arrest the husband when the family believed indicators of potential crime did exist. Kennedy then advocates that police cannot be expected to stop or prevent all crimes, but some responsibility on police does exist regarding their ability to help people change the way people interact with other people. Further, police can and should be expected to understand some of the underlying factors in potential conflicts and equip people with the tools and information to stop or prevent the potential conflict (Kennedy and Forde 1999). In this example, Kennedy and Forde make clear points regarding expectations of police and the tools at their disposal.

In Michoacán, however, the police have failed to predict, prevent, or understand the crime-taking place in their state. Steps to understand the underlying causes of crime do not appear to have taken place either, but there may be reasons behind their perceived lack of understanding.

THE STATE OF MICHOACÁN

Violence, Public Corruption, & Law Enforcement in Michoacán

The increased number of violent protests, ineffectiveness of Mexico's law enforcement officers and public officials, combined with routine violent conflicts with drug trafficking organizations have helped to create a backlash which later resulted in the rise of vigilante self-defense groups. Law enforcement and Mexican government officials have routinely clashed with protestors, which helped propel a movement that resulted in an armed opposition of the self-defense groups. Social scientists refer to the act of an oppressed groups pooling of means and resource in order to bring about social change as backlash (Perry 2014).

Currently, the actions of local farmers and villagers that later transitioned into vigilante self-defense groups created a social movement for Michoacán's citizens. The growing numbers of successful recruitments by the vigilante self-defense groups help reflect the breadth and enormity of the social movement that is taking place among Michoacán's citizens.

The collective response by the vigilante self-defense groups in Michoacán has not come without an underlying reason. A combination of violent actions, such as kidnapping, armed robberies, and armed vehicle thefts, by DTOs and a lack of response or support by law enforcement. The general response to this inaction by police has been the rise of vigilante self-defense groups.

Perhaps one of the largest reasons behind the creation of the vigilante self-defense groups is the lack of trust in the judicial response. This lack of trust has come after continued failures by the government to punish the people responsible for violent crimes. According to Business Insider article entitled *Mexico's President Appears to Be*

Fudging Numbers about the Biggest Threat to the Country, since 2010 there has been a 4.64% increase in homicide rates from 2010 to 2014.^{xii} Despite this gradual increase in homicide rates, the number of people that are imprisoned due to homicide remains low. From 2000 to 2013 there were 215,000 people killed due to homicide, but there is only 20,800 people imprisoned for these crimes.

A failure to punish violent offenders is not a new issue in Michoacán. Homicide rates and lack of judicial response has been a problem in Michoacán since the early 2000's.^{xiii} Alejandro Hope, the current Director for the 'Less Crime, Less Punishment' project in Mexico, believes that the lack of punishment for perpetrators of homicide is due to the fact that crimes of homicide do not directly affect Mexico's elite in the same way that crimes of kidnapping and extortion do. Hope writes that while kidnapping has fallen by 38% and extortion has decreased by 19% from 2014 to 2015, this is in largely because extortion and kidnapping affects the middle and upper class while other violent and petty crimes often do not. Hope contends that there will be no legislative or law enforcement response if the middle or upper class is not affected by these incidents. Overall, Hope contends that the phrase "getting away with murder" is not just a phrase in Mexico; it is the current state of affairs. Hope writes from Mexico, "Most everyone that tries it literally gets away with murder."^{xiv}

While many states and local municipalities claim a slight decrease in the number of kidnappings and incidents of extortion that are reported in Mexico, there are concerns regarding the validity of those statistics. Inconsistencies in crime reporting occur throughout Mexico; however, local media reporting indicates that areas with a high concentration of DTOs members have the biggest problem with accurate statistics. In

Veracruz, the governor failed to report 299 killings at the hands of violent clashes between the Zetas and Gulf cartels in 2013. In Michoacán, the government deleted almost 3,000 reported crimes after submitting its data to national reports, including over 300 killings.^{xv} These inconsistencies in crime reporting will continue to complicate issues of law enforcement impacting the proper allocation of funding and the advantages this vital data gives to law enforcement.

Proper usage of crime statistics could greatly assist law enforcement officers, most notably in their continued violent confrontations with citizens and violent gang members. Over the last two years, gang violence has reached the state and federal level, killing citizens, police officers, and gang members. In May 2015, forty-two (42) people were killed during a confrontation with the federal police.^{xvi} According to the *New York Times*, federal authorities described those killed as members of a powerful gang who fired repeatedly on officers during a three-hour battle in Michoacán.^{xvii} The May 2015 confrontation also raised issues regarding the police's ability to end violent confrontations with minimal damage and minimal loss of life. The May 2015 run-in left one officer killed, no wounded survivors and only three arrests were made.^{xviii}

Federal law enforcement officers in Mexico also struggle with the protection of human rights during violent confrontations. In Michoacán, a 2014 violent confrontation occurred when twenty-two (22) people were killed in an encounter between citizens and the army. Following the 2014 skirmish, charges were brought against some soldiers when a commission determined "most of the victims had been summarily executed after an initial gun battle."^{xix} Failures in the protection of basic human rights will continue to

affect the perception of law enforcement in Michoacán and may also garnish public support for the vigilante self-defense groups.

