MEXICAN DRUG CARTELS AND INTERNATIONAL THEORY:
HISTORY WITH SOLUTIONS

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James Page
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ABSTRACT

MEXICAN DRUG CARTELS AND INTERNATIONAL THEORY:
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by

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The struggle between the Mexican government and Mexican drug cartels has reached a critical point with the death toll in several areas reaching levels comparable to the failed-state of Afghanistan and war-torn Iraq. While the death toll itself is significant, the manner in which violent attacks are carried out has been particularly gruesome. Politicians, police, journalists, and the average citizen do not seem to be safe from the ever-growing grasp of the drug cartels. There have been several attempts by the Mexican government to put a stop to the drug cartels, and among the most explored approaches has been the increasing level of military intervention of the last twelve years. From the perspective of many Mexican citizens and government officials, the involvement of the military has only made the problem worse: the rising death count resulting from cartel violence is indicative that increased military actions may have led to greater
instability and violence within Mexico. In this regard, the problem that both the United States and Mexico must confront is how to quell the influence and destructive power of Mexican drug cartels.

This paper will present a number of options for dampening the power and destructive behavior of drug cartels in Mexico. The primary argument presented is that primary actors in the conflict including the Mexican and U.S. governments and the cartels themselves are all rational agents. It will be argued that if poor economic growth, increasing violence and a continued policy of inefficient action by both U.S. and Mexican authorities, then Mexico will fall into a weak state status. As a weak state Mexico will be subject to influence by the ruling cartels, and legitimate democracy will be put in danger as cartels seek to expand their own enterprises.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On September 15, 2011, the *New York Times* reported that two people were murdered and then hung from a bridge for allegedly speaking out over Twitter and Facebook against different cartels operating in the areas in which they live.¹ On their bodies was a sign that said, “This will happen to all internet snitches...be warned we’ve got our eyes on you.”² On May 14, 2012, the Christian Post reported that 49 bodies were found on the side of a road leading to the Texas border; their heads, hands and feet cut off as a message to any person that would dare try to disrupt the business flow of drug trafficking.³ There was another message painted on a stone arch that said “100% Zeta,” which refers to one of the most brutal cartel enforcer groups in Mexico.⁴ Since 2006, over 47,000 people (civilians, cartel members, police, and soldiers) have been killed in the war for control over Mexico’s drug trade.⁵ These are just two examples of the brutality occurring almost daily in Mexico.

² Ibid.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid.
The violence is growing exponentially and there does not seem to be an end in sight. Law enforcement is ill equipped and ill trained to deal with the death-squad mentality of the cartels, and the military is ill equipped to deal with the legality and human rights aspects of the problem. Politicians are unable to deliver on their promises to lower the rates of violence because they lack the funding and necessary resources needed to stop it. Profit from black-market activities outweighs any budget that the legislative or executive branch could appropriate to the police and military in Mexico. The United States government recognizes the problem but is primarily working on preventative strategies as a way to halt the cartels at the border; however, amid wars being waged overseas and a stagnant domestic economy, the United States is unlikely to increase its contributions to fighting the cartels within Mexico even if the political will within Mexico for U.S. intervention were stronger.

When politicians cannot promise security to the Mexican people, democracy and democratic elections become endangered. Citizens become disillusioned and distrustful of their government: how long can a democratic government endure if it is not able to protect and provide for the people it governs? The problems the cartels cause are costly and destabilizing to both countries. Mexican drug cartels must be studied and understood so they can be dealt with quickly and efficiently.

Research Question

The primary question driving this investigation is, What should Mexico be doing to stem the violence of the drug cartels, and since the violence is on the border, what role should the United States play? To understand a problem, one must examine the
consequences that will occur if the problem is not resolved. To better understand the power struggle within Mexico, the following questions must be asked:

- Is Mexico falling into a failed state status due to a loss of control over cartels in certain areas of the country, or is it simply being maneuvered into a weak-state status?
- How can this failed or weak-state status be measured?
- What are the implications for the Mexican people and the United States if this were to occur?

Current President Felipe Calderón scoffs at the ideal of Mexico being a failed state or becoming one. However, the Fund For Peace views the situation in Mexico as “grave” and “worsening” with human rights abuses, economic insecurity and political corruption all stemming from or being exacerbated by cartels, thus destabilizing the country. When one studies the issue of Mexican drug cartels, one will learn that there are several parts to this issue, but these questions provide a solid groundwork for research in order to understand the problem and determine what needs to be done to solve the problem.

Hypotheses

This thesis will argue that if the current situation of increasing violence, poor economic conditions, and the decreased legitimacy of the government continues without U.S. intervention, Mexico will likely fall into a weakened-state status subject to the


influence by the ruling cartels. In such a state, the government may no longer maintain control of day-to-day operations in many areas as those will be taken up and run by the cartels; cartels will likely have a hand in many operations traditionally carried out by the “government.” Average Mexican citizens will no longer be able to rely on the government for security but instead will have no choice but to turn to their local cartel for all the basic security services that a government usually provides. Cartel power will expand across Mexico and with it, increased violence due to power struggles that will occur. The United States will also suffer since the economic and physical security of its citizens in states bordering Mexico will be at risk; the possibility of overt expansion and influence of the cartels in the United States will be eminent as well. This thesis will focus on what actions need to be taken by both countries in order to control the cartels effectively.

Some research has focused on the supply and demand of drugs or the economic aspects of the issue, while other research has focused on the escalation and militarization of the drug cartel situation. This thesis will argue, however, that these are only part of Mexico’s cartel problems. The cartel problem is a complex topic that must be addressed from various angles including Mexico’s current economic situation, the “live and let live” agenda of a prominent Mexican political party, and corruption of the police within Mexico.

These angles will become important when one considers salient concepts from international relations theories that have the potential to shape the decision-making of the principal actors involved in managing the conflict. It will be demonstrated throughout this thesis that all actors within this conflict are inherently rational in their thinking and
that they are acting according to the tenets of realism in that actors pursue self-interest, ultimately aiming to increase their chance of survival in an anarchic system.

It is critical to note that while realist theorists typically focus on state-level actors and ignore domestic or sub-state actors, this paper treats Mexican cartels as though they are agents behaving as realists in their own right. Realists also assume that the international system is anarchic as it lacks a central authority. By contrast, sovereignty is defined by a state’s capacity to control what happens within its own territory. While the United States and Mexico inhabit an anarchic system of states, the case of cartels in Mexico is not so clear to the extent that the Mexican government maintains significant but eroding control over what occurs in several regions in the state. For example, it may be that the central authority in Mexico, the recognized government, fails to maintain control and provide security in large areas of the state. In this regard, the paper proceeds in treating state actors (the U.S. and Mexico) as well as sub-state actors (cartels) as rational, power-seeking agents that behave in a manner consistent with the theoretical assumptions of realism, that of advancing their material interests.

From the realist view, the world operates in terms of power, and power is simply the ability to coerce other people or states to do what one wants them to do.\(^8\) Whereas realists discount the relevance of non-state actors, idealist or liberal theorists view such actors as intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, political parties, multinational corporations, and even individual agents as relevant actors that determine outcomes in international relations. Liberalism generally points towards

greater cooperation in the long run among actors who have routine interactions because such actors ultimately realize that conflict is costly and cooperation more fruitful in the long run. The realist, by contrast, sees the world in the opposite fashion: those that have power will use it to gain a competitive edge, and war is an inevitable part of human nature to gain that edge.

Rationality, a key assumption for realists, underpins the behavior of key actors in the conflict including the United States, Mexico, and the cartels themselves. This paper argues that the interactions between three rational actors generate complex, often counterintuitive outcomes. This paper builds a rational-choice explanation of the evolution of the conflict.

Chapter II, the literature review, details the different academic perspectives on the issue by breaking down works into various categories based on the role Mexico and the U.S. should play in managing the conflict. From there, the following chapters will bring together these works and apply the various thoughts in a manner that will most efficiently reduce the violence and allow the Mexican government to regain control over the regions with the largest cartel influence. During this process, the paper highlights relevant conceptual understandings from international relations theory that likely underlie the decisions being made by key actors in the conflict.

Before this conceptual discussion ensues, however, the question of whether or not this issue is significant for academic discussion must be addressed. There are several readers who may look at this issue and question the validity or the significance of it when

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9 Goldstein, *International Relations*.

compared to other situations that are occurring around the world, or even more specifically within the United States. To understand exactly how close this situation is to home (from a U.S. standpoint) would be to understand the gravity of the topic at hand. Drug cartels are not far away—they are right across the border.

Significance

On a superficial level, many Americans may see the problem of drug cartels as something distant and inconvenient. The amount of American tourism has been reduced quite a bit as tourists are being kidnapped and dispatched by cartels for means of ransom or intimidation.\(^1\)\(^1\) Also, as far as the media goes, the usage of the new term “spillover,” or Mexican cartels gaining influence and committing acts of violence in the U.S., is being hyped without understanding the real consequences this means for towns bordering Mexico or acknowledging the level of violence combined with action by the United States Government.\(^1\)\(^2\) An incident in the border town named Redford in 1997 led to 18-year-old U.S. citizen Esquiel Hernandez being shot and killed by a U.S. Marine while he was tending his goats on his family’s property.\(^1\)\(^3\) The Marine thought he was a drug trafficker who was interfering with their operation. At the time of this incident, it was all over the media. However, media attention to the story has since died down as the


\(^{3}\) Ibid.
media focuses on the possibility of violent spill over without realizing the violence carried out by U.S. soldiers and officers.

The *New York Times* recently published an article that discusses the Zeta Cartel and their use of horse racing within the United States to launder money as a front for their trafficking. The Treveño brothers, Miguel and José, used both their residency and drug money to purchase a ranch in Oklahoma and raise over 300 horses and mares for racing. These two brothers had invested in horses of the highest quality and then established a breeding operation that allowed them to launder millions of dollars into a legitimate business for years while being able to run the Zeta Cartel in Mexico. Miguel would handle the enforcement side of Cartel (he is currently suspected of leaving the 49 decapitated bodies in garbage bags along a busy Mexican highway leading to the Texas border) and José would handle the horseracing and money laundering by investing the drug money received from his brother. Their operation has been in operation since 2006, and since its inception, they have won over $2.5 million in legitimate earnings, including money at the All American Futurity which is considered to be the Kentucky Derby of quarter horse racing. The brothers are an example of cartels already using the United States as a means to prosperously mix business with drug trafficking while at the same time protecting their own families, but there are other examples of more destructive ways the cartels are already using their influence in the United States.

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15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.
One example of this is the induction of a variety of gangs into the drug cartels for reasons that range from a profit motive to carrying out hits to simply providing a safe haven for drug cartel members. A *Global Post* article by Ioan Grillo reported that Mexican cartels have made contact and even made profitable deals with gangs in 52 different cities throughout the United States.\(^\text{17}\) This adds up to every urban area in the United States and it includes gangs that would normally be rivals; white supremacist groups like the Aryan Brotherhood are working with gangs like the Mexican Mafia and African-American gangs to dispense illegal narcotics to their respective “customers” in order to make huge profits while extending their own reach and control across the United States.\(^\text{18}\) Cartels are in the United States recruiting people who are willing to make a profit off illegal narcotics. Cartel soldiers are upping their numbers as the “war on drugs” starts to heat up.

The “war on drugs” has literally turned into a war. As will be demonstrated and discussed later, this war is gaining momentum as the cartels grow in sophistication, military prowess, firepower, economics, and numbers. The question that must be asked then is: As a rational actor, does America want to fight this open war in the United States or in Mexico? As the cartels grow in power and alliances between them and U.S. gangs get stronger, spillover will occur and blood will be spilled in a more open manner in the United States as it currently is in Mexico. This spillover will impact the entire country dramatically and cause a level of destabilization in those areas bordering Mexico and


\(^\text{18}\) Ibid.
beyond. The next questions that must be asked are, what about the “war on drugs” itself? Should this war continue, or should it evolve into something that is more focused on the cartels themselves? These are significant questions that always need to be asked when looking at the effects of prohibition. The current problem in Mexico is occurring due in part to prohibition. Reducing the supply of narcotics drives up the market value. Given that demand for drugs is inelastic (i.e., that demand does not fall in proportion to price increases), higher market prices provide compelling profit motives to cartels. Prohibition, which may appear to be rational from a policy standpoint, may actually be enriching and strengthening cartels.

Many would argue that if there was no narcotics trafficking, the black market would find something else of value to illegally profit from, thus the need to maintain the drug prohibition. The other side would say that narcotics are so mainstream that the profit is quite large when compared to other illegal markets, thus the rise of such powerful and dangerous groups like the drug cartels in Mexico. The future of the drug war is at stake, and the cartels have raised the question as to whether it is still worth the fight.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The recent discussion of Mexico’s Drug Cartel problem has been intensely debated among various scholars, politicians, and criminal justice agencies. While the debate continues about what should be done in regards to these cartels, an exact solution for a viable long-lasting solution has been stalled in favor of the brief reprieve that military action provides. As will be discussed, this military quick fix has failed in its goals and this leaves a researcher with a single main question: How can the violence that is being caused by drug cartels in Mexico be stemmed?

After substantial research, the following articles discuss the same themes. The authors often break down their research into three main areas, which will be the focus of this literature review: the United States and Mexico both have their own internal problems and policies that they must deal with in order to halt cartel violence, and in order to completely end drug related cartel violence, they must address these problems, and address other issues that they can only overcome together. Within each of these areas is a break down of different arguments, which leads to a possible solution, or set of solutions that need to be addressed to rid Mexico of its cartel violence problem. The conclusions that will be drawn from this literature review are that in order to stem the violence in Mexico that is being caused by drug cartels, the United States and Mexico must address the following: gun trafficking, increasing demand for illegal narcotics,
government stagnation and corruption, police and military corruption, the lack of funding for operations against cartels and the increased amount of funding for cartels. The authors state that only when these issues are dealt with by their respective countries will the violence in Mexico caused by cartels really begin to subside in a significant manner. If the task is not met, then the status of the Mexican state in many areas will be brought into question as legitimate government control slowly slips away in areas dominated by cartels.

United States Only

Beginning with what the U.S. needs to do for its part in stopping Mexican cartel violence, many articles focus primarily on the stemming of weapons into Mexico from the United States and increased border security from the U.S. into Mexico. Bill Weinberg discusses the U.S. contribution to the violence that is occurring in Mexico and how United States intervention could possibly ratchet-up the violence in Mexico if other aspects contributing to the cartel problem are not addressed first. Weinberg states that in the year 2005 10,579 guns were smuggled into Mexico, with 90% of those weapons coming from the United States.¹ The constant flow of guns (the iron river as some call it) comes from a variety of sources on the border between the United States and Mexico. Most of the guns come from loopholes allowed in gun shows in states like Texas and Arizona where people can buy multiple automatic weapons at once. However, they are also being brought over by citizens of both countries in exchange for payment by the

cartels to the purchasers. These weapons are not low-grade weapons but are often military-standard, high quality weapons with equal ammunition. While AK-47s are primarily purchased in the United States and then used by cartels, other weapons such as AR-15s, rocket launchers, grenades, and grenade launchers are also being purchased, brought over, and used by the cartels as well.