Changes in the protection of human rights for Michoacán's citizens will likely have to come from its public officials; however, there are a number of reported instances of public corruption in Michoacán. For example, in August 2016 a Michoacán mayor and four local police officers were arrested as part of an ongoing investigation into the murder of 10 people.^{xx} The victims were killed and burned the weekend prior to the arrest. According to the *Washington Post*, the victims were “detained, on instructions from the mayor, the civilians were transported to a place in Alvaro Obregon where they were killed and then they took the bodies to a property in Cuitzeo where they set them on fire.”^{xxi} As the investigation continued Governor Aureoles told reporters that the motive appears to be related to a rivalry over street-level drug sales.^{xxii} These links of public corruption to law enforcement and public officials encourage the continued efforts of the vigilante self-defense groups.

Drug trafficking organization will murder and intimidate current public officials, but they have also influenced elections. According to a report by the Congressional Research Service, “Elections held in Michoacán state in late 2011, organized crime groups reportedly intimidates National Action Party (PAN) sympathizers (former Mexican president, President Calderon's party) and killed a PAN mayor in early November.” Incidents of intimidation on voters impact the democracy in Michoacán state, effecting its state and local government on multiple levels of its infrastructure.

Each episode of public corruption linked to law enforcement or public officials, helps legitimize the vigilante self-defense groups in Michoacán, but not all examples of

public corruption in Michoacán include links to law enforcement. Examples of public corruption between public officials and some Michoacán's most prominent DTOs include the 2009 CNN report on Mexican Congressman Julio Cesar Toscano. Julio Cesar Toscano, an elected member of the lower house of Congress in Mexico, was accused of being in charge of the protection for the La Familia Michoacána.^{xxiii} Additionally, Saul Solis, cousin to La Familia Michoacána's leader Enrique Solis, ran for a congressional seat in 2009.^{xxiv} In this instance, Saul Solis lost his congressional bid; however, his direct ties to La Familia Michoacána impact the public's perception of Mexico's federal government. Instances of public corruption in some of Mexico's highest levels of government hinder law enforcement efforts to build public trust and a positive relationship with Michoacán's citizens.

Reducing public corruption in Michoacán's political leaders may prove difficult as DTOs continue to have a heavy influence in elections. The *New York Times* has reported a number of these instances of public corruption and violent intimidation at election polls throughout Mexico, with some of the most recent violent incidents occurring as recently as January 2016. In Texmixco, a city south of Michoacán, DTO murdered Gisela Mota, the first female mayor of Temixco. Gisela Mota was pulled out of her bedroom and murdered in front of her family members at her residence.^{xxv} According to the *New York Times*, since 2000 mercenaries in Mexico have killed almost 100 mayors throughout Mexico.^{xxvi}

In many of these instances, DTO have claimed responsibility for the kidnapping and murder of Mexico's public officials while continuing to meet with other public officials. Drug trafficking organizations use assassins, sometimes referred to as sicarios,

to capture and kill Mexico's public officials as "a warning."^{xxvii} According to Governor Graco Ramirez, the DTO Los Rojos,^{xxviii} have threatened at least 13 Morelos mayors in the past several years.^{xxix} In Michoacán, the Knights Templar forced some political leaders to hand over percentages of their budgets.^{xxx} These meetings have become public knowledge multiple videos and photos have exposed sit down meetings with the leader of the Knights Templar and mayors in Michoacán.^{xxxi}

These incidents of public corruption connected to major DTO greatly impact the international community. In July 2011, The White House, under the Obama Administration, issued a report entitled "Strategy To Combat Transnational Organized Crime." The purpose of this document was to provide information on areas of concern, regarding transnational organized crime (TOC), both at home and abroad. According to the report, operations of today's criminal networks are "fluid, striking new alliances with other networks around the world and engaging in a wide range of illicit activity."^{xxxii} More specifically to public corruption the report said, "TOC threatens U.S. interests by taking advantage of failed states or contested spaces; forging alliances with corrupt foreign government officials and some foreign intelligence services; destabilizing political, financial, and security institutions in fragile states." Clearly then, the Obama Administration has taken steps to raise awareness of incidents of public corruption around the world because these incidents do not solely impact the single states; they impact the international community as a whole.