A follow-up article published by the journal *Trends In Organized Crime* supports Weinberg’s theory of the United States contributing to Mexico’s gun violence. According to this article, from 2004 to 2008, 87% or 20,000 firearms seized originated in the United States. The last 13% of these firearms were unidentifiable due to them not having the correct distinguishing marks and having incorrect and incomplete information. This leaves the possibility that even more firearms seized in Mexico could have originated in the United States. The *Trends In Organized Crime* article also comments on the power of the weapons that are being confiscated, which is along the same lines as Weinberg’s article. The weapons that are being confiscated are getting higher in terms of power, going from .22 pistols and rifles to military rifles such as AR-15s and AK-47s with scopes and grenade launcher attachments. According to *Trends In Organized Crime*, these weapons come mostly from gun shops/pawn shops and FFLs dealing at gun shows, reaching up to 95% of weapons

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3 Ibid.


5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.
traceable by the ATF.\textsuperscript{7} These numbers are actually incomplete as well, according to this article, as there are several factors hindering the United States and Mexican operations trying to slow the trafficking of arms into Mexico. In order to put a stop to the arms trafficking, the article states that four things must change:

1. Firearms laws in the United States must be changed to make it easier to track firearms in different states.
2. Coordination between ATF and Mexico’s authorities needs to be better.
3. Infrastructure limitations must be removed in regards to tracking weapons going south and aid made must be given.
4. A systematic process for logging seized weapons that could display patterns that are occurring must be implemented.\textsuperscript{8}

The article states that when these issues are addressed there will be more success in reducing the amount of arms flowing into Mexico.

Shannon O’Neil provides a third and briefer piece of research in this area of weapons trafficking in her article \textit{The Real War in Mexico: How Democracy Can Defeat the Drug Cartels}. O’Neil’s call for a reduction of firearms trafficking is the first item she addresses. Over 90\% of guns that are traceable lead back to the United States; these weapons range from pistols to semi-automatic weapons like AK-47 and AR-15 assault rifles.\textsuperscript{9} An increased budget for ATF, DEA, and Border Patrol are all necessary in order to combat the weapons trafficking that is occurring, and these agencies must check people both coming and going to Mexico in order to deal with trafficking.\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{7} “Firearms Trafficking,” 175-178
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{10} O’Neil, “Real War in Mexico.”
weapons are key factors in the murders that are occurring; the trafficking of them is just
as important as anything Mexico can do to reduce violence. Several other authors
discussed this issue as well, making it a key factor on the United States’ side of stopping
the drug cartels. Shifting gears, O’Neil also has an opinion that is not expressed often by
other authors, but is significant enough to mention.

O’Neil departs from other authors by suggesting a treatment approach instead
of the analogous imprisonment approach of drug offenders in the United States. O’Neil
states that treatment for addicts and intervention for those not yet addicted is up to five
times as effective as money spent on traditional law enforcement operations on the
border.\footnote{O’Neil, “Real War in Mexico.”} While the stemming the flow of guns into Mexico is important to reduce
murders directly, the treatment of addicts to help reduce the demand is an indirect method
that others do not acknowledge. The multi-billion dollar industry of illegal narcotics has
created drug cartels, but a dent in this industry can be obtained by providing services and
education to consumers and potential consumers and this hopefully can reduce cartel
recruitment while stemming the violence. Some support for O’Neil’s theory does come in
the form of Tomas Kellner and Francesco Pipitone’s article \textit{Inside Mexico’s Drug War}.

Tomas Kellner and Francesco Pipitone begin their research with the death of
the Medellin Cartel’s Leader Pablo Escobar in 1993 by Colombian Police Commandos
and the capture and extradition of Gilberto and Miguel Rodriguez of the Cali Cartel in
1995.\footnote{Tomas Kellner and Francesco Pipitone, “Inside Mexico’s Drug War,” \textit{World Policy Institute} 27, no. 1 (2010): 29-37.} This eventually led to Mexican organized crime growing and overtaking the trade
that was once run by the Colombians. According to Kellner and Pipitone, U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft reported that in the year 2000, Americans spent $62.9 billion on drugs; $36.1 billion of that was spent on cocaine and 90% of all cocaine was trafficked through Mexico.\textsuperscript{13} As these profits went up, so did violence with Kellner and Pipitone estimating that in the city of Juarez alone the death rate has risen to 165 deaths per 100,000 people, which is four times higher than Baghdad.\textsuperscript{14} Taking over the Colombian cartel routes raised the stakes for the Mexican cartels, thus raising the violence against each other, government officials, and civilians alike. Kellner and Pipitone also give a brief history of the people that the cartels are using to carry out these acts of violence and kidnapping, specifically the Zetas. According to Kellner and Pipitone, the Zetas are a part of the Gulf Cartel and were originally a group of deserters from the Mexican Special Forces that this cartel had hired.\textsuperscript{15} Almost single handedly, the Zetas have stepped up the level of violence in Mexico by using high tech and high-powered weaponry to carry out different kidnappings and murders. In summary, according to authors Kellner and Pipitone, the rising body count is due to rising amounts of profits being taken over by the Mexican Cartels.

The more money involved in drug trafficking increases, the level of violence increases in graphic and dramatic ways. Kellner and Pipitone do not state outright that they are advocates for O’Neil’s theory of treatment and education, but they provide statistics and information that deals directly with demand. The volume of demand creates

\textsuperscript{13} Tomas and Pipitone, “Inside Mexico’s Drug War.”

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
profits so astounding that cartels use violence and high body counts to capitalize upon these profits. If the U.S. were to reduce demand, the need for extreme violence would possibly be reduced. According to authors in this field of research, the United States needs to reduce the billion-dollar demand for narcotics, reduce the weapons flow into Mexico, and change drug policy from one of imprisonment to one of education and treatment if the violence in Mexico is to be slowed at all.

Mexico Only

The next subject discussed by authors is Mexico’s part in dealing with the drug cartels. The first topic of this area that many authors discussed is the removal of the partisanship and stagnation of the government that has reigned throughout recent Mexican political history. M. Delal Baer chooses to focus on Mexico’s political history and areas of corrupt politics in his article, *Mexico At An Impasse*, specifically three years into the term of the newly elected Vincente Fox when gridlocked executive and legislative branches were battling for power over the government. Baer focuses on this time period because with the election of Fox, there was hope of economic prosperity, stronger relations between Mexico and the United States, and a reduction of drug trafficking coming through and from Mexico by means of internal investment.16 This of course did not happen, and the main point of Baer’s research outlines the reason why this did not happen. With the election of Fox, the PRI remained a strong party of opposition to Fox and caused constant gridlock within Congress.17 While the election of Fox was a

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17 Ibid.
change in regime that had reigned in the executive branch for over 70 years, there was no complete overhaul of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), and it, in turn, cemented itself and its power as Fox’s opponent in Congress. Since the Mexican government needs majorities to pass bills through their houses of Congress, the PRI was able to stop every piece of legislation that Fox that to pass. This is a structural problem that could not be fixed with the divided government that ruled at the time. The only course of action that was left to Vincente Fox during his presidency was minor uses of military in highly dangerous areas that were overrun with cartel operatives. No types of legislation could be used to deal with the cartels thus leaving the government useless to its people and their security. Other authors in their pieces on Mexican political history support this topic.

Andrew Selee in his article *Back from the Brink in Mexico* discusses the political gridlock that Mexico had endured and since recovered from after the election of President Felipe Calderón in 2006. For the purposes of this discussion, however, the gridlocked portion will be focused on. The election of Vincente Fox created a high level of legislative gridlock during his six-year term that prevented him from really acting on the goals he had for Mexico in terms of security and economic prosperity. President Fox put forward several initiatives in regards to raising tax revenues, the transformation of the judicial system, and the reshaping of Mexico’s energy policy, but the PRI would

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18 Baer, “Mexico At An Impasse.”

19 Ibid.

20 Andrew Selee, “Back From the Brink in Mexico.” *Current History* 107, no. 706 (February 2008): 65-70.
often oppose these proposals.\textsuperscript{21} The main goal of the PRI (Fox’s opposing party) was to gain back some power by humiliating and embarrassing the president.\textsuperscript{22} This only wasted time and allowed the body count to rise.

The parties of Mexico working together as well as the removal of government gridlock are areas of discussion that are currently underway when the topic of citizen security is debated. According to research by Selee and Baer, citizen security cannot occur if the government is fighting itself and not focused on the real problems. This leads to the next areas where Mexican security concerns are discussed often by authors in this field of research. Two of those security concerns include the corruption that is currently running rampant in the police forces of Mexico and the increased use of the military to maintain some level of peace. Both of these problems are factors that Mexico must address without help from the United States.

Several authors have discussed the corruption of the police force as a core component of Mexico reducing the violence. The article titled \textit{The New Cocaine Cowboys} by Robert Bonner focuses on the infrastructure problems of the Mexican state and how those problems led to the birth of the cartels in Mexico and their eventual growth to the powerhouses that they are today. As stated before, the Mexican cartels received their start when the Colombian cartels were picked apart by efforts from their own government and the United States working together.\textsuperscript{23} With the Colombian cartels dispersed, the Mexican cartels began to grow in power. This growth in power by the

\textsuperscript{21} Selee, “Back From the Brink.”

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.

cartels was aided by the corruption that seeped into the government itself. The then-reigning party of Mexico, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), was keen to allow the growing cartels operate within Mexico as a way to increase their own influence without really understanding that they were leaving the door open for these cartels to gain their own power and influence. The PRI had been in control for nearly 70 years already, and there was virtually no political backlash as no other party could challenge them. This corruption seeped into law enforcement, as they were the front lines, and it has resulted in all levels of law enforcement in Mexico being unable to carry out investigations and stop the activity of the cartels. This infrastructure problem has carried on even into the current era of Mexican politics and the dethroning of the PRI.

According to Bonner, in 2000 with the election of Vincente Fox from the National Action Party (PAN), there was a push to reform the customs service and the federal police while at the same time extraditing prisoners to the United States. President Calderón proceeded to do the same and expanded the role of the military to include taking over aspects of policing duties. This has increased the violence in Mexico as the cartels fight each other and the military to try to maintain the territory that they have gained over the years while at the same time sending a message to the current regime that they disapprove of the new policies. This disapproval is exactly what Bonner believes can

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24 Bonner, “New Cocaine Cowboys.”
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
lead to the downfall of the cartels, as it displays that the government is going in the right direction. The cartels are fighting for survival as the pressure is being applied by the military, but more must be done according to Bonner. A weak infrastructure and government corruption are needed in order for the cartels to thrive as they have in the past. Bonner’s point is well made in his article: corruption in the police force does nothing but perpetuate the problems of violence created by the cartels. Police corruption has done little more than embolden the cartels, and ending this corruption is necessary in order to stem the violence.29 Bonner does gloss over the increased violence caused by military presence, however.

Kellner and Pipitone suggest looking at how Colombia dealt with their cartels after removing their leaders from the top. The first thing the Colombians did was remove corruption from within the police and military through a decree that stated any allegation of dealings with cartels could have them fired and jailed.30 This decree included polygraph testing, financial record checks, and even having their families submit to screenings as well.31 This allowed for protection of judicial authorities and political authorities who were able to continue financing and supporting the fight against the failing cartels. Kellner and Pipitone and Bonner have well developed points: the Mexican government has to remove corruption within its ranks and also address the connection with military usage and increased drug violence. These issues must be addressed before the violence can be reduced. Other authors support and continue these arguments.

29 Bonner, “New Cocaine Cowboys.”

30 Tomas and Pipitone, “Inside Mexico’s Drug War.”

31 Ibid.
The article entitled, *Mexico’s Drug War Gets Brutal* by Francisco E. Gonzalez, discusses Mexico’s increasing displays of violence since the intensification of the drug war against cartels by the Mexican Government, and it falls in line with previous authors that discuss policing tactics and military presence in Mexico. Beginning with outlining the differences between Mexican and United States drug policies in the 1970s, Gonzalez is able to assert how these differences between these two countries made drug trade a profitable business. Since the United States started the original “War on Drugs,” illicit narcotic prices went up to match the risk it would take to get narcotics across the border.32 This information would of course fall on the side of what the United States needs to do to reduce violence, but it is important to note here, as it is only a side point in this article. The increased risk placed on obtaining illegal narcotics occurred due to the U.S. war on drugs policy; this increased risk also increased demand and price of these goods.33 On the other side of the border, due to divisive regional politics, Mexican officials had adopted a level of “live and let live” policy towards the cartels trafficking in narcotics.34 This allowed for a reduction in public disturbances and violence to occur, with both sides knowing where the line is drawn. Gonzalez states that since Fox’s election, the violence has only increased, especially with the election of Felipe Calderón and his increased militarization of the issue in an effort to reduce corruption in law


33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.
enforcement. This corruption is still current today and it has to do directly with social factors in Mexico. Gonzalez states that although many law enforcement officials do resist the gifts that the cartels offer, it is often hard to resist the threats and ignore the assassinations that are occurring including the assassination of acting chief of Federal police, Edgar Millan Gomez.

Shannon O’Neil discusses corruption of the police force as one of the main components of violence in Mexico as well. All three branches of the Mexican government prior to the election of Vincente Fox in 2000 were considered corrupt entities used primarily to preserve PRI power. O’Neil states that as violence escalated, most aspects of the corruption within government remained, but for different reasons. Police officials and political leaders remained corrupt or became corrupt so as not to be the next to “disappear” or be assassinated as a message to those that would defect from the cartels. When given a choice, a paycheck to look the other way or death for oneself and one’s family, people will often choose the paycheck.

Robert Stout has a different perspective from the research he has done on the topic; state employees at all levels at one time or another carried out tasks given to them by cartels because it was simply part of one’s job. While O’Neil and Gonzalez emphasize that often there is a mandate to “do it or else,” Stout follows up on those that were willing

35 Gonzalez, “Mexico’s Drug Wars”
36 Ibid.
37 O’Neil, “Real War in Mexico.”
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
to do the bidding of cartels as long as there was something in exchange. In an interview he did with Pedro Enrique Martinez, a retired state employee, the following statement was given:

The capos (drug lords) realized it wasn’t cost effective to have to keep bribing those who held higher offices so they started recruiting young local candidates, helping finance them to win elections. Soon every city, every municipio (county), every state bureaucracy was infiltrated. Sometimes the capos would go years and not require anything then one day they’d say ‘We need this bill passed’ or ‘We need this shipment to go through’ and they’d get what they wanted.\(^4\)

When discussing what Mexico’s own role should be when it comes to ending cartel violence, authors often focus on corruption within the police, politicians, and military, what the military’s role should be, and the stagnation of the government. The necessity of a healthy government, a healthy police force, and a military that knows its place is important when deciding on the best possible plan to dismantle the cartels. The next section is the discussion of what the United States and Mexico can do together when dealing with cartels.

**Mexico and the United States Together**

The last area of discussion is what the United States and Mexico must do jointly to stop the violence of the Mexican drug cartels. Most authors, when writing about drug cartels, discuss the funding from the United States to provide Mexico with training and equipment necessary to deal with cartels. The reason why this is often put into the category of joint efforts between Mexico and the United States is because the U.S. must

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be willing to provide the necessary funds, and Mexico must be willing to accept the help from the United States. Authors suggest that since this war is being pushed by the United States and fought by Mexico, they must both be willingly to do their parts separately and jointly if success is to be had and control over different areas of Mexico is to be regained by the government.

Gonzalez argues that the fall of the Colombian Cartels in the 1990s gave rise to the Mexican Cartels as the new suppliers of illegal narcotics.41 Mexico’s elected president, Vincente Fox, under increasing pressure from the Bush administration, began his own war on drugs as a way to gain political capital.42 Gonzalez argues that Mexico will need military help in a technological and training capacity alongside money and supplies.43 Without these, Gonzalez believes that the Mexican state will continue to spiral out of control and into an area that threatens Mexican prosperity. A likely outcome would be a weak-state status.

The argument that Kellner and Pipitone make is that help from the United States is necessary as it was for the eradication of the remnants of the Colombian cartels. Currently there are $1.4 billion in funds over three years starting from 2008 that are flowing from the United States to Mexico and Latin America via the Merida Initiative.44 These funds are supposed to go towards training, equipment, and the prosecution of cartels. Kellner and Pipitone believe that this is not enough and that the U.S. must do

41 Gonzalez, “Mexico’s Drug Wars”
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Tomas and Pipitone, “Inside Mexico’s Drug War.”
more to help stem the violence. Kellner and Pipitone say that if more is not done, and Mexico is forced to stand alone in this fight, it is possible that they will fail and fall into a “weak-state” status.\textsuperscript{45}

O’Neil follows suit when she discusses how Mexico and the United State’s economies are intertwined, both relying on exporting and importing goods to each other.\textsuperscript{46} With a depressed economy on both sides of the border, however, the drug trade begins to look more promising than the deflated legal options for work within Mexico.\textsuperscript{47} Many Mexicans are forced to either migrate north for job options or turn to the drug trade in order to gain a livable income.\textsuperscript{48} The investment in infrastructure by the Mexican Government and the investment in training and technology by the United States must occur in order for the cartels to be dealt with in a proper manner.\textsuperscript{49} Robert Bonner also agrees with the aspect of funding of operations from the United States, but he also takes the joint operation aspect much further than other authors. He develops a six-point plan, all of which depends on both Mexican and U.S. cooperation. His six main points focus on stopping the cartels: first, U.S. involvement in the policing and military strategies; second, a single goal to wipe out cartels, not to end drug trafficking; third, dividing the cartels up and taking them out one by one; fourth, working from the “kingpin” down; fifth, the reformation of law enforcement; and sixth, the limited use of the military and its

\textsuperscript{45} Tomas and Pipitone, “Inside Mexico’s Drug War.”

\textsuperscript{46} O’Neil, “Real War in Mexico.”

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
being swapped out by the reformed police force. Each of these strategies has had to do with the infrastructure of Mexico and its reformation from the inside out. This is Bonner’s main point: leniency from the beginning has led to the cartel strength seen there now, and the only way this can be fixed is by both United States and Mexico working together to reform Mexico from the inside. Of course, Bonner’s six-point strategy is going much further than other authors, but the point that Bonner is getting at can be well taken: there are different operations in regard to dealing with the cartels that must occur with cooperation from both sides of the border. Another example of dual cooperation comes from Julia Reynolds as she discusses the banking system and different money laundering issues that require both governments to investigate thoroughly. Instead of examining the issue of increased funding from the U.S. to Mexico, Reynolds looks at the issue of how cartels are actually being funded.

Julia Reynolds discusses the issue of cartels mixing in with legitimate businesses in Mexico, more specifically banks. According to Reynolds, in the 1980s and early 1990s, Mexico’s professional institutions were known to fund different projects throughout Mexico via money laundered by cartels. For example, a Guadalajara newspaper published contracts showing the bank Grupo Anahuac had spent $8 million on a construction project being led by President Zedillo’s brother, with much of this

50 Bonner, “New Cocaine Cowboys.”
51 Ibid.
money being traced back to the Juarez Cartel.\textsuperscript{53} The privatization of these banks and other organizations made it much easier for infiltration by the cartels to occur. The mixing of the drug trade with legitimate business was something that had become natural in Mexico, and it only increased over time. However, as Reynolds states, it was the 1994 Peso Crash that invariably brought the United States banks into the equation as well. The Peso Crash resulted in the major banks looking for bailouts: one of the country’s largest banks, Banamex, was bought out by Citibank.\textsuperscript{54} Since this merger, Citibank has come under questioning for money laundering and possibly being linked to the Juarez Cartel by the Federal Reserve Board of Illegal Methods.\textsuperscript{55} Citibank has not had a formal investigation launched against it due to the fact that concrete evidence never seems to show up. This may be due to the amount of lobbyists and other forms of political influence Citibank and Banamex have in both the United States and in Mexico. Reynolds’s argument is still well taken: the seeping of the cartels into both the Mexican and U.S. banking system has resulted in a desperate need for both governments to deal with issues of money laundering that is occurring on both sides of the border. A large amount of damage can be dealt to the cartels if their money is hit hard enough in both the primary production and dispersion countries. While the issue of increased funding and equipment from the U.S. to Mexico is discussed often and by several authors, Reynolds looks at the defunding of cartels and the ending of their access to legitimate business. All of these options require cooperation by the governments of both countries, and they

\textsuperscript{53} Reynolds, “When Prohibition Meets.”

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
support the third and final aspect of how to deal with the cartels and the increased amount of violence they have caused throughout Mexico. The United States and Mexico must work together financially and operationally in order to devastate the cartels by cutting off their finances, hitting them with more sophisticated technology and training, all while providing a more sound infrastructure so that Mexican citizens do not need to resort to drug trafficking for a source of income.

Kidnapping

A concept that is not talked about often within the mainstream media is the role that kidnapping is playing in terms of the violence that is being perpetrated in both the United States and in Mexico. Sylvia Longmire discusses this in-depth in her book *Cartel*. Kidnapping is occurring in three different forms and these forms are the reasons why it belongs in the section of problems that both Mexico and the United States must deal with jointly.

The first form is kidnapping members of rival cartels or their family members, the second is kidnapping civilians within Mexico, and the third is kidnapping civilians within the United States.\(^5^6\) The situations often have the same format according to Longmire. The cartels lure their victims to secluded areas and take them by force to a “safe house” where they torture and beat their victims for different pieces of information depending on which of the three categories the victim fits.\(^5^7\) Then proof of life is sent to the families with a demand of a ransom and instructions on the drop. After the drop,


\(^{57}\) Longmire, *Cartel*. 
according to Longmire, the kidnapping can go in two different directions: the first is discussing if releasing the victims will occur, or there will be a second demand which often results in the victims being killed even if the demands are being followed.\textsuperscript{58} It seems that the longer the crisis goes, the more likely it is that the victims will be killed and the families are drained of their resources. Why would cartels engage in kidnapping and what purpose does it serve in this underworld?

In regards to cartels kidnapping other cartel members and their families, Longmire states it is a form of getting income while at the same time intimidating other cartels and citizens by demonstrating a level of ruthlessness that many did not engage in when conducting drug wars.\textsuperscript{59} According to Longmire, in Mexican media at least seven out of ten kidnappings are not reported for fear of retaliation against reporters.\textsuperscript{60} This message is sent to cartels, citizens, and police in Mexico that the media is under indirect control via fear. Cartels engage in the kidnapping of civilians within Mexico for moneymaking purposes and often to send messages that no one is actually safe when siding with the government and authorities.\textsuperscript{61} The final form of kidnapping occurs in the United States. In 2009, kidnappings in Phoenix more than doubled from 2000’s 117 kidnappings to 318.\textsuperscript{62} Most of these were people who were related to drugs or human trafficking being carried out by the cartels in some form or fashion. The fear that this may

\textsuperscript{58} Longmire, \textit{Cartel}.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
spread to those in the United States who are not related to cartels in this way is a real possibility and an issue that must be addressed on both sides of the border. The kidnapping of people is crossing the border according to Longmire, and this means that it is an issue that requires efforts and attention from law enforcement on both sides of the border.

The book by George W. Grayson entitled *Mexico: Weak Violence and a Failed State* has dedicated a large portion of its discussion to the issue of kidnapping as well. According to Grayson, in 2008 the kidnapping rate in Mexico increased 9.1 percent in the first five months when compared to the year before. The possibility that these numbers are actually higher is evident according to Grayson, as it is approximated that nine out of ten kidnappings are not even reported to the police. These kidnappings are not reported for several reasons. The possibility that the family of the kidnapping victim is engaged in narcotics trafficking is high which goes hand in hand with one of the types of kidnapping situations that occur according to Longmire. What is more disturbing is that according to Grayson these kidnappings are not reported for fear that the police or federal agency is in some way connected and calling them will only worsen the situation. While Grayson does not discuss kidnapping in as much depth as Longmire, he does make a point of noting that according to a survey in 2008, respondents listed kidnapping as the second worst occurrence in Mexico behind drug trafficking and ahead


64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.
of unemployment. Kidnapping and its uses are on the minds of the people of Mexico and for good reason. In regard to this subject, Ioan Grillo offers a different perspective on its uses and why it is currently affecting Mexicans.

Ioan Grillo states that kidnapping occurring at the hands of the cartels is not just used for different means of extortion, but also for human trafficking purposes as well. For example, cartels will often help smuggle people across the border into the United States; when this happens they demand different forms of repayment from people and thus are able to increase the price since they already have their victims in their custody. This repayment comes in the form of prostitution, slave labor or a never-ending ransom that the families cannot hope to pay. The consequences that occur for not giving in to any of the demands that cartels request are rape, beatings and even breaking of bones such as those in the hand that are necessary for working. This type of kidnapping is occurring on the U.S. side of the border, and it is a much milder form of the events happening in Mexico. However, this does not mean that it should be overlooked. If cartels are able to push the boundaries on kidnapping, extortion, and human trafficking within the United States, these boundaries are only going to be extended until they reach the same point in Mexico. According to the literature, kidnapping in Mexico and the United States is being carried out by the cartels; this means it needs to be dealt with by both entities together.

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68 Ibid.

69 Ibid.
Failed State Status

There is very little literature on whether or not Mexico has the ability to fall into a failed state status, but a few articles and books have asked the question of whether or not it is possible. In understanding the basic argument, a failed state is a state that has no real form of government operating throughout the country. The infrastructure is chaos and often there are different factions vying for power. A weak state and a strong state have a central government, except in a weak state, that government is often considered wholly corrupt and not reliable to the people to carry different tasks in a fair and impartial manner. This will be discussed further in Chapter V as a comparison to what Mexico is becoming and other currently failed states throughout the world.

As stated earlier, Francisco Gonzalez has several ideas as to what type of aid needs to be given to Mexico in order to stop the cartels. Gonzalez argues that Mexico will need military help in a technological capacity, a reduction in demand for illegal narcotics within the United States, a reduction in arms flowing into Mexico, and money and supplies to create the narcotics needs to be reduced as well.70 All of these things were needed when dealing with Colombian Cartels, and as Mexico’s drug war is going in the same direction, he believes they will be needed there as well. If not then, the basis for civilized life will be consumed by the cartels as they destroy the control the government has over the people.71 In Gonzalez’s second article titled “Drug Violence Isn’t Mexico’s Only Problem” written in 2011, he addresses yet again the possibility of state failure in a more direct manner. In this article, he discusses the fact that although cartel violence is

70 Gonzalez, “Mexico’s Drug Wars”
71 Ibid.
currently running rampant, the real danger comes in the shockwaves that it is producing throughout the country. The legitimate economic growth in Mexico has remained stagnant since 2000 when the violence really began to increase, which has in turn reduced legitimate interest in investing in the Mexican production industry. The average citizen is feeling disenfranchised by all three levels of government due to obvious corruptive practices being allowed, encouraged, and enforced by cartels.\textsuperscript{72} Seeing that the first true democratic election in 70 years began in 2000 when PRI had to actually compete with and lose to the PAN party with the election of Vincente Fox and the loss of the majority of seats in the house, Mexico is in reality a brand new democracy. A new democracy being plagued with a failing economy, rising violence, disenfranchised citizens, and corrupt politicians may not last too long if these problems persist.\textsuperscript{73} The discussion of Mexico falling directly into a situation of failure is again not stated directly, but Gonzalez alludes to the possibility.

In a similar manner, Robert Bonner briefly mentions the effects that will ultimately happen when it becomes far too evident to the people of Mexico that they have no democracy. When the legitimacy of the government is undermined, then state-failure is inevitable.\textsuperscript{74} However, Bonner believes that there is not a big chance that this will occur, at least in a “rapid and sudden collapse” as some have suggested will happen.\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{72} Gonzalez, “Mexico’s Drug Wars”


\textsuperscript{74} Bonner, “New Cocaine Cowboys.”

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
Kellner and Pipitone do not believe that Mexico could fall into failed state status either. According to Kellner and Pipitone, a failed state is not a possibility and most likely Mexico would fall into a “weak state” status if more than the Merida Initiative is not done to combat the cartels. Finally George W. Grayson weighs in on the topic of Mexico falling into failed state status in an in depth manner. According to Grayson, if four areas are not thoroughly investigated as a means to stem the influence cartels have over the country, then the prospects of state failure are ever present. The four areas that he addresses are to; first, continue the war on drugs in a more effective manner by concentrating on those that it corrupts and how this corruption begins from the top and seeps its way down; second, by acknowledging that the cartels are not able to be negotiated with; third, focusing more attention to the demand side by providing education and treatment; and fourth, by looking more heavily into decriminalization. In Grayson’s research, these areas are the beginning areas when dealing with cartels and questioning Mexico’s ability to fall into a failed state status. However, when discussing whether or not Mexico is a failed state, Grayson states that even though there are several sources recommending it for that status, it is not quite there yet. Public confidence slipped by 12% in regards to the federal electorate and its capabilities of resolving Mexican ordeals; as this percentage continues to increase, so will Mexico’s chances of falling into a failed state status.

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76 Tomas and Pipitone, “Inside Mexico’s Drug War.”

77 Grayson, Mexico: Narco-Violence.

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid.
The literature discussing Mexico as a failed state is mixed in its reviews of Mexico, but it will be more thoroughly addressed in this reading. All of the literature states that Mexico is not at the level of being considered a failed state, but the potential is there. In order to fully understand this portion of the question it will be discussed in detail what constitutes a failed state vs. a weak state and where exactly Mexico sits on that scale. The literature discussed here is simply providing a background for the discussion of what a few authors are saying Mexico is and where it is going.