It is also important to note that this administration has recognized important links between DTO, TOC, public corruption, terrorism, and cyber crime. According to the May 2010 *National Security Strategy*, "This lethal threat of organized crime, narco-trafficking,

and terrorism is a threat that the United States, Russia and all of us share and should be working together to combat.”^{xxxiii} Further, the *National Security Strategy* and the Executive Office’s report *Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime* found that TOC and drug trafficking are “increasingly intertwined threats” and urged other nations to combine national and international intelligence to “maximize the impact” U.S. operations would have on dismantling transnational organized crime.

Overall, this administration recognized several key priorities that would be needed to greatly impact and lessen the threat of transnational criminal organizations. The Executive Office’s report emphasized its reliance on enhanced intelligence and information sharing, as well as building cooperation and partnerships worldwide. However, specifically to disrupting organizations reliant on narco-trafficking the report encouraged joint efforts to support drug crop reduction, promote the alternative livelihoods, and “partner nation capacity building.”^{xxxiv} In order for this administration’s efforts in combating transnational organized crime to be successful, the United States must rely on Mexican federal law enforcement partnerships, increased information sharing, and the building of communities, including the reconstruction of social benefits in Mexico’s more dangerous states.

Impact on Agriculture

Over the past several decades Michoacán has become a leader in agricultural production, most notably avocados and limes. The geography, climate and nutrient rich volcanic soil has helped Michoacán become a leader for these products. However, the features that have made Michoacán an excellent atmosphere for agricultural production have also made it an ideal environment for the production of opium and marijuana. Drug trafficking organizations have taken advantage of Michoacán's nutrient rich soil and the citizens of Michoacán have been greatly impacted by the by this invasion.

The agriculture industry in Mexico is a major source of income for the state and its people. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, Canada and Mexico remain the United States' largest suppliers of agricultural products (\$22.2 billion and \$19.3 billion in 2013-15 respectively), which include mostly consumer-oriented goods such as horticultural products, red meats, and snack foods.^{xxxv} Mexico's agriculture industry affects the entire world's import of citrus products and other goods. Mexico is the second-largest producer of lemons and limes in the world.^{xxxvi} The surge in exports to the US and Canada thanks to the NAFTA agreement, alongside a growing domestic market, have turned Mexico into one of the most important countries for citrus production.^{xxxvii}

NAFTA has played an enormous role in the globalization of Mexico's economy, most notably its globalization in its exporting of agriculture products like limes and avocados. According to *The Economist*, export earnings from horticulture in Mexico have tripled since 1994, to over \$3.5 billion; exports of fresh vegetables have risen by 80% and fresh fruit by 90%. Farmers have been able to use the local climate to their advantage by

investing in crops that can be exported during the American or European winters. The important export, historically, is the Hass avocado from the state of Michoacán, in the west of Mexico. These exports have increased from 6,000 tons to 30,000 tons a year since the NAFTA agreement.

The production of limes in Mexico has also benefitted from the NAFTA agreement, greatly impacting the U.S. agriculture imports. From 2013 to 2014, the cost of limes in the U.S. has quintupled, going from roughly \$20 for a 38-pound case to “over \$100 per case at present”.^{xxxviii} There are two main reasons for this steep increase. The first is heavy rainfall. In 2013, Mexico experienced abnormal amounts of rainfall for that area causing crops to die or wash away.^{xxxix} The second reason behind the step increase is the impact the Knights Templar has had on the production of limes in Michoacán. Since 2013, the Knights Templar infiltrated parts of Michoacán that depend on the production of limes. The Knights Templar have used a number of different types of crime to help their own production and exporting of limes, including the kidnapping and murder of other local farmers. However, vigilante self-defense groups have come to the farmer’s aid, resulting in violent battles between the vigilante groups and the Knights Templar. The violent “shoot outs” between the Knights Templar and the vigilante self-defense groups has resulted in the steep increase in lime prices making it nearly impossible for U.S. officials to guarantee how or where Mexican limes are grown.”^{xl}

Historically, there have been instances in Michoacán of local farmers transitioning from farmers to drug traffickers and the reformation of social contracts may help stop this transition. One example of a farmer converting into drug trafficker occurred when Jose Valencia, once the head of a producer of avocados in Michoacán, transitioned

into a producer of opium and marijuana (Heinle, Mozahn, Shirk 2015). Valenica's production of marijuana gained heavy popularity, famous for its leaf "Michoacán." This increase in popularity for "Michoacán" led to Valencia transitioning into the production of opium poppy (Heinle, Mozahn, Shirk 2015). In these types of instances where citizens transition from local farmer to heavy drug producer, it becomes dangerous for the future citizens to maintain their production of legal products without being impacted by the production of dangerous substances.

Turf Wars, Increased Violence & Predictions on Drug Trafficking Organizations

Since 2012, most areas in Mexico have seen a decrease in the number of homicides, kidnappings, and other forms of violent crime. According to Kimberly Heinle, Cory Molzahn, and David A. Shirk of the Wilson Center Mexico Institute, with evidence gathered from the National Public Security System in Mexico, most “organized-crime-style” homicides have decreased. However, Michoacán is one of that states that this statistic does not apply. During that same time span Michoacán experienced an increase in the number of homicides, in fact it experienced the largest increase in the number of homicides, more than any state in Mexico (Heinle, Mozahn, Shirk 2015).

The increased number of organized crime style homicides is starting to become a priority under Mexico’s current leader, President Enrique Peña Nieto; however, it is important to understand that increased number of gangs, and the corresponding homicides, is part of a failed strategy by the former Mexican president and the Mexican government. The previous Mexican administration made the dismantling of major drug trafficking organizations a major priority. This dismantling of major DTOs was meant to put Mexico’s law enforcement officers in a better position to stop organized crime, however it failed to make combatting of organized crime and gangs simpler and easier for state and local law enforcement agencies.

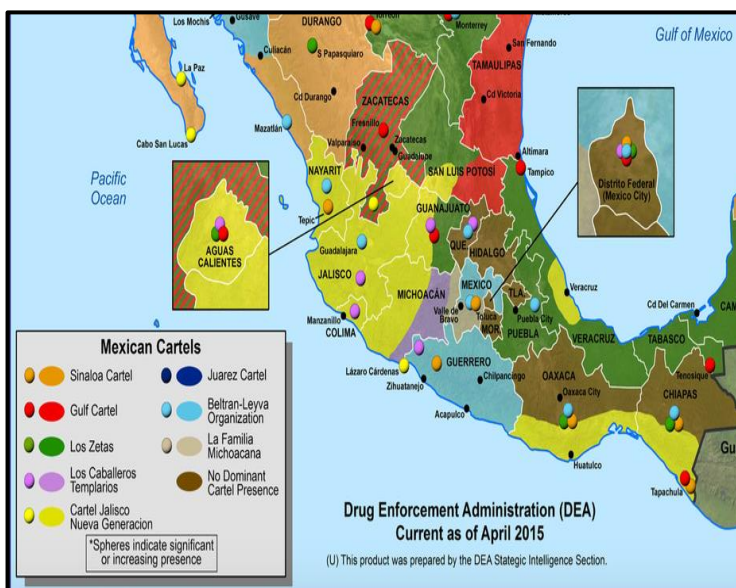
From 2006 to 2012, Felipe Calderón was president of Mexico. Throughout his administration, Mexican law enforcement agencies adopted a very particular strategy in combating major DTOs; which was to break the DTOs down into smaller pieces. According to David Shirk, director of the Trans-Border Institute at the University of San Diego, the Mexican government’s strategy was to “break the cartels into smaller, more manageable pieces.”^{xli} However, as Shirk points out, this strategy is better in theory than

in practice. Shirk says, “But smaller doesn't mean more manageable... It's begetting more violence... and more dangerous organizations”^{xlii} By targeting the heads of major DTOs, Mexico’s government paved the way for smaller organizations that would compete over neighborhoods, drugs, and clients, also referred to as “turf wars.” These turf wars are one of the reasons behind the increase in violence in Michoacán.

The turf wars in Michoacán are a result of the breaking down of major DTOs into a multitude of smaller organizations. According to the Drug Enforcement Agency’s 2015 National Drug Threat Assessment, there are at least three DTO organizations in Michoacán. The three largest organizations are La Familia Michoacána, the Knights Templar (referred to as Los Caballeros Templarios in the DEA study), and the Cartel Jalisco.

Further, Michoacán is directly bordered by states with major DTOs like Los Zetas, Beltran-Leyva Organization, the Gulf Cartel, and the Sinaloa Cartel.²

Some of the dominant DTOs in Michoacán are a direct result of President Calderón’s splintering strategy. The DEA assessment of smaller street



level gangs is that “street gangs are involved in a multitude of criminal activities, street-level drug trafficking and distribution continues to be their main source of revenue and they commit violent crimes such as robbery, assault, threats, and intimidation to those

² Image provided by the Drug Enforcement Administration, which depicts the number of Mexican Cartels, or drug trafficking organizations, in and surround the Michoacán state.

ends.” Further, the DEA assesses that street level gangs expanded into other forms of crime to generate profit engaging in “lower-risk crimes, such as prostitution, counterfeiting, extortion, and tax fraud to supplement their profits.” The assessment by the DEA illustrate an estimate increase in violence for the citizens of Michoacán, as their state is now filled with splintered DTO and bordered by other major DTO.