The subject of Mexican Drug Cartels is an area that is beginning to bloom in terms of the literature that is now being published. Instead of large death counts and highly graphic details of assassinations and murders, authors are beginning to produce information on how to appropriately deal with the situation. The line of argumentation often follows the pattern of what the United States should be doing, what Mexico should be doing, and what both countries should be doing together. These themes can be seen actively cropping up throughout well-written intellectual literature. When delving deeper into these breakdowns, it becomes evident as to what main conclusion is being established within the intellectual community. From the research gathered, the conclusion restated is that in order to deal with the Mexican drug cartel violence adequately, the United States and Mexico have to work both separately and jointly on stemming narcotic demand, gun trafficking, government stagnation, internal corruption and infrastructure development, and the training and funding of operations both within and around Mexico and Mexican territory. Only after all of these issues are addressed in well-structured manner will the violence that is being caused by the cartels in Mexico be significantly reduced. The trafficking of narcotics may not necessarily see a decline, as this is in itself
a much more complicated issue to deal with. The much larger and the much more
dangerous issue will be addressed, and that issue is the obscene violence of the cartels.
CHAPTER III

LOOKING BACK TO LOOK FORWARD:
A FUTURE OR A FAILURE

Currently Mexico is in a dire situation where control for the country is up in the air; the government is striving to maintain legitimacy and security of its people while the cartels are working to usurp this power and establish underground control in place of the government. This struggle has led to the deaths of thousands of Mexican citizens over the years. The current situation is not easily fixed due to the history that is behind Mexico’s role to pass illegal substances into the United States. An overview of this history is necessary to understand the root of the problems that plague Mexico today. Most people do not look far enough back into history when discussing the current role of drug trafficking and how to actually deal with it. If they were to do so, they would see that the current cartels are providing a service that has been demanded since before there were even any narcotics laws in the United States and Mexico. Trafficking of drugs from Mexico into the United States has its own history, and in this history is the violence that occurred due to the different forms of prohibition that were not thoroughly thought out when enacted. By understanding this history of trafficking, one will be able to understand the role Mexico has played for the United States in the past and what that role should be in the future.
The History of Trafficking and the Relationship Between North and South

The use of opium was originally used in eastern societies and eventually brought overseas during the mass migration of Chinese laborers in the late 1800s. In 1886, the opium poppy was noted as a new and naturally occurring flower in Sinaloa which was a direct result of these Chinese laborers bringing the flower with them after the British won the Opium Wars and the right to traffic opium after the Qing Dynasty had outlawed it because of its addictive properties.\(^1\) The East India Trading Company smuggled the opium into China from India, and when the Chinese government began to limit British trade, the Royal Navy went to war (France, United States, and Russia all supporting) with China in order to force the Chinese to stand down when it came to trafficking opium into China.\(^2\) This entire situation is called the Second Opium Wars; it led to Opium being brought to Mexico and the United States, and it can be called a time when the major powers throughout the world were drug traffickers themselves and used their own military to force profits in a similar manner cartels do. World affairs seem to constantly replay themselves with different actors playing different roles. During this time, a British, U.S., French, and Russian drug cartel forced its way into China to distribute narcotics—this was called trade. Today, the Mexican cartels are forcing their way into different countries around the world to do the same thing—this is called crime.

When the United States moved to pass the Harrison Narcotics Act of 1915, an act that proposed a tax and jail time on physicians for prescribing opium and cocaine for

\(^1\) Grillo, *El Narco.*

\(^2\) Ibid.
the treatment of addiction while also proposing a tax for the importation, production, and distribution of opiates, they opened up an entire black market for opium and cocaine.\(^3\) At the time this act was passed, opium and cocaine were seen as the miracle drugs that could cure all illnesses by adding them to various tonics and medicines. Add this to the fact that there were estimated to be 200,000 to 4 million addicts in the major cities throughout the United States, the possibility of profit for poppies was astounding and it happened overnight.\(^4\) Mexican drug trafficking of opium and cocaine had begun, and the traffickers were Chinese. Of course, the United States called on Mexico to stop the trafficking that had begun, but with the Mexican Revolution of 1910 occurring, opium was not that important to the government or its people. From the very beginning, Mexico was distracted by much more important issues while the United States tried to push its agenda without the provision of the necessary support to get the job done. Opium and cocaine did eventually fall by the wayside as did everything else when the alcohol prohibition came into play during the 1920s, but this history of opium and cocaine trafficking is often lost; it must be remembered though that it created a basis for narcotic trafficking into the United States in the past that is still present and expanded upon today.

Alcohol prohibition in the United States occurred in the 1920s after the progressive movement targeted alcohol and pushed for the 18\(^{th}\) Amendment to pass for the morality of the United States. The official result was that alcohol could not be sold, manufactured, or transported in the United States. The consumption of alcohol fell by


\(^4\) Hohenstein, “Just What Doctor Ordered.”
half during the 1920s, due to many respecting the law, and it remained low all the way into the 1940s. The unofficial result was that since alcohol was no longer “available” to the population it could also no longer be regulated in any way. This led to many people who normally would not consume alcohol, such as women and children, occupying different areas such as saloons and speakeasies. Prohibition, more importantly, led to illegal trafficking of alcohol and the rise of organized crime within the United States. Much of the illegal trafficking came from Canada and Mexico since their distilleries and manufacturing plants were not illegal and the borders are vast and extremely hard to conduct efficient surveillance, much like today. Essentially, Mexican trafficking switched from opium and cocaine to alcohol since the customer base was quite a bit larger. The trafficking channels remained but the product itself just switched. This is also about the time that the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) came into power and asserted its dominant reign for the next 70 years while maintaining an “undercover” relationship with illegal traffickers.

With the end of the prohibition of alcohol, drugs like marijuana, cocaine and opiates became the target of the youth in America seeking a thrilling high; these drugs also became the target of those seeking to claim a level of moral superiority over the general population by finding ways to ban these drugs from usage. The use of these drugs increased exponentially in the 1960s and 1970s as the counter culture movement

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embraced these narcotics as a way to rebel against the mainstream. This is also the time period when drugs like Lysergic Acid Diethylamide (LSD) and MDMA (Ecstasy) also came into the picture more heavily as their usage came in the form of experimentation in the scientific community and as an exciting “new” recreational drug with the youth of society. MDMA for example was seen as a very useful drug by psychotherapists because of its interaction with the different emotions of the user; it often relaxed the user in a similar manner to cannabis and made them more available to therapy. This time period marked an increase in the variety and the consumption of illegal narcotics for recreational activity. Also, it marked the beginning of the United States ramping up its illegal narcotic legislation and enforcement, which indirectly increased the amount of trafficking from Mexico into the United States.

The most important drug law passed was the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act of 1970. This act essentially ranked all drugs by their potential medical usefulness and the potential for addiction with schedule one being the most dangerous and schedule five being the least dangerous. Marijuana, LSD, and heroin (an opiate derivative) have been labeled as schedule one narcotics (most addictive and no medical usefulness), cocaine has been labeled a schedule two narcotic (medical usefulness but high abuse potential), and MDMA has been labeled as a schedule three

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7 Grillo, El Narco.


narcotic (medical usefulness but less abuse potential than schedule two). These
schedules and these labels essentially divided the drug market into two different
categories being sold on two different markets: the synthetic drugs were being sold on the
legal market wholly run by pharmaceutical companies and the more “natural” occurring
drugs were to be sold on the black market by those who were able and willing to
manufacture, produce, and sell these narcotics to a large market of recreational users. Of
course, this scheduling did not do much to deter the use of these drugs though as peak
usage of each occurred mostly after the implementation of this act: for example cocaine
peaked from 1987-1989, marijuana peaked from 1978-1979 and heroin peaked from
1969-1971. After its creation, the law itself had no effect on usage and this in part is the
basis of the creation of the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) in 1973 by President
Nixon.

This agency’s creation served as a means to generate a united front against the
constant flow of narcotics into the country. The Bureau of Drug Abuse Control combined
with the Bureau of Narcotics to create the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs,
which after the 1973 act it was turned into the Drug Enforcement Agency with
significantly more funding and enforcement power. The trafficking of narcotics from
Colombia and Mexico were not in the extremes that they reached in the 1990s and in

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10 “Drug Abuse Legislation.”


13 Ibid.
today’s market, but the trafficking warranted a response from the Federal Government. This new agency stepped up the enforcement of different laws that were being pushed by the president and passed by the congress. The DEA did their best to grind illegal trafficking to a halt and ultimately wipe the streets clean of the illegal narcotics that were primarily coming in from the south and being homegrown within the United States. However, it can be argued that the DEA and the new focus of law enforcement on illegal narcotics has in fact had the opposite result of stopping the narcotic trade; instead of stopping the illegal trafficking the industry, it was driven further underground and pushed into an area of violence and self-enforcement. This is what essentially gave rise to the cartels that ran the cocaine, marijuana, and heroine trafficking from Colombia and their use of Mexico and its local gangs to carry out the footwork since it is a direct route into the United States.

The boom in the United States for illegal narcotics like marijuana and cocaine throughout the 1960s and 1970s created a lucrative drug trade for those who were willing to get involved in the operation; for example, cocaine was able to be produced for no more than $1500 per kilo and sold for $50,000 per kilo in the United States.\(^\text{14}\) South American countries became areas of mass production, none more so than Colombia. It was during this time that Colombian cartels established themselves as the premier trafficking groups; beginning as small operations and eventually growing into powerhouses that would eventually rival the government of Colombia itself. The history of the Colombian cartels is just as bloody and bullet ridden as the current warfare for

control of Mexico’s drug trade that is happening now. There were two primary cartels vying for power and pushing back against the Colombian government throughout the 1980s and 1990s: the Cali cartel which was led by the Rodriguez Orejuela brothers and the Medellin cartel which was led by Pablo Escobar and the Ochoa brothers.\(^\text{15}\) Pablo Escobar led his Medellin cartel into a war Colombian government officials, killing police officers, judges, prosecutors, journalists and innocent bystanders alike in his quest for power and control over the country, while at the same time waging war against the Orejuela brothers for complete control over the trade.\(^\text{16}\) This of course had a ripple effect that radiated into the United States and created hot pockets of violence in the areas that the drug trade was most active, except originally these areas were not spots that most people today would guess. Instead of the United States being affected by violence at the border of itself and Mexico, Florida was the area where gang wars between the Medellin and Cali cartels were waged.\(^\text{17}\) Originally, 80% of cocaine was brought into the United States through island hopping in the Caribbean and it would eventually land in south Florida; this area of Florida was where turf wars raged and the hysteria of cocaine was originally built during the mid 1980s.\(^\text{18}\) Movies like *Scarface* really personify the type of violence that was occurring, as they brought to life the massive amounts of money, cocaine, and blood that was being spilled all over the streets of south Florida during the

\(^\text{15}\) Frontline, *Drug Wars*.

\(^\text{16}\) Ibid.


\(^\text{18}\) Ibid.
1980s. The DEA and its establishment came into play during this time, as President Reagan chose to push the war on drugs and gave authorization for this agency to work with other agencies to militarize the seas surrounding Florida. This forced the Colombian cartels to figure out a different route into the United States, and the route through Mexico was born. Before the actions carried out by the DEA and other federal agencies, Mexican drug smuggling was minimal, unorganized, and overlooked by everyone on both sides of law. The efforts to combat the Colombian drug trafficking organizations became the prelude to the Mexican trafficking organizations that are in existence today.

Areas like Juarez and Sinaloa were already areas where meager trafficking attempts were taking place, but once the Colombian cartels took interest in these areas they became key spots as Mexico became the leading area in which cocaine flowed into the United States. Again, in the 1980s, 80% of all cocaine came in from the Caribbean into Florida; by 1992, half of all cocaine came into the United States through Mexico, by the mid 1990s that number increased to the 85% range. A complete turn of events occurred, which also meant that a complete change of money flow occurred as well. The business partnership between Mexican gangs and Colombian cartels began with small amounts of money exchanges, but as more cocaine was being shipped into the United States through Mexico these partnerships began carrying more weight as more money became involved and more Mexican gangs started to realize the bargaining power they had over the Colombian cartels that needed to pass through their country. Slowly, as the

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19 Gootenburg, “Blowback.”

20 Ibid.
Colombian cartels felt the weight of their own government and the United States closing in on them in the 1990s, the Mexican cartels began to take over more of the profit and the business that is behind narcotic trafficking. Mexican traffickers, especially those headed by Miguel Gallardo from Sinaloa, looking to make profits on a similar scale as the Colombian cartels went from charging a $1,000 to $2,000 fees for trafficking, to taking half of the profit that was to be had from narcotics going into the United States.\(^{21}\) When the Colombian cartels fell from power in the 1990s, the Mexican cartels that are known today were already in prime position to take over the trade and continue where the Colombians left off. Unfortunately, these Mexican cartels did not just observe and adopt the business practices of the Colombians, they also gained an insight on the use of violence and corruption to ensure business would continue as usual.

**How Corruption Occurs**

The Mexican cartels were being established as the Colombian cartels started to decline. The establishment of today’s cartels occurred with the help and support of the Colombian cartels that were looking to use Mexico as a possible way into the United States. During this time, Mexican cartels had the ability to cultivate an already loose relationship between the government and the different trafficking organizations that were already operating in Mexico. The Mexican government and police officials had a policy of “live and let live”; as long as there was no violence, public disturbances and public complaints, operations would not be hassled.\(^{22}\) For a long time this is how the

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\(^{21}\) Gootenburg, “Blowback.”

\(^{22}\) Gonzalez, “Mexico’s Drug Wars.”
Institutional Revolutionary Party dealt with the illegal traffickers while at the same time maintained a level of control over the country. Drug trafficking was seen as a naturally occurring way of life and the stifling of this trafficking would not only be a burden but would be unrealistic. In order for the PRI to maintain its level of control over the country in a domestic capacity, they made a rational choice to allow the trafficking to occur; either risk losing power in a drug war or maintain it and let the U.S. deal with trafficking if they so choose. This is a prime example of narrow, instrumental rationality also coming into play: the PRI decided that their power was more important than what may or may not be beneficial to the country as a whole and they made a rational choice to maintain it. This would be an example of “soft” realism governing the country. Hobbes believed that entities should seek peace wherever they could as long as power could be maintained.23 In this situation and in the PRI’s understanding of the world, peace allowed for the PRI to maintain their power and thus it would be irrational and against their best interests to try and wage a drug war. They had both a cost benefit analysis and an understanding of the world in action during this time.

A gentleman under the pseudonym of David described his experience in drug trafficking as an industry where everyone knows each other, is friendly to one another, and it often involved bail bondsmen, judges, and lawyers on both sides of the border of Mexico and the United States where he trafficked the most, El Paso and Juarez.24 As more money rolled in, first from the Colombians and then once the Mexican cartels took

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over the trade indefinitely, higher areas of government were infiltrated and began operating on the payroll of the drug cartels.

In 1994 after President Ernesto Zedillo appointed a new police chief to try and crack down on the cartels that were operating in the country, he noticed that many officers were not even picking up their paychecks.\(^{25}\) The truth is, their pay was nothing compared to what they were making under the table from cartels.\(^{26}\) The application of realist theory as well as the rational choice model provides an explanation of why this was occurring. At the individual level of analysis, the police officers chose their livelihood over the idealistic theory of upholding the law equally to every citizen and denying the bribe that was in the form of paycheck that was not even comparable to the government check they received. Their realist understanding of the world is clear: you accept the check or you and your family is dead and that is how this world works. Weighing the costs and benefits in this situation with the goal of protecting and providing for their families was simple.

President Zedillo tried to do something about this, and he appointed General José de Jesus Gutierrez Rebollo as Mexico’s drug czar, a position that essentially focused solely on the stemming of the drug trade. However, after eleven weeks General Gutierrez was put in prison after being charged with taking bribes and protecting the nation’s number one drug lord at the time.\(^{27}\) Not only was Gutierrez using government time and


\(^{26}\) Gray, *Drug Crazy*.

\(^{27}\) Ibid.
resources to protect the Sinaloa Cartel from the government, but he was also protecting them from other rival cartels in for a decent fee.

What would be the point of buying off politicians and police officials? Besides ensuring the fact that shipments of illegal narcotics and known narcotic dealers are not being hassled, kingpins were also buying access to the border and being provided information about the patrol occurring on the U.S. side of the border.28 If the cartels were able to know the times and areas of patrol of the country with the strict drug policies they are delivering the narcotics too, then it becomes infinitely easier to traffic illegal narcotics through the border. Instead of guessing and reacting to the border patrol checkpoints and convoys, they are now able to simply avoid them. Much of the work and the risk of drug trafficking would be taken out of the equation. It should be noted though, that access to the patrol schedule of U.S. officers is not the only thing being accessed; the officers themselves on the United States side are often being “accessed” as well. Corruption is not a commodity solely found south of the border, as officers in the Border Patrol have been known to allow unchecked vehicles drive through the border without being thoroughly examined.29 When comparing the amount of danger officers’ face from both sides of the border when dealing with narcotics trafficking with the actual take home of a government paycheck, the pay of an officer is often considered insufficient when death could potentially be just around the corner. The easier course of action for the Mexican cartels was to simply pay off their own police, since the price for Mexican officers was much lower than United States officers and offering them more to turn was simple when

28 Gonzalez, “Mexico’s Drug Wars.”

29 Gray, Drug Crazy.
considering the tremendous amount of profit that was occurring as a result. In terms of money, even if an officer was being bribed an extra $50,000 a year that really is peanuts when compared to the multi-billion dollar business that this officer was allowing to operate unnoticed. It became a standard cost of business reality for cartels. However, many cartels have realized that factoring police into their equation did not always have to come in the form of money, as violence would do just fine and it would force the individual officers to do their own weighing of costs and benefits of playing along.

Since Mexico’s war on drugs has begun, the death of police officers trying to enforce drug policies has increased dramatically. In 2010 alone, 637 police officers had been killed around the country with a majority having to do with the drug war.30 When money does not work, violence usually does the job as the cartels look to make an example out of the police. Often police officers themselves are not the people being threatened, but it is their families and friends that are being put under knife.31 It is not just the police either; judges, lawyers, politicians and anyone else that could not be bribed received an ultimatum, “‘plata o plomo?—‘ money or lead?’”32 Many individuals have the ability to resist monetary gain from a corrupting source. However, not many people are able and willing to risk the lives of themselves or their families, especially when the other decision is wealth beyond anything they really dreamed of having. This is just human nature and cartels have capitalized on the natural urge to protect one’s own family. The


31 Bonner, “New Cocaine Cowboys.”

32 Ibid.
maintenance of a level of power through alignment is necessary to achieve this objective. The result has been Mexican cartels intimidating, murdering, and bribing their way into the higher echelons of government without resistance because for many resistance means death. The corruption within Mexico is far reaching and it has old and strong roots within the government; however, in order to stop the cartels it must be removed no matter how painful the process might be. Before this process can be delved into more deeply though, the cartels have exploited other areas of weakness within Mexico and these areas must be outlined as well.

Political Uselessness

Political gridlock is not as old as corruption within Mexico, but it has created a wealth of opportunity for cartels to flourish. As stated in Chapter II, the PRI was in control of Mexico for over 70 years, when they were finally dethroned with the election of President Vincente Fox in the 2000 presidential election after slowly losing its iron grip over the country via the loss of several other important elections throughout the country. The election was not a complete overthrow though, and the PRI remained a strong oppositional party to the new president and it resolved to do its best to halt any progress that Fox looked to make. No matter what bills or initiatives that Fox tried to pass, he hit a brick wall within the legislature, even if those bills would have helped the Mexican people. The result of this was almost six years of idleness occurring within the

33 Baer, “Mexico At An Impasse.”
34 Ibid.
35 Selee, “Back From the Brink.”
federal government while the cartels kept moving and adapting to the changes that were occurring within society and its expanding needs. The cartels essentially became the providers for the people: building schools, parks, and giving paychecks to those areas friendly to them and harassing those areas that would not.

The only true activity that Vincente Fox was able to do was to get the military involved in combating the cartels by providing some military personnel to help in policing duties. The understanding behind this action is simple when applying the concept of realism and then the rational choice model. The world in which Fox came into president sees him unable to use his legislative branch for any type of policy or law creation that can stop the spreading control of the cartels. Waiting to act only sees the problem spreading as the cartels become bolder by the day as the state becomes weaker and unable to stop them. The maintenance of the state’s power is at stake as the cartels use their own power to override it. Fox only had the military at his disposal; it was only rational for him to use it to wipe out the cartels. The methods of the cartels are brutal and at times sadistic, thus the need for the strongest arm of the government to step in.

This unfortunately aided in creating more violence, and it did not allow for more substantial change to occur right away as expected. The military would do its best to exterminate the cartels, but the pressure they created on them only made them splinter into different factions. This sounds like a positive, but in reality, it created more ruthless cartels that were looking to grow their ranks and their influence. The military did not discourage cartels, but it made them bolder in the violence and atrocities they were

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36 Longmire, Cartel.
willing to commit and it sharpened their operation by forcing them to find more and more innovative ways to get around or recruit military personnel. Los Zetas are a prime example of this, and they will be discussed in Chapter V. Police remained on the payroll of the cartels, more and more youth became recruited by the lure of a life with riches, and the government was seen as an entity looking to create havoc instead of an entity looking to create a solution. This gridlock continued until the election of President Felipe Calderón.

After Calderón’s election, even though the PRI did not gain back the power they had before, they were more likely to work with Calderón (PAN). This has given Calderón more leeway to launch a full on assault on the cartels since the legislative branch supported him using the federal police and the military in place of state and local police to try and investigate the cartels, which was something that Fox was unable to do.37 The decision making process here was same as Fox’s, but this time it had more backing as the situation became more and more dire. The state and local police were ill equipped, ill prepared, and too corrupt to deal with those that had the training of Mexican commandos, thus the more trained personnel of the Mexican government had to take over.38 This is fantastic, but Calderón was still not able to make long time changes in the infrastructure of the government and society at large. Even though the PRI championed itself as the great negotiator between the two parties during Calderón’s term, it still had the ability (and willfully exercised this ability) to stop any true changes to the infrastructure in hopes of regaining their former power over the country. Couple that with

37 Selee, “Back From the Brink.”

38 Grillo, El Narco.
a failing economy and a still profitable drug trade, and the government has continued to render itself almost useless. Even the military usage, which was at first supported by the Mexican people, has lost its momentum. Killings and violations of human rights being carried out by the military have only pushed the Mexican people to be more indifferent towards the military than supporting of it.\textsuperscript{39} Too many think that Calderón’s policies of military action have only raised the death count and done little to actually address the problem. New ideas and more effective military action must be brought to the table and tough discussions including the effectiveness of prohibition must be deliberated. Until they are, many people regard Mexican politics as useless when it comes to resolving the real tribulations.

Mexico’s Future and How to Win This Fight - Politics

As this thesis is being written, it should be noted that Calderón ’s term has expired, the PAN has been removed from the executive branch and the PRI has resumed its majority control over the country with Enrique Peña Nieto as the president for the next six years. Nieto is currently following the same path as his predecessors as the realization that the military is a necessary part of removing the cartels from power, but there are still other ideals that must be investigated to aid the military action. Mexico’s future is back in the hands of PRI and this means that the country has one of three options, two of which leads to control of the country being handed to the cartels as it stumbles into a weak state status and the third being given back to the people of Mexico as it becomes a strong state.

\textsuperscript{39} Grillo, \textit{El Narco}. 
Beginning with handing Mexico over to the cartels, the first and most obvious option is that the PRI can go back to business as usual, as if that twelve-year absence of overwhelming power never happened. A live and let live policy can be enacted and violence will be reduced. The government and the cartels can pretend that they are working against each other when they are all on the same payroll, democracy can disappear from the grasp of the people and trafficking into the United States will resume unimpeded. There has already been discussion by different media outlets that this may in fact have been occurring leading up to the 2012 election.

A report by the Al-Jazeera news outlet speculated that the PRI has already made pacts with the dominating cartels within their districts in exchange for votes and support.40 This is speculation as no real evidence has been produced with the PRI outraged that such accusations would occur, but based on the history of this political party and its previous methods of governance it is not too far fetched to speculate that such actions would occur. It is would only be a rational form of action being taken by PRI. Instead of putting their own lives and political careers (power) at risk by continuing to try and enforce drug policies, they can simply align themselves with those that have the power, which would be the drug cartels. All campaigns during this election cycle focused on the reduction of violence without too many providing carefully laid out plans; however, when a senior security official was asked if a pact between the PRI government

and cartels would reduce violence he simply replied: “Yes.”\(^{41}\) This is one possibility that could occur, however, one has to ask what would keep the cartels from pushing for more.

Essentially backing off now and striking a deal would provide evidence to the citizens of Mexico, the drug cartels, law enforcement, and the world that the Mexican government cannot win and that the cartels are running the country. President Calderón raised the stakes, and there really is no going back for the government without them risking all legitimacy that they ever had. In terms of the cartels, realist theory suggests that, in terms of war and peace, entities must do all that they can to maintain their power—this includes the expansion of possibly an imperialistic nature.\(^{42}\) There are areas of Mexico that are currently strongholds of the government in which cartels have no control. One would have to suggest that if a deal is struck then those strongholds would disappear.

The second option is to keep the national politics and drug policies the same. The federal government can continue its infighting between the dominant parties, the military can continue fighting the cartels haphazardly, and citizens can be caught in the literal crossfire while having their human rights violated from both sides. The only future guarantee for Mexico would be a government stalemate and death, with the youth of Mexico being provided two rational career options, soldiers in the government run military or soldiers in the cartel run military. Either way the future looks bleak, and it is this future that the current United States administration is pushing towards. When asked about the rhetoric of the now President Nieto’s campaign and its focus on violence

\(^{41}\) Aljazeera, “Cartels Cast a Shadow.”

\(^{42}\) Doyle, *Ways of War.*
reduction and not trafficking reduction, a senior Obama administration official said Nieto’s statements were just, “a sound bite he is using for obvious political purposes” and “what we basically get is that he fully appreciates and understands that if/when he wins, he is going to keep working with us.” This essentially means that to the Obama administration, the Mexican government will do as they are told, and if that means continued use of the military without follow-up policies in place then that is exactly what will happen. Regardless of what is actually working and what the people of Mexico want, the United States has its own agenda and is betting on the PRI and President Nieto to play ball. The current drug war has lost over 45,000 lives and it is up to the PRI to choose the direction in which they want to go. This option leaves the Mexican government toothless, with its strings being pulled by the United States. The previous option leaves the Mexican government toothless with the strings being pulled by the cartels.

This leaves the third and final option, the only real option that is open for the Mexican government to make progress out of the mess they have put themselves into from their ill-mannered actions throughout history. This option is of course to remove party lines and to remove outside influence and examine the heart of the problem itself. The reasons as to why citizens are accepting of the cartels and are even supporting them over their own government must be understood in a rational manner. The answer is that cartels are providing people jobs, parks, schools, and other publicly needed resources through the funding they deliver to areas that need it.44 The government must look at

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44 Longmire, *Cartel.*
public services and find ways to make them affordable and accessible to all citizens without the need of cartels. Regardless of what the philosophy is of any party, public resources must become a priority. As of now, the citizens of Mexico are sitting with the option to be poor without work opportunities or to make decent money being some form of low-level cartel operators. Using the rational model, if the goal is to live a comfortable and moderate lifestyle, then the cartels are finding ways to provide that lifestyle while the government is not. However, if the people of Mexico were given some level of a choice, then theoretically their decisions should shift towards the other direction.

Violence is also a huge concern of citizenry, to the point that this last election was based solely on its reduction. Security should be the next concern of the government. Security is a basic human need and value in a society based in modernity and materialism, and if people are constantly worried of being shot, kidnapped or harassed within their own neighborhoods then the government has failed at its most basic duty: to protect the people over which it governs. However, when the government is able to prove to its people that it can provide security, safety, and public services it can then move forward to provide other needs of the Mexican people such as decent paying jobs.

Infrastructure building is necessary when constructing a strong, prideful, and non-corruptible people, and without a strong infrastructure that provides them with the jobs and pay necessary for living a moderate and fulfilling lifestyle, they will inevitably

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45 Archibald and Cave. “Candidates in Mexico.”

turn to a corrupting entity that will. The basic list for what the Mexican government needs to focus on is simple: public services, jobs, and security of its people. These all can be achieved if the removal of the government stalemate occurs, and the all the elected politicians can agree to do what is in the best interest of the people and not the best interest of the United States, the cartels, or any other outside businesses in the world. If they can do that, then it will become quite apparent that cartel problem is now manageable. People will actively choose not to rely on the cartels and thus stop supporting them because the government is now steadfast and trustworthy. Drug trafficking will lose its allure to the youth of Mexico as other more viable options will be available and have much less of a risk. The police will become an entity that can be trusted and called upon in case incidents do breakout, and people will be secure in knowing that calling the police will end the problem as they are well trained government officials that are ready for any situation instead of exacerbate the problem through bumbling incompetence or corruptive practices. In essence, the worldview of the Mexican citizens will change, and their realist actions will lead them to rationally choose the government over the cartels. The costs of choosing the cartels will become too high as the benefits remain the same, but the costs of accepting and choosing the government, as a strong state will decrease as the benefits expand exponentially. The political arena is a great starting point to begin fighting the cartels, but the actual corruption on the “ground” amongst the police force and other officials is something that must be addressed entirely on its own.

47 O’Neil, “Real War in Mexico.”
Corruption of Government Officials

The corruption within the police force and among government officials has been occurring for quite a long time and will be much harder to root out than simply legislating it away. Fortunately, there is a previous model the Mexican government can try to adapt to their needs: that model is the Colombian model. With help from the United States, Colombia was able to dig deep into the core of the corruption within the police force through a process of background checks, credit checks, physical tests, lie detector tests, field tests, and more until it was almost non-existent. As part of these tests, if at anytime any officer of any rank was suspected of being corrupted or corruptible they were immediately dismissed and if evidence surfaced that they had in some way aided cartels, they were arrested. In Colombia, over seven years, they removed hundreds of officers and military personnel and replaced them with professional men and women that were willing to perform the necessary job. Of course removing the personnel from these positions alone did not stop the corruption dead in its tracks and create a level of professionalism. It was also supported by the increase in salaries for all officers and military personnel. They were all being aptly compensated for doing a job that risked the lives of themselves and their family members. This pressed them to do their professions without giving into bribes and allowed them to enforce the law to the best of their abilities. Officers and government officials were able to trust that if their families

48 Tomas and Pipitone, “Inside Mexico’s Drug War.”
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
were in protective custody, they would not suddenly be kidnapped or killed because the guarding personnel handed them over to the higher paying cartels. This model was created through the rational efforts of both Colombia and the U.S. working together to actually understand why the corruption and violence was occurring. From a realist perspective, they understood how the world was and how it operated. They then worked together to systematically remove each area of concern piece by piece. It became inconceivable for an individual rational actor to find any reason to help the cartels, and the result was the cartels picking up and moving shop to Mexico because it was in their own best interests to not be in Columbia anymore. The Colombian model is based on a realist perspective of the world, and it forces every individual involved to rationally weigh the costs and benefits of picking one side over the other. The Mexican cartels learned quite a bit about how to operate based on the Colombian cartels and adapted this knowledge for their own situation; the Mexican government can do the same.

Several government officials are sitting on the payroll of the Mexican cartels and it is time to purge them from their offices. The extent of this corruption goes so far that there are even officers that are physically unfit to do any police work or do not have any legitimate or current training to carry out investigations.\textsuperscript{52} The new PRI administration must remove them from power if they want to achieve any form of security for Mexico’s most troubled areas. Unfortunately, this may cause quite a bit of strife as quite a few “good cops” may be found to be corrupt or been involved in the murders or disappearances of fellow officers, and it may take quite a bit of time, but it is

\textsuperscript{52} Grillo, \textit{El Narco}. 
a necessary to remove the root of the problem. Everyone must go, and every person that applies to be an officer must undergo a series of carefully scrutinized tests and continue to pass these tests throughout their occupation. As they proceed further into their career, their pay must increase as their rank increases. Being a police officer should go from a lackluster job with benefits and paychecks coming from the cartels, to a great job with paycheck and benefits all being funded by the government. Corruption will be prevented from the very beginning as most people will not give in to the monetary value being given by cartels and they can trust fellow officers with their friends and families if threats of violence surface. It sounds simple, but in reality this process is highly complicated and will take time, but if corruption is being prevented from even stepping foot into the academy then Mexico’s police will be in a much better position to defend their country. The cartels will only provide an external threat to the police from fighting, which is a bit easier to deal with than internal corruption.