In its continued assessment on street level gangs and the drug distribution in which they engage in the DEA warns that there may be an increased in violence. According to the DEA, “Competition for territory has spurred incidents of violence and murder.” The increased incidents of violence in Michoacán appear to be a direct result of the splintering of major DTO; however, it is also important to study DTO with former connections as they may sometimes engage in drug distribution to increase their profits. The DEA assessed gangs are likely to participate in mutually beneficial relationships “in an effort to expand their criminal enterprises and increase profits.”

While the re-establishing of former relationships is important to monitor, DTO in Michoacán continue to venture into other means of expansion, including ones similar to the Knights Templar’s expansion into their own production and export of limes. These continued relationships illustrate the monopolistic drug trade environment, but they force the DTO to expand into other field, like the Knights Templar. As the street level organization continue to expand into other roles in order to increase and maximize their profits, it is important to monitor their involvement in other legitimate forms of business and production.

The error in strategy for combating violent crime by the Calderón Administration was furthered by responses by the U.S. government. In 2009, the Obama Administration

targeted three Mexican organizations as part of the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act. Since its creation in 1999, the act has help combat some international DTO, but has contributed to the creation of smaller, violent, splinter organizations, like the Knights Templar and La Familia. The Kingpin Act allows the President to take actions when he determines that a foreign person plays a significant role in international narcotics trafficking.^{xliii} In 2009, President Obama designated the Sinaloa Cartel, Los Zetas and La Familia Michoacána as foreign persons that are appropriate for sanctions pursuant to the Kingpin Act; however the Drug Enforcement Agency's 2015 National Drug Threat Assessment listed Mexican TCOs as the "greatest criminal drug threat to the United States."^{xliv} Additionally, in 2015 Mexico had the highest number of arrests for leaders of drug trafficking organizations, but the overall homicide rate in Mexico rose (Wood, Hope 2016). This assessment questions the overall effectiveness of the Kingpin Act.

The Kingpin Act is further impacted as Mexico continues to struggle with security and surveillance in Mexican prisons. In 2015, Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, the leader of the Sinaloa Cartel, escaped from a Mexican prison for a second time, and while Guzman was recaptured in 2016, his continued success in escaping Mexico's prisons affects Mexico and U.S. relations in arresting and imprisoning these DTOs leaders. Since Guzman's capture in 2016, Mexican authorities have agreed to extradite Guzman to the United States. The success of this extradition will impact U.S. and Mexican relations.

Also of concern for the United States is the increased number of relationships between both US nation-level gangs and street level gangs and major Mexican transnational criminal organizations. The DEA assesses "national-level gangs and

neighborhood gangs continue to form relationships with Mexican TCOs to increase profits for the gangs through drug distribution and transportation, for the enforcement of drug payments, and for protection of drug transportation corridors from use by rival gangs.” This assessment supports the argument that Mexican TOC rely on US gangs and vice versa. In total, the DEA assesses that at least 8 US based gangs are directly associated with La Familia Michoacána including MS-13, Tango Blast, Crips, Los Cholos, Murder Inc., Almighty Latin Kings, Eme, and Surenos. Michoacán DTO relationships with US based gangs will increase profits for Mexican DTOs, impacting citizens in Mexico and the United States.

Mexico has taken some steps towards a more effective police force. In 2014, a proposal to centralize Mexico’s law enforcement agencies, with the hope of creating more centralized intelligence and investigative means, was rejected by Mexico’s Congress. However, a federal mandate made federal funding for police agencies contingent upon centralizing the state and municipal police forces, resulting in the integration of several Mexican state and municipal police forces (Wood, Shirk 2016). As Mexican police forces start to centralize, Mexico’s law enforcement agencies may start to become more effective with better, more current intelligence; however, police effectiveness will continue to be contingent upon the relationships between Mexico’s citizens and law enforcement agencies.

The Calderón Administration was partly successful in its dismantlement of some DTOs; however, many of the major DTO still exist, while local law enforcement struggles with the organizations that were disrupted or dismantled. Parts of Mexico have seen a decrease in crime, homicide and other violent crimes; however, Michoacán is one

state that has not followed this trend, and this was in large part due to the splintering of drug trafficking organizations. Further, violent turf wars, increased relationships with US based gangs, and joint relationships with some of Michoacán's neighborhood based gangs indicate issues of violence and narcotics trafficking will continue to be a problem for the Michoacán state.

INVESTMENTS IN EDUCATION AS A RESPONSE

In 2013 and 2015 National Gang Reports released by the Federal Bureau of Investigation indicate that US and Mexican DTO relationships continue to grow and follow along similar trends. In total, the FBI assessed that there are more than 96 gangs involved in cross-border crimes between the US and Mexico. Further, recent intelligence by the US and Mexico has been unable to understand the nature of these relationships as they remain “unclear.” However, if Mexican street level gangs continue to follow along similar lines of US based gangs it is likely that recruitment in schools will increase in the Michoacán state.