The next area that must be examined more thoroughly by the Mexican government is the type of training this new batch of officers would receive. They will be facing people armed with ak-47s, grenades, bazookas, and other high-powered weaponry, and it only seems fitting that police are trained to use these types of weapons. This is not to say that the police should be a military entity. The police force should be dedicated to investigating crimes and serving the people they are there to protect, but it should never be confused with a military force. The military is there to fight foreign enemies attacking the sovereignty of Mexico; the police are there to enforce order and safety.

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53 Tomas and Pipitone, “Inside Mexico’s Drug War.”
amongst the civilians within Mexico. However, they should be able to respond to quickly escalating situations and have access to the right tools for the job. Knowing that the cartels have access to some military weaponry means that the police should have that access as well. Of course, once the situation dies down they will no longer need access to this weaponry and it can be given back to the military, but until then the police should have the correct training and weaponry to do a job that entails dealing with powerful criminals.

The process of removing government inaction and rebuilding Mexico’s infrastructure and police force from the ground up will be long, painful, and expensive. The country is already known for high unemployment and mass emigration due to simply a lack of resources in which citizens can take advantage. No one ever said that it would be an easy quick process; in reality, it could take up to ten years before a real turnaround can be seen within Mexico. Mexico really has no choice as it is walking a tightrope where falling off on either side will lead to a weak-state status. This process will not only take time and money, but it will take the removal of a culture that has been rooted in this country for the last 80 years. The expectancy of a new president turning the situation around and dealing with the root of the problem in matter of six years is unrealistic.
CHAPTER IV

TO INTERVENE OR NOT TO INTERVENE:
THE ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES
IN THIS CONTINUING CRISIS

As discussed in the previous chapter, Mexico’s history of trafficking illegal items, whether narcotics or liquor for profit, is quite long and colored. Although the people involved in trafficking varied in cultural background, products they were trafficking, and levels of enforcement that were looking to stop them, they all had one thing in common: their clientele and profits were within the United States. The United States played a large role in the trafficking history of Mexico; it is the destination of most of the products that flow through or come from Mexico and it is the source of the money that flows back to Mexico in the hands of illegal traffickers. To many people, the removal of the money coming from the United States will ultimately solve the problem of violence, death, and government disruption that is happening in Mexico. How to remove the money? Simply make illegal narcotics legal and allow them to be purchased in regular stores in the United States. The answer seems simple and straightforward enough to work. No illegal drug purchases, no illegal drug profits, and eventually no illegal drug cartels. The current situation is far more complicated, however, especially when one considers that the drug cartels are rational entities. The previous reign of the PRI has created roots within its own government that are far deeper than simple narcotic
trafficking. With the actions taken by President Vincente Fox and Felipe Calderón, the cartels have only become more powerful. There really is no turning back, and simply making illegal narcotics legal within the United States will not relieve all the problems occurring in Mexico due to cartels. There is a role for the United States to play, and that means looking at current policies and practices that are in action within the country and shifting those policies from stopping drugs to stopping cartels. As research shows, an examination of the following is necessary when discussing the role of the U.S.: gun control policy, drug policy towards users and dealers, coordination with Mexico to stop money laundering operations, better coordinate cross border drug operations, and making the authorities in the U.S. available to illegal immigrants for kidnappings occurring within the United States. By focusing on each of these and applying realist theory coupled with the rational actor decision model, the United States will sever the connection that it maintains with the cartels by shifting from stopping drugs to stopping cartels by drying up all of their resources and removing all of their tools. Without the United States taking a more active role in all of these areas as well as working with and aiding Mexico in their areas of need, some level of failure is inevitable.

The Iron River

As the pressure from the United States was being put onto the Mexican government to increase enforcement of narcotic trafficking, so too was pressure being put on cartels to protect their current investments. The “live and let live” policy was beginning to be violated with the creation of the DEA as they began carrying out their own operations to stop the trafficking that is coming into the United States. It was not
until 1985 when a DEA agent was killed during one of these undercover operations that the United States really put pressure on Mexico to crack down on cartels as an unspoken requirement to enter the Free Trade Agreement between the two countries.\(^1\) After the murder, there were many delays by the Mexican police in the investigation and this left a frustrated the Americans, especially when the murder was carried out by the very Colombian cartels that were being systematically taken apart by co-opted efforts from the American and Colombian governments.\(^2\) The circumstances were strenuous: a murder of an American DEA agent on Mexican soil carried out by a Colombian cartel member during an operation that was not necessarily supported by the Mexican government and brought into question the role of state sovereignty into the equation.

However as time went on, the Colombian cartels fell and Mexican cartels took over the drug trade, and the focus of the American government shifted. As a result, the “live and let live” policy of Mexican government officials ended. The crackdown resulted in a standoff between both sides of the drug trade in Mexico. This lasted until the election of Vincente Fox and the downfall of the PRI, which ultimately led to a sudden increase in violence because laws regarding illegal narcotics in Mexico were beginning to be enforced by the military. All of this backed by the United States in the name of reducing drug trafficking.\(^3\) One can see a direct correlation between violence and the take over of government by the PAN in 2000 as Vincente Fox pushed the United States narcotics

\(^1\) Gonzalez, “Mexico’s Drug Wars.”

\(^2\) Ibid.

\(^3\) Ibid.
The enforcement of this agenda rationally pushed the cartels into finding ways to protect their empires, and this is when access to weapons became a large component as to why cartels were/are able to resist the illegal narcotic reduction agenda by both governments. In this situation, the cartels were to choose whether or not they wanted to give up and submit to the government or they wanted to fight back. Considering the amount of money that was at stake, they chose to arm themselves, organize, and go to war with those who would try to stop the flow of money.

The role of weapons laws in the United States and how those laws are not only affecting the citizens within, but how those laws are also affecting people in neighboring countries, namely Mexico, began to gain a spotlight. Currently, the firearm debate within the United States sits with two opposing sides that divide the country: one side advocates for more gun control and the other advocates for less, with the former being a stance of the liberal Democratic Party and the latter being the stance of the conservative Republican Party. This debate is one of the few staples between the two parties that divide them, and it has resulted in a stalemate, which leaves the current laws that (vary by state) the same. Within the United States, essentially the only real federal law regarding firearms purchasing is two fold: all citizens have a constitutional right to firearms due to the second amendment pending a full criminal and mental background.

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4 Gonzalez, “Mexico’s Drug Wars.”

check of the individual purchasing the firearms. State and local governments handle further regulation of firearms, including the regulation of assault rifles. The federal assault rifle ban, which expired during President George W. Bush’s first term, has not been renewed since its expiration. Varying from state to state, it can be rather easy to purchase large amounts of weapons and ammunition in a very short period of time. This has been an aspect of U.S. politics that cartels have taken advantage of when looking to beef up their own arsenals with the states bordering Mexico ironically having some of the most lax gun control policies in the nation. Arizona, for example, almost solely relies on federal law for purchasers of weapons with the limit on the amount of weaponry and ammunition being left solely up to the discretion of arms dealer. One has to wonder if a country that is the highest exporter of firearms in the world is the best country for Mexican cartels to have direct access to, especially when the laws within said nation are also some of the most lax in the world.

It has already been stated that of the traceable firearms that the ATF confiscated in Mexico from cartels, 90% of those firearms were from the United States, with the other 10% of firearms were from third countries throughout the world. Sixty-

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9 “Firearms Trafficking.”
eight percent of these firearms were manufactured within the United States.\textsuperscript{10} The reason the other firearms could not be traced to their country of origin was because the cartels ground off or found ways to remove the serial numbers of the weapons. Many will argue that the key word in this information is “traceable” firearms, which means that those that are not traceable could be from some other countries throughout the world. This is true; they could in fact be from other countries. However, it could also mean that these untraceable weapons could be from the United States as well. Regardless, the majority of weaponry is coming from the United States into Mexico and it is getting into the hands of the drug cartels that are waging a war against their government forces. Weapons that are coming from their northern neighbors are murdering police, military soldiers, government officials, other cartel members, and civilians caught in the crossfire. The debate of gun control continually wages within the United States, and while it does, the country of Mexico suffers. What is it that the U.S. government can do to help Mexico until the issue is resolved?

The only rational option for the United States is to make it a priority of local and federal policing agencies to put a stop to arms trafficking. This will require more stringent investigations into citizens purchasing large amounts of firearms and ammunition, the purchasing of specific types of firearms, and the monitoring of arms dealers throughout the states bordering Mexico. Also, the stopping and searching of citizens going into Mexico and increased funding to carry out all of these tasks is necessary as well. The U.S. has the ability to choose either increase funding to decrease

\textsuperscript{10}“Firearms Trafficking.”
the amount of firearms entering Mexico or to do nothing and allow firearms to continue entering Mexico. At the interstate level of analysis, cutting off the trafficking of firearms should become more of a priority of the federal government than actually catching drug dealers that are going in and out of the United States. As stated earlier, the focus for the United States must change from stopping drugs to stopping cartels, and by drying up the primary arsenal resources of the cartels, the United States will have aided Mexico in the long uphill battle for their country. This must be done in a correct and efficient manner, which is the exact opposite of the “Fast and Furious” operation that was carried out by the ATF.

The Iron River, Operation Fast and Furious, and a Lesson Learned

From 2009 to 2011, the ATF began an operation that would try to hit the cartels at the core of their arsenals, and allow data to be gathered to track where the cartels were getting their weapons. The concept of the operation was to track different identified gun traffickers and allow them to buy as many guns as they wanted, track the weapons, and bust the final buyers as means to demonstrate to the cartels that the U.S. government is tracing their every move.11 The result was a loss of over 2,000 high-powered weapons and their repeated disbursement to various cartels because ATF agents were looking to build their case more than necessary.12 This was a huge “black-eye” to the ATF and the entire United States government. In this case, the ineptitude of the ATF


resulted in several deaths by guns traced directly back to this failed operation. December 14, 2010, U.S. Border Patrol Agent Brian Terry engaged in a firefight and was shot and killed by automatic assault weapons traced directly back to the “Fast and Furious” operation.\textsuperscript{13} Since the failed operation, there are still 1,400 unrecovered weapons.\textsuperscript{14} This situation is a solid demonstration of what can happen when both states refuse to cooperate. The intentions were in the right place, but the result was a catastrophe. In order to prevent this from happening again, more interstate coordination must occur especially when logging and tracking weapons that could possibly get into the wrong hands.

Of course this is much more difficult than it sounds, and it will require both countries working together at the interstate level of analysis to ensure that proper logs of information are not only being kept, but they also must be shared. The problem of this not only comes in the form of possible corruption of Mexican police, but it also comes in the form of funding.\textsuperscript{15} The United States and the Mexican federal police forces are vastly different in terms of funding, resources, and equipment. When it comes to logging and sharing information, it becomes quite evident that the funding and resources of the Mexican police is a huge concern when at times they only have one staffer documenting the information of confiscated firearms.\textsuperscript{16} This creates a huge lag in turnaround, and it

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{14} Horwitz, “A Gun Running Sting.”
\textsuperscript{15} Tomas and Pipitone, “Inside Mexico’s Drug War.”
\textsuperscript{16} “Firearms Trafficking.”
\end{flushright}
does not allow for planning and action to occur. A sharing of resources between the two government entities must occur if weapons’ trafficking is to stop. This can occur in several forms including funding of more employees/officers, the loaning of personnel, or the loaning of equipment. Any combination can occur, but the Mexican authorities are severely underfunded, understaffed, and undertrained when it comes to dealing with weapons trafficking. U.S. authorities must provide this as a form of cooperation. With well-oiled machines on both sides of the border looking to stop the flow of arms trafficking from the United States into Mexico, the iron river will be dammed and one resource used by the cartels will be slowed to a trickle.

United States Drug Policy

In 2003, the United Nations put out a report that stated the world illegal drug trade ranged in the $320 billion mark.\footnote{Niklas Pollard, “UN Report Puts World’s Illicit Drug Trade at Estimated $321b,” \textit{The Boston Globe}, June 30, 2005, http://www.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2005/06/30/un_report_puts_worlds_illicit_drug_trade_at_estimated_321b/ (accessed August 10, 2012).} The United States has an estimated $62 billion worth of clientele within its borders.\footnote{Tomas and Pipitone, “Inside Mexico’s Drug War.”} This makes the United States one of, if not the largest purchaser of illegal narcotics in the world, a market that seems to only grow with the amount of restrictions that are being placed on the citizens within the country. At the domestic unit of analysis, drug policy of the United States has been in debate almost since the conception of the country, and it will continually be a contested issue. This section is not to push towards one side or the other of the debate over legalization versus prohibition, but it is to look at the current policies in place and find ways to use these.
policies as best as possible to better the current situation. As of now, there are a group of narcotics that are illegal within the United States, but are providing a huge profit for those that are willing to take advantage of the market. In most instances, these narcotics can be damaging and debilitating to the user if abused. The U.S. reaction to this information has been to lockdown these narcotics as much as possible and to prevent their usage by the average citizen with the goal of protecting the citizen from himself/herself. The result has been the average citizen giving money indirectly to cartels and funding their entire operation in exchange for unregulated illegal narcotics. In this unlawful operation, the users’ risk is two fold: potentially overdosing on unmeasured and unregulated drugs and potentially being caught and put into the ever expanding criminal justice system. Due to the current form of prohibition, the state has actually increased the possible amount of damage to a citizen’s life instead of reaching the original goal of protecting them from themselves, while at the same time funding those that are looking to harm citizens in the name of profit. Prohibition is currently the way that the United States is operating, with a slow but steady trek towards legalization. According to a 2011 Gallup Poll, in 1969 only 12% of Americans supported legalization of marijuana; this number has increased to 50% of Americans who support legalization of marijuana.\footnote{Frank Newport, “Record-High 50% of Americans Favor Legalizing Marijuana Use,” Gallup Politics, October 17, 2011, http://www.gallup.com/poll/150149/record-high-americans-favor-legalizing-marijuana.aspx (accessed August 11, 2012).} While this is a large increase, it still shows that the American public is still wholly divided on what to do about marijuana legalization, with the legalization numbers for other drugs like cocaine and heroin much worse. Prohibition is currently the path that is being chosen, but in order to damage the cartels, its enactment must be more thoroughly thought out.
A survey of high school students showed that 59% of them had used marijuana, 16% had used cocaine, and 14% had used stimulants of some form in the preceding month.\(^\text{20}\) Cocaine usage went up to 30% of people by the time they reached their senior year of college.\(^\text{21}\) The customer base for drug cartels is huge and banning the usage of these drugs is not reducing their profit margins at all. In order to deal with this aspect, it may be necessary to think outside of the box. Instead of punishing people and encouraging them to “keep to the shadows” in terms of their illegal narcotics usage, it will be more beneficial for all parties involved to be reassured into admitting their transgressions and then offering them an array of social services to stop their current usage and prevent future temptations. Many will question this concept as a means of rewarding those that break the law with government support. In essence, this is exactly what this theory is stating. Dr. John Marks founded the Chapel Street Clinic in 1982 in the Liverpool Suburb of Widnes England. At this clinic, Dr. Marks treated heroin addicts with psychology and weekly doses of heroin, only to find these addicts slowly removing themselves from their own addiction.\(^\text{22}\) They were able to maintain jobs, crime in the city was reduced, and many addicts began actively using government services to try and put their lives back together.\(^\text{23}\) Drug use reduction and overall drug control cannot be achieved through full prohibition or full access. Full prohibition creates an allure that can


\(^{21}\) Ibid.

\(^{22}\) Gray, *Drug Crazy*.

\(^{23}\) Ibid.
only be satisfied by those that are more than willing to exploit their customers to keep them coming back; full access promotes a wealth of overuse and possible misuse by those that are ignorant of the consequences. According to Dr. Marks, control of narcotics is optimal when it is treated as a U-curve, the controlled distribution mixed with other physical and mental services to be available to those that would use and abuse these narcotics.24

Shannon O’Neil has brought up a similar concept as well. The offering of treatment to offenders instead of the punishment and mandatory sentencing of them is a prime concept that O’Neil is not afraid to champion in her writings.25 As stated earlier, treating drug offenders and preventing those that could become addicted is five times more effective than the type of prohibition that is currently occurring as of now.26 If the goal is to hurt the cartels while at the same time protecting the American public, it can be achieved by removing the customers from the cartels. The rational model has been applied in both of these instances almost as if it were a mathematical model. Clientele and drugs supplied by cartels equal money for cartels, which when used correctly creates power for the cartels and has the side effect of destroying citizens. Using a rational decision model, if the U.S. goal is to cripple the cartels then they have to remove the clientele from the equation. This means switching from an organizational process model

24 Gray, *Drug Crazy.*

25 O’Neil, “Real War in Mexico.”

26 Ibid.
of having the standard response to all drug offenders, which has a weak or undefined goal based solely on standard operation of the 1960s to a rational decision model.27

As of now, the United States has shown signs of this switch to clearly defined goals when it enacted the creation of the drug court. The original creation of the drug court was to provide a necessary alternative outlet of processing the increased amount of drug offenders being trafficked through the criminal justice system.28 In this process, the offender interacts directly and personally with the judge as a means to help treat the offender outside of the clinic.29 This has resulted in the drug courts themselves being overcrowded and only a small reduction in recidivism rates. The rate of re-arresting drug offenders within three years is at 67% if there is no program involvement occurring.30 Drug courts have been a bit more successful with some dropping recidivism rates down to 44%.31 These types of programs for drug offenders are a step in the right direction as they recognize the need for a different type of system for these people, but they still are not entirely on the mark when it comes to dealing with drug offenders. Treatment must occur, but the system that is currently in place is forcing this treatment upon offenders by providing them with either stepping through the program or going to prison. The organizational thought process model that is currently dominating the execution of the

27 Goldstein, *International Relations*.


29 Ibid.


31 Nolan, *Drug Courts in Theory*.
program is that through giving individual drug offenders these two options they will happily go through the drug court program and change their behavior because this is what is expected as part of the process. The fault of this logic lies in the fact that these drug offenders are not making decisions based on the organizational process model, but they are making decisions based on the rational process model. The drug offender’s goal is to get back to using illegal narcotics as quickly and as painlessly as possible. When weighing a choice between prison and rehab, the answer is most often going to be rehab, whether they intend to change their behavior or not. These people are highly rational actors at the individual unit of analysis, and to think otherwise will continue to yield the current results.

In reality, to have the most amount of success for treating these offenders is to allow them to receive treatment and support when they feel they are ready to embrace it. Success rates will skyrocket as recidivism and drug usage rates drop. However, as long as treatment is forced, resistance will occur and illegal usage of drugs in the U.S. will continue to fuel the operations of the drug cartels in Mexico. The role of U.S. drug policy has a direct effect on how Mexico can proceed with eliminating the cartels that are plaguing their country; this role is to find ways to remove the profit margin from the cartels.

Mixing Business with Drugs

The removal of the profit margin from cartels does not only reside in cutting off cartels from their customers, but it also resides in cutting off cartels from their alternative businesses. Running a multi-billion dollar illegal enterprise is bound to catch
the attention of several international authorities, which will lead to the enterprise being shut down immediately. Of course, those running said enterprise will want to preserve it, so they find ways to ensure that authorities do not detect the money being used by investing it into various businesses and stocks around the world. This process had to be refined, as the first instances of money laundering came in the form of Colombian couriers picking up the money made from street-corner dealers and simply depositing it into the nearest banks so the weight of the money did not have to be carried around the city.  

Eventually as the Colombian operations became more and more sophisticated and generated larger amounts of cash, the U.S. government began passing laws like the Banking Secrecy Act requiring banks to report deposits $10,000 and over and withdrawals $5,000 and over with a rational goal of being able to track this money and shutdown operations. Banks are rational entities themselves and enjoyed the large amount of wealth being brought into their system and, with goal of keeping that wealth, they rationally began the breaking down of large deposits and withdrawals, which became a service that they happily provided. Essentially the Banking Secrecy Act of 1970 was a toothless law that was easily avoided until the DEA, FBI, and IRS were allowed to charge those that were dodging it with a felony. When President Ronald Regan signed the National Security Decision Directive No. 221 making drug enforcement a national security issue, he created a wave of backlash on the banking system within the

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33 Ibid.
United States as banks were being punished for doing business with the Colombian cartels.\textsuperscript{34} Assets were being frozen, powerful and legitimate clients of the banks were being questioned and embarrassed resulting in them leaving the banks, and constant audits created too much of a hassle for banks to want to do business with cartels. The usage of banks within the United States as a means of laundering money became an impossibility and soon after countries around the world followed in the footsteps of the United States, cutting off the cartels from many of the easiest entities for money laundering. During this time period, the Colombian cartels tried to adapt to their money troubles by trying other methods of laundering and while not all countries followed the example of the U.S. and Colombia, the Colombian cartels were feeling the pressure from those governments working together in other aspects. The removal of money laundering schemes was a huge blow to the Colombian cartels and it must be done in the same manner to Mexican cartels.

As of now, it is well known that Banamex has some level of dealings with Mexican cartels. The amount and the extent to which these dealings occurs is not entirely known as several documents outlining this information have never been turned over by the bank. Knowing that Citibank, a U.S. banking institution, has bought Banamex has left many to wonder what are the connections between the Mexican cartels and this U.S. banking institution. With no concrete evidence to begin launching an investigation, the truth cannot be uncovered. This instance of a banking institution constantly “slipping through the fingers” of both Mexican and U.S. authorities has not discouraged either

\textsuperscript{34} Andelman, “The Drug Money Maze.”
government from trying their best to crackdown on other banks that are allowing money laundering to still occur. Recently the Mexican bank HSBC was levied a $27.5 million dollar fine by regulators for failing to report 39 suspicious transactions and being late in reporting 1,729. According to the U.S., this bank had been a “conduit for drug kingpins” for quite some time and through joint efforts regulators were finally able to crackdown on them. This is a great example of a well-known bank being handily punished for dealing in illegal activity and it must be continued. There are other areas that must be continually examined though because money laundering can happen anywhere at any time.

This is where U.S. training and information sharing with Mexico can come in handy. The crackdown on HSBC came from the two countries continually working together to stop these operations. The Mexican government has modeled some of its most recent banking regulations, such as deposit and withdrawal limitations, from the regulations imposed on the banking system of the U.S. These types of ideas must continually be shared if success is to be had; the cartels are innovative and constantly trying to find loopholes and ways around the limitations and traps being set for them by the government. For example, instances of money laundering through the use of nightclubs are both inventive and not uncommon. Also, the funding of public construction projects via the use of drug money is another way in which cartels are

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36 Merco Press, “Mexican Regulators Impose.”

37 Grayson, Mexico: Narco-Violence.
getting around the banking lockdown. The horse racing operation being carried out by the Zetas was extremely imaginative and brilliant, but that came tumbling down through joint efforts of U.S. and Mexican authorities. Technology, training, and information sharing are the only ways in which these laundering operations in both the U.S. and Mexico can be stopped. This is similar to the situation that occurred with the Colombian cartels, with one small difference: the Colombians were hit during their downfall and the Mexicans must be hit during their upswing using different methods. It is well known by traffickers that the banks are being monitored, so other methods are being used. Mexico and the U.S. must work together to find these methods, close the loopholes, and cut the cartels off from any legitimate business they may have. By doing so, they will be cut off from their allies and the wealth they do amass will be more or less rendered useless since it will not be able to be moved or used efficiently. Stopping their laundering schemes will effectively make their large drug trade operation collapse on itself from the weight of its own profits.

The Profit of Kidnapping

Kidnapping is not only used by the Mexican cartels to intimidate any person or group of people into accepting or supporting their operations throughout the country. It is also the second largest income creator for the cartels behind the actual trafficking of

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illegal narcotics. The kidnapping of a person often leads to a demanded ransom in exchange for the victim, and if this ransom is not paid then a death sentence is almost guaranteed. Even paying the ransom does not always yield a 100% chance of survival for a victim. Depending on who the victim is in relation to whom the cartels are looking to punish (government officials, police officers, rival cartels, journalists or average dissenting citizens) the kidnappers may push to get as much money as possible by constantly demanding more. Each time the ransom is paid, the price goes up until it is not paid anymore for any variety of reasons, and then the victim is put to death often in a brutal manner.

In Mexican culture, the family dynamic is extremely strong, and the cartels know that as they have experienced it themselves; this is why they choose to prey on this aspect of life within Mexico whenever possible, the results are often quite profitable. From 2005 to 2010 in Mexico, kidnappings have gone up 317% with an average of 3.7 kidnappings being reported a day in Mexico; other cartels and gangs noticed the profit of the act and have resolved to take a slice of the profits. Currently there is a rise of activism as citizens and police are starting to get the gears rolling to find ways to combat these crimes. Active citizens are demanding a stop to this from their government, and slowly officials are responding but this type of response by citizens and officials alike is not happening on the same level in the U.S.

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40 Longmire, Cartel.
41 Ibid.
42 Grillo, El Narco.
43 Ibid.
Perhaps the reason is because many people think that kidnappings happening in Mexico are not of any concern of the United States; it is a domestic problem having to do with Mexico that must remain domestic and it need not escalate to the interstate level. The United States has its own kidnapping/missing person’s problem that is occurring and these cases are not often solved; the taking in of another nation’s problem would be overload. In reality, many of the kidnappings that are done by cartels are occurring either in the United States or are crossing the border into the United States as a destination spot to hold victims.\textsuperscript{44} Six year-old Cole Puffinburger was kidnapped at gunpoint after members of an unnamed drug cartel were robbed of millions of dollars by Cole’s grandfather Clemons Tinnemeyer.\textsuperscript{45} His abductors were looking to force Tinnemeyer out of hiding in order to get their money back and possibly send a message to him and others not to deal underhandedly with them. Cole is a U.S. citizen who was kidnapped from his home as a form of retaliation being carried out by the drug cartels on U.S. soil. His case is not an anomaly either, as reported kidnappings in Arizona alone have doubled.\textsuperscript{46} U.S. local authorities are doing their best when it comes to kidnapping cases that involve U.S. citizens, but at times local municipalities may not have the intelligence or the resources to take the necessary steps to track down kidnapping cases. Aid may be given to the local authorities in the form of access to some federal resources that may help in solving kidnapping cases that involve drug cartels. For example, in Cole’s case it may have helped local authorities if they were able to access federal databases on his family’s

\textsuperscript{44} Longmire, Cartel.


\textsuperscript{46} Grayson, \textit{Mexico: Narco-Violence}. 
background in hopes of finding information on his grandfather quicker. He may have not been found any quicker, but at least authorities would know what they are getting into, and might even have an ideal of where to start. Access to these databases would need to be limited with local authorities going through the proper channels to access them, but this would be a great resource in resolving and hopefully reducing some of these kidnappings of U.S. citizens. The question remains though, what about the kidnappings of people who are not U.S. citizens?

Immigration is currently a hot button issue in the United States, with one side of the debate not in favor illegal immigrants in the U.S. receiving the same services that citizens and legal immigrants receive. The debate itself rages on two extremes, but neither side discusses the role that drug cartels play in illegal immigration. The trafficking of persons from the Mexico into the United States is a source of income for cartels, as families often pay for their services to get into the United States and they continue to pay for their services once inside the United States. Often these families that are coming into the U.S. illegally do not have the finances to pay their debt off to the cartels, and this results in payment occurring in other forms. Prostitution rings and slave labor are some of the forms of payment that are extorted by cartels, but also it is not unheard of for individuals to cross the border with cartel help and for their families to never hear from those individuals again. When faced with these incidents, illegal immigrants are disinclined to report them to the U.S. police for fear of being deported back to Mexico. The story of Lupe Gonzalez, outlined in Sylvia Longmire’s book,

47 Longmire, Cartel.
Cartel, is a great example of why illegal immigrants often refuse to report kidnappings to U.S. authorities.

Lupe had traveled to the United States for work, and left her three children behind with relatives. She missed her children and had hired a “coyote” (a person skilled in getting people across the border) and her brother to help get her children across the border into the United States. Along the way armed men stopped them and the children were kidnapped and taken to Texas. Lupe received a ransom call for $3,000, and with help from her family she was able to pay it. The result was another demand for money, this time $9,000. With no options left Lupe went to Texas authorities, which helped rescue her children and arrest the kidnappers who were members of a prominent cartel in Mexico. The authorities also detained Lupe and her children for being in the U.S. illegally and as of 2010 they were being processed for removal by U.S. immigration authorities.48

The names in this story have been changed for protection of the individuals, but the story is true. The debate of illegal immigration becomes much deeper when the consideration of drug cartels and their role is considered but, as in all other questions in this thesis, one has to consider what will hurt the cartels the most.

Kidnapping and human trafficking into the United States is a known operation that the cartels are currently involved in running. The way to damage this operation would be two-fold: first would be governments on each side of the border stepping up efforts and resource sharing between themselves and the public, and second is to allow illegals some level of immunity when reporting on illegal activities of cartels operating within the United States. The first activity seems to be slowly evolving into its rightful place while second is still not anywhere near being put into place. Taking into consideration there could be many false reports of cartel activity, it would be possible to reduce this by means of limiting that immunity through means of penalizing false reports.

48 Longmire, Cartel, 89.
This process would need to be fine tuned, but the concept is a start in regards to taking a stab at the cartels and limiting their operations and thus their finances. The goal is to end the current power hold over the Mexican people and government. By limiting the reach of the cartels and by cutting off an area of finances by removing a section of their operation, the goal begins to become reachable. By shrinking a problem, it becomes much more manageable.

An Examination of International Law

In this section of the thesis, it has been argued quite often that the need of some level of increased U.S. intervention into Mexico will be necessary to weaken the cartels to a point where the Mexican government can end the cartel hold of Mexico. Naturally though when discussing action at the interstate unit of analysis, questions of sovereignty, international law, and the validity or the level to which that law is upheld are going to be deliberated. As displayed throughout this thesis, there are several elements to the problem of drug cartels that cross state lines between Mexico and the United States, but the question is at what point is the United States allowed to intervene in the situation without the acknowledgement or support of Mexico?

Consistent with international law, all states have a right to sovereignty and as part of this sovereignty they have the ability to conduct their own affairs concerning their own population without the fear of intervention of other states. On the other hand, the principles of extraterritorial jurisdiction in international law may enable the United States
to intervene. Of course, there are some limits to state sovereignty including universal crimes such as genocide, terrorist acts, and actions that threaten international peace and stability.