Educational systems in the US continue to be plagued by an increased effort by gangs to recruit students from public and private schools. According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, “Forty five percent of high school students assert that gangs are present in their schools while 35 percent of middle-school students report gang presence in their schools.” While these assessments by the FBI and the National Gang Intelligence Center depict a fertile environment for US gang recruitment there are indicators that gang recruitment in the Michoacán state may prove even more successful.

In Mexico, high school and middle school students perform much lower on focus areas like math and science. According to PISA, a global education study, less than a fifth of Mexican students performed adequately in math in 2012, compared with more than three-quarters in South Korea.^{xlv} Private schools are little improvement on public ones; the poorest children in Canada do better than the richest in Mexico.^{xlvi} Further, as gangs

contain to increase their efforts in recruitment on social media platforms it is likely they will continue to reach high school students. For example, in 2015 MS-13 members recruited a middle school student over the social media platform KiK.^{xlvi} Further, the gang requested that the student provide names of other middle school students likely to join the gang.^{xlvi} Poor performance of students in Mexico's school combined with an increased presence on social media platforms may lead to an increase in gang participation by students, as there are indicators that education level is linked to participation in criminal activities.

Poor performance by the majority of Mexico's students may be largely due to the ongoing feud involving Mexico's teachers, the teacher's union, and the Mexican government. Only two Mexican cities have their teacher's unions controlled by the National Educational Workers Coordinator (CNTE), a group that has opposed teacher evaluations in general and is seen as more radical than all other teacher unions in Mexico.^{xlix} The two cities with the CNTE are Michoacán and Oaxaca. The CNTE directly impacts the students in Michoacán affecting the numbers of days in school and the quality of education while at school.

The ongoing feud between the CNTE and Mexico's government has affected Michoacán's students since 2013 and this impact may be felt years after the feud is resolved. The CNTE affects the quality and quantity of education that is being bestowed on the children of Michoacán. In August 2013, the teachers and participants in the CNTE blocked access to national highways and established huge tent cities in Mexico City to house protesters.¹ As one Wall Street Journal reporter recalls, "Union teachers have... clashed with police, burned cars and blocked the entrance to Congress—forcing

legislators to meet in a nearby racetrack. And during these protests, the CNTE's legendary strikes—held every year or so for three decades—lasted for months this fall, shutting down schools for millions of children.”^{li}

Also troubling for the students in schools associated to the CNTE is the CNTE's indications of public corruption and relationships with some criminal organizations. Much like parts of the Mexican government, some of the CNTE leaders have links to “shady guerilla groups.”^{lii} The Wall Street Journal was able to review Mexican intelligence documents and discovered these shady links, however the CNTE has denied all ties to the groups in question. These accusations and “shady links” further complicate the process of rebuilding the social benefits for Michoacán's students and young people population.

However, some of Mexico's citizens have seen the issues between the social benefit of education, public corruption associated to the CNTE, and the current atmosphere of Michoacán's educational system. According to 2013 speech by Claudio X. Gonzalez, president of Mexicanos Primero, an educational think tank, "Oaxaca and Michoacán [another southern state where the CNTE is strong] live in the Middle Ages of education.”^{liii} Recognition of problems associated to the CNTE by educational think tanks is the first sign of progress towards rebuilding the social benefit of education in Michoacán.

Contemporary theorists and recent publications by U.S. universities suggest a correlation between education and crime reduction, indicating that if Michoacán is able to rebuild the educational system in Michoacán they will be able to reduce the growing

crime epidemic. The correlation between education and crime reduction was recently reported by Lance Lochner and Enrico Moretti in their paper entitled *The Effect of Education on Crime: Evidence from Prison Inmates, Arrests, and Self-Reports*. Their research examined three different avenues of arrests and crime reports including the Uniform Crime reports, the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, and individual data from the Census on incarceration, and each level of reporting indicated a negative relationship between education and crime rates exist.^{liv} Their research indicated that when the youth population is given more education, the crime rates are reduced. Overall, Lochner and Moretti conclude that not all benefits from education can be seen or are measured; however, education does have a strong correlation to a decrease in crime rates (Lochner and Moretti 2004).

Relationships between the education and justice system in the U.S. and Mexico exist; however, the correlation does not always directly result in similar outcomes regarding education reform and reductions in crime rates. Developing nations and states and countries with discrepancies in crime reporting create obstacles for theorists attempting to study international educational systems and crime reduction. Many other nations reflect this correlation between education and crime rates, there is not extensive literature on crime rates across years and nations, including nations that are still developing. Alma Gonzalez, a 2015 NYU International Relations graduate student, concluded a college degree does reduce crime rates in nations across the world (Gonzalez 2015). She argued that the correlation between reductions in crime rates and education is the strongest when we examine the effects that higher education degrees have on crime rates opposed to the impact from high school and middle school education (Gonzalez

2015). Gonzalez writes, “A comparison of the effects of increased secondary graduation rates to that of college graduation rates shows that there is also a trend of significant, increased reductions in crime as higher levels of education are achieved.”^{lv}

Gonzalez’s study illustrated the impact government, economic climate, community, and geography have when examining other countries. However, not all educational impacts happen immediately, which Gonzalez attempted to account for. Gonzalez’s research included a time lag in its methodology that was intended to show the gradual impact that education has on crime rates over the course of time, which it often does. However, her research showed that higher youth unemployment correlates to a decrease in homicide rates, which may be contrary to suspected beliefs. Overall, Gonzalez concludes that education is shown to reduce crime rates in developing countries; however, these results are dependent on the economic environment in which it functions (Gonzalez 2015).^{lvi}

There is good news for the citizens of Michoacán. In 2014, President Pena Nieto dedicated \$3.4 billion towards rebuilding social programs in Michoacán, including investments in its educational system (Heinle, Molzahn, Shirk 2015). Other programs affected by this investment are economic development for small business and farmers, public health, including improvements to local Michoacán hospitals, and investments in food banks, parks, and women’s center. It is through these programs that President Pena Nieto can help rebuild the relationship between the citizens of Michoacán and its government and have the greatest impact on crime reduction.

The Michoacán state is in need of this educational reform proposed by President Pena Nieto. As gangs continue to increase their presence in school and on social media

platforms the likelihood of recruits from high school and middle school will continue to grow. Reform on education, helping to rebuild the social benefits between citizens and the state, may correlate with a decrease in homicide rates, violence, and gang activity. Michoacán's investment in education, and other social programs, should assist in the reduction of crime.

REFORMATTING THE STRATEGY ON DRUG TRAFFICKING

ORGANIZATIONS

The White House, DEA, and FBI have developed national and transnational strategies in combatting drug trafficking organizations. These strategies include investments in intelligence sharing and increase funding on tools for law enforcement. Congressional research and comments by the White House indicate a connection between TOC and terrorism. Further, the *National Security Strategy* assessed that “combatting transnational criminal and trafficking networks” should be part of a collective strategy as there is a “lethal nexus of organized crime, narco-trafficking, and terrorism.” Should the funding for terrorism intervention and drug trafficking intervention be combined or shared, improvements to reduce and combat both sectors may have lasting result.

According to a 2013 PEW research report, the U.S. government dedicated an estimated \$16.6 billion to combating terrorism for the fiscal year 2013.^{lvii} This funding, if divided up properly, could have a substantial impact on the fight against drug influenced terrorist organizations. This quantitative measurement for resources allocated to counter-terrorism illustrates the level of concern the government has in terrorist groups. However, should the administration recognize some links between drug financed terrorist organizations, this funding could impact both terrorists groups and drug trafficking organizations.

As Perry and a multitude of other contemporary theorists have pointed out, the definition of terrorism is debated in a number of different political and law enforcement circles; however, it should be assessed that a link between terrorism and DTO exists no matter the definition. Contemporary theorists have previously argued that DTO are

associated to terrorism, which should result in shared or increased funding; however, this impact has not yet been felt.

A large part of the shared or increased funding argument relies on the motivations behind terrorism as opposed to drug trafficking. While it has been historically established that DTOs are focused on profits, while terrorism is idealistic in nature, the two enterprises are linked in the current borderless and global world (Peele 2012). Evidence of this link was provided in a 2003 FBI testimonial that reported, “Terrorism and crime are inextricably linked. International and Domestic Terrorism Organizations and their supporters engage in a myriad of crimes to fund and facilitate terrorist activities. These crimes include extortion, kidnaping, robbery, corruption, alien smuggling, document fraud, arms trafficking, cyber crime, white collar crime, smuggling of contraband, money laundering and certainly drug trafficking.”^{lviii} This statement by the FBI illustrates Peele’s 2012 argument that the methods and motivations of terrorists and drug cartels are associated and contingent on each other.

Additionally, the argument of motivation for profit or ideological reform is dependent on each other when examining DTOs in Mexico is of political motivation of drug trafficking organizations. Peele argued, “On top of efforts to influence state elections, the organizations have established a strong presence at the municipal level.”^{lix} The links between public corruption, including the direct relationship between organizations like the Knights Templar and public officials in Michoacán illustrate the recognition by DTOs that politics and government directly impact drug traffickers.

Actions by vigilante self defense groups and the splintering of gangs further complicate issues of funding and crime reduction in Mexico as current strategies, like the

Kingpin Act, have not resulted in crime reduction. Congressional Research Service concluded, “the so-called kingpin strategy, of taking down top DTO leaders, which worked to fragment and help destroy the Cali and Medellin organizations in Columbia in the 1990s, has not been replicated as successfully in Mexico to date.” Further, the report stated the kingpin strategy, “has created more instability and, at least in the near term, more violence.” Overall, current strategies and funding have not combatted violence in Mexico, they have increased it. If the U.S. should want to help strengthen the stability of the Mexican government by eliminating the vigilante self-defense groups, and help stop the nearly 20 organizations that have fragmented from the major DTO it needs to recognize DTO links to government and terrorist organizations.

While the splintering of DTOs continues to be a problem for law enforcement agencies, new analytical strategies, like risk terrain models, can assist law enforcement officers in stopping street level drug trafficking. Risk terrain models may further assist law enforcement in combating these issues of smaller DTOs by impacting the increased threat of gang violence. In most cases, areas of street level drug dealing by gang members optimizes their potential for drug distribution as well as maximizing their security from police and rival gangs (Barnum, Campbell, Troccio, Caplan, and Kennedy 2016). Analysis of concentrated drug distribution regions across the state of Michoacán will assist law enforcement officers in their allocation of resources. Further, increased police presence in these areas may help repair the breakdown of social contracts involving citizens and feelings of public safety.

As violence increases and Mexico continues to see a raise in vigilante justice, Mexico is at an increased likelihood of becoming a failed state. Some U.S. officials have

recognized the link between terrorism and a potential failed state in Mexico. A 2011 joint letter by Representative Peter King and Representative Michael McCaul to then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton urged Clinton to “use every capability of the U.S. Government to counter this growing threat to our economy, our security and well being of our citizens. Equally as important, we must make sure Mexico does not become a failed state and yet another haven for terrorists.”^{1x} As the U.S. shares funding between combatting terrorism and combatting Mexican DTO, Mexico may have hope of their investments in social benefits like education having a lasting impact.

CONCLUSION

According to a 2015 Congressional Research Service report at least 80,000 people have died due to organized crime related incidents since 2006.^{lxi} While the Mexico government continues its “war on drugs” the Mexican cartel drug industry remains a \$29 billion industry from sales in the U.S. alone.^{lxii} Investments in Mexico’s infrastructure may prove to be the only way to combat another potential DTO forming out of the vigilante self-defense groups. The Strategic Studies Institute concluded that, “As long as poverty, poor health care, and unemployment hang like a Sword of Damocles over the 113 municipalities of this area, many of which are isolated, men, women, and children will respond to religious appeals of a better life on earth; some will link arms with a strong advocate of “divine justice” such as La Familia.” Increased violence between the vigilante self-defense groups and the DTO will continue to the Michoacán state until they are better able to strengthen their infrastructure.

Further, while the vigilante self-defense groups act as a collective group, organized similarly to a militia, it is unlikely they will combat issues of crime as “that is the job of the federal government.” Failure to recognize drug trafficking and increased gang violence questions any impact the vigilante groups may have in the Michoacán state. In 2015, U.S. Department of State argued that, “The flow of illicit narcotics across our shared borders fuels violence, instability, and threatens the security of both our countries, and we have a shared responsibility to address these common challenges.” The vigilante self-defense groups may further threaten Michoacán’s security and may result in more challenges for the U.S. government.

Applied theories on collective behavior and backlash may better assist Mexico's policy makers and law enforcement officials in their understanding and handling of vigilante self-defense groups. Analysis of theories on collective behavior shows researchers that reformist policies that target a specific group have little or no impact on stopping the backlash response. Better understanding of the steps taken by a collective group when combating social strain will better equip law enforcement officers in instances of violent protests and will help policy makers understand the potential implications of policies.

Alternatively to reformist policies, restorative justice may help decrease the overall likelihood on continued backlash from Michoacán's citizens. Restorative justice helps rebuild the relationship between the perpetrator and the community. The relationship between the community and the violent offenders remains an important part of the social contract, as it helps build faith in the actions of the government. In addition to restorative justice, the implementation of risk terrain models can better assist law enforcement officers in combating the number of incidents of violent protests as well as addressing other types of crime sometimes associated to political violence. Investments in the infrastructure, the implementation of restorative justice, and the use of risk terrain models may serve as the best means of combating crime in Michoacán.

Overall, the backlash from vigilante groups in Michoacán is a result of failures to protect its citizens, creating social change and social disorder. The current backlash has complicated issues of safety and security for Mexican law enforcement officials; however, until they are able to rebuild their infrastructure and eliminate issues of public corruption, gang violence and drug trafficking will continue to be an epidemic in Mexico.

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