In the case of Mexico, cartels are crossing over into the United States, but that could arguably just make them international criminals that must be dealt with by each state (U.S. and Mexico) domestically. Just because they are crossing the border does not necessarily give the United States the right to conduct operations in Mexico without Mexico backing and sanctioning those operations. “Article 8 of the Convention on the Rights and Duties of States provides that no ‘state has the right to intervene in the internal or external affairs of another.’”

There are loopholes that can be exploited, and arguments that can be presented when finding different reasons to intervene in Mexico without their permission. As stated earlier, there were operations being carried out on Mexican soil without the sanctioning of the Mexican government and one result was a DEA agent being killed. Due to Mexico wanting to be a part of the Free Trade Agreement, and the U.S. knowing there was a violation of sovereignty occurring with that operation, neither side really addressed the issue of the cartels and how to deal with them at the interstate level. Both sides more or less let the other deal with the cartels in their own manner, with the U.S. providing the Merida Initiative to Latin America as a means of aid. However, with the recent increase of atrocities occurring near the U.S. border one can argue that these acts


50 Ibid.
are instilling a level of terror into U.S. citizens and thus the U.S. has the ability to intervene as deemed necessary. Also, U.S. citizens are being put more at risk as drug lords like El Teo who was caught in Tijuana, a high volume American tourist spot, are choosing to hide amongst U.S. tourists.\textsuperscript{51} The question is how the United States wants to interpret international law and what theoretical approach it will take.

Currently, the U.S. is operating under what has been described in Michael Doyle’s book, \textit{Ways of War and Peace} as a realist short-term intervention approach: the security, prestige and profit motive necessary to intervene is not entirely present for intervention to occur.\textsuperscript{52} There have been a few small acts of intervention, but for the most part the U.S. has largely ignored the problem in its varying aspects. The result has been the U.S. fortifying its own defenses by beefing up the DEA, ATF, and other federal authorities to defend against cartels entering and exiting the country. The rational theory behind this thought process is that the goal for the U.S. is to protect its own assets and let Mexico fend for itself. Currently, the costs outweigh the benefits from the U.S. realist view of Mexico; there is no benefit to helping the country and cost could be more dead DEA agents.

However, with the U.S. continuing to act inherently realist with the rational pursuit of its own self-interest, one can determine that if the U.S. merely understood where the profit, security, and prestige of intervention occurred then intervention would


\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{52} Michael W. Doyle, \textit{Ways of War and Peace} (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997).}
happen rapidly.\textsuperscript{53} Justification for intervention is simple enough to find: the threat of violence towards U.S. citizens and the security challenges associated with having an unstable border. Once these items come onto the radar of the U.S. government, according to realist theory, intervention will occur regardless of international law. Eventually the United States and Mexico will have a showdown with the drug cartels as this problem continues to grow, spread, and mutate into a larger enterprise. The U.S., as a rational entity, must consider where it wants to fight these cartels: on U.S. soil or Mexican soil. If the U.S. is actually acting as a realist entity with self-interest as its motivation, it will realize that there are going to be a large amount of dead bodies stacking up and where those bodies stack up matters. The choice by the U.S. should and will be in Mexico, regardless of international law.

Summary

After reading this chapter, many will look at the role the United States should play and wonder why it is that there are quite a few more items on the “to do” list of the U.S. versus the “to do” list of Mexico. The simple answer is because it has the ability to execute most of these things as its current system operates and, if not, then simple adjustments will more than suffice. The main line of argument here is funding, training, and communication. Whether that funding is in terms of personnel to stop the gun trade beginning in the United States and ending in Mexico or that training is of Mexican police in takedown tactics of organized/militarized crime, or communication between head officials of different operations occurring on either side of the border, all three of these

\textsuperscript{53} Goldstein, \textit{International Relations}. 
must be present. Currently, the Merida Initiative is a $1.6 billion funding operation of the United States that gives money to Mexico and other Central and South American countries over three years (beginning in 2008) as aid in combating drug trafficking, transnational crime, arms trafficking, and money laundering.\(^5^4\) This is a very decent proposal to begin with, but one has to remember that these countries are splitting this aid between them and that aid is over a period of three years. When broken down and compared to the multi-billion dollar operation a year of the cartels, this number begins to seem insignificant. More has to be done if the cartels are to be uprooted from Mexico. As seen since 2008, that money has barely made a dent and, in many ways, the violence in Mexico has only become worse; that funding must come much larger and it must come with training and communication.

The budget of the United States is currently constrained due to economic and political turmoil. The U.S. really has no other choice than to find the funding to support efforts to eradicate the cartels if victory in the elimination of the drug cartels is the ultimate goal. For example, as stated earlier, many Mexican officers are ill trained, unprofessional, and unfit for their duty as officers of the law, which has led to the realization that the eventual uprooting of their entire policing structure and starting fresh is inevitable if the corruption is to be removed.\(^5^5\) During this process, which will take a copious amount of time and money that the Mexican government also does not have, Mexico will have no other choice but to rely on the U.S. for guidance in establishing a


\(^{55}\) Grillo, El Narco.
successful federal and local police force. On the other side of the border, the FBI has over 35,000 agents and the DEA has over 10,000 agents and both of which are highly trained and extremely professional. They have been established for years and are considered a force to be reckoned with throughout the world as they have brought down numerous international crime rings by working with many countries around the globe. The U.S. has the ability to give the Mexican policing authorities the necessary training and communication tactics to run the cartels into the ground just based off these two agencies alone, not including all the others that specialize in different areas of crime. In order for this to happen though, the money has to be found and used competently or Mexico will potentially create a similar unsuccessful situation just with different people in officer uniforms. The U.S. just has to invest, which is not the same as starting from scratch. 

Funding is stretched, resources are thin, but it is necessary that the U.S. address each of the discussed areas in this chapter: arms trafficking, drug policy, money laundering, and kidnapping all of which will require some form of funding, training, and communication between the U.S. and Mexico. When this occurs, the cartels will be severely crippled and the Mexican government will finally be able to go on the offensive with much needed support from its northern allies.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION: WHAT HAPPENS IF FAILURE OCCURS?

Mexico and the United States face big challenges in confronting and controlling the cartels rampant in Mexico. All aspects of the problem must be addressed and many of these aspects touch hotly debated issues in both countries. The current situation in Mexico may be characterized as drug war, and the failure of the government to succeed in this war must be taken into consideration. This is why a discussion of government failure and what it means for Mexico, the U.S., and all people involved is the next and final step when evaluating the situation of Mexico and the possible future it may have when the dust finally settles.

Weak State Status

When discussing state failure in terms of Mexico one must realize that the term “failure” must be examined in a different manner than when looking at other states around the world that have technically “failed” or fallen into a “failed state status.” For example, Somalia is considered a failed state for several reasons: a lack of a centralized government, large amounts of refugees or displaced persons, large amounts of unchecked famine, perpetually warring “tribes,” and an absence of real signs of improvement or stabilization in the future. A group looking to capitalize on this situation of a failed state
was Al-Qaeda because their leaders believed the chaos and desolation of the people would actually provide a solid ground for recruiting new members and building up their own numbers and strength.\(^1\) This has proven partially correct, but since there is no control in Somalia, they are finding that they have essentially become one of the warring tribes and they have not been able to use the country or its people for their benefit. Afghanistan has recently been called a failed state for similar reasons: large amounts of displaced persons and perpetual civil war for control over a government. However, upon examination of Mexico and its current status, one will realize that it will not fall in the same manner because there are the interests of the very people that are pushing it to the brink. As demonstrated throughout this thesis, the cartels themselves are inherently realists in their actions and their ways of doing business. If trafficking of illegal drugs is brutal, sadistic and terrifying, then it is also a business. This means that if the cartel leaders are brutal, sadistic socio-paths then they are also businessmen or CEOs of multi-billion dollar corporations. Constant blood shed between the government and traffickers is bad for business, as it scares away customers and pushes other nearby governments into action as a means of ensuring the stabilization of their own countries.

An example of this is the United States and its involvement in Colombian cartel trafficking, and its currently limited but slowly increasing involvement in Mexican cartel trafficking. As stated earlier, the Colombian cartel wars were spilling over into Florida, and it prompted swift action from Ronald Reagan to give the DEA more teeth to put a stop to the violence on U.S. soil.

What is good for narcotic trafficking business, on the other hand, is a
tsymbiotic or even a “puppeteer” like relationship between the government and narcotic
traffickers, otherwise known as a weak-state status. As a realist entity operating in the
domestic level of analysis with an influence on the interactions between interstate units of
analysis, the cartel leaders are going to do what is best for them in terms of maximizing
not only their wealth, but their power as well. They see themselves as having the ability
to either “force the hand” of the United States by making it in the best interest of the U.S.
to get more involved due to the excessive violence or they can lull the U.S. into an area of
passivity as the violence subsides. Knowing that the U.S. is a realist, rational and self-
interested entity itself, the cartels will find a way to make its involvement unwanted.

Currently, with a failing economy and high levels of violence in different
areas of the country, Mexico is seeing a decreased interest in investments from other
countries as well as a decreased ability to compete with other nations like China and the
Caribbean in terms of export production and foreign assembly plant creation.\(^2\) The
government in its current state is unable to support the Mexican people; however, a deal
struck between the government and the cartels could provide the tools needed to pick up
the country’s economy and restore some level of “faith” in government officials.
Business for narcotic traffickers will likely take a turn towards providing security benefits
as the government will become ineffective in enforcing narcotics laws and officials of the
government will become “wholly owned subsidiaries” of the drug cartels. The situation
in Mexico is quite similar to the situation in Somalia, except that the cartels have the

\(^2\) Baer, “Mexico At An Impasse.”
ability to keep some level of infrastructural control over the situation. It is a balancing act that the cartels want to have between a failed and a strong state of Mexico. The failed state would be Somalia where really no faction has control and no means of an operation can be established. The strong state would be the U.S. where people can call the police and expect them to show up and handle a situation, and the corruption of politicians is still a scandal. A weak state is where a narcotics operation can be established and if government officials for some reason interfere, then a small bribe is enough to make the problem go away. Applying rational-choice theory to the problem, this is how a self-motivated entity such as a drug cartel will want to act as it maximizes its own benefits while minimizing its costs. Their power and the expansion of it is all that matters, and the best way to expand that power is to maintain a level of calm control over the people they are working among. The PRI had this level of agreement in place before, and if the cartels have their way, then this is how the country will go back to operating. This is how democracy will fail in Mexico, and it is how Mexico will slip into a lesser-state status; it will not be a failed state, but rather, a weak state.

From the outside, Mexico will look like a well-oiled and well-funded machine with state officials doing their jobs. The country will look like a safe place for investors from around the world in which to invest and set up new factories and franchises. Funding for different government projects will be available and civil society itself will appear to be at an functioning. When examined more closely, however, the truth about where the money and peace is coming from will be exposed. Behind the door deals will be where decisions about government are being made, not at polling stations and voting booths. The charade of an election between several candidates in several areas of
government will occur, but no matter who is elected, the outcome will be the same: the cartels will remain behind the scenes, pulling the puppet strings of all elected officials to ensure that policy creation will continue to benefit them. Policy may vary from state to state, as different cartels control different states, but in reality, the vote will no longer count for anything substantial. This is what it means to fall into a weak-state status: the drug traffickers essentially take on the role of government in many capacities and thus undermine the concept of democracy.

As stated earlier in the literature review, many authors and researchers believe that Mexico has not yet reached this status. While there is rampant corruption, and in a few areas of Mexico the government is losing its battle for control, the state, as a whole, is not in a position of failure. The government is still operational and it is doing its best to fight off the cartels and reestablish control. Even though the government is currently operating in an inefficient manner in regards to fighting the cartels, it is still fighting. How long it can fight is another entirely different question, as time, resources and hope is running out. The following map of Mexico shows the current division of the country as cartels are continuing to spread and expand their operations as rational actors and business entities (Figure 1).

Large cartels are coming up with new and more imposing ways to rally not only their own troops, but also to inspire the civilians and intimidate officials. La Familia is a large and dominant cartel with many of its members coming from Michoacán.3 This cartel is known to be brutal but also revolutionary. One of their first acts of violence that

3 Grayson, Mexico: Narco-Violence.
Figure 1. Areas of cartel influence in Mexico.⁴

gave them notice and fame was when they fired a few shots into the air at a nightclub and threw five severed human heads onto the dance floor with a note calling their act “divine justice” as they only kill those that deserve it and the innocent will always be spared.⁵

This cartel has continued different forms of public relations, including religious quotes, to try and sway the people of Mexico to support them in their divine war against the government and other cartels. In many areas of Mexico, the brutality of this cartel, mixed with revolutionary rhetoric and small charity work, has influenced the average citizen to


⁵ Grayson, Mexico: Narco-Violence.
favor them over the government. They often state they are the crime fighters of Michoacán, executing wrong doers, without trial and at their own discretion. The La Familia cartel is powerful, well funded, and it is dedicated to increasing its power over Mexico.

The Gulf Cartel is another example of a cartel exploiting the increasing weak state status of Mexico by recruiting, as a means to seize and maintain power, well-trained deserters of the Mexican military and Special Forces. Their close relationship with Mexican military gave them access to soldiers looking for a “career change” and found the drug trafficking field as a viable means to work. This is how the birth of “Los Zetas” occurred; they were originally the muscle of the Gulf Cartel. As Los Zetas began to grow and establish their own reputation, they eventually splintered off from the Gulf Cartel, and they have become their own organization and a dominant force in the drug trafficking game. Their brutality is well known, as they are willing to kidnap, decapitate and murder any person/people that may stand in their way. One of their crimes included kidnapping of 72 immigrants from Central and South America and marching them out into a deserted area; after giving them the opportunity to pay a ransom or become foot soldiers, the Zetas executed them. There has not been an explanation for these actions since they occurred, but they have only added to the infamy of Los Zetas. This reputation is one of the reasons why different gangs are willing to work with Los Zetas in exchange for minor training and weapons. Los Zetas are considered top notch with a willingness to expand their operation more so than other narcotic syndicates; they are sought out and actually have

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7 Longmire, *Cartel.*
control over U.S. gangs like Mexican Mafia, MS-13 and the Texas Syndicate. This cartel now has a hand in several illegal markets ranging from the black market DVD trade to prostitution and illegal immigration. Los Zetas have a level of unwavering support discipline within their upper ranks and support from the people in the allure of the “fast paced” drug trafficker lifestyle and, like the La Familia cartel, they have their eyes on the government as the highest prize of all.

The Mexican government alone does not stand a chance against two powerful cartels like La Familia and Los Zetas or other cartels like the Gulf Cartel that originally created Los Zetas, the Juarez Cartel, a cartel that heads up one of the most violent cities in Mexico, or even the Sinaloa Cartel, one of the largest cartels in Mexico. The Mexican cartels are strong, and they have agendas that include using the government for their own profit motive.

Summary

In the end, the issues with the Mexican drug cartels problem cannot be fixed with a single piece of legislation. The situation in Mexico is a result of almost 100 years of history and build-up between mind-altering drugs and their relationship with governments and the ruling class from around the world. Fundamental concepts from international relations theory provide an explanation for the motivations and behavior of the actors involved. As demonstrated throughout this thesis, each actor is acting in accordance with realist tenets. Such rationality prevails from the newly recruited cartel member looking to make quick money at the individual level of analysis to the U.S. and

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Mexico at the state level of analysis trying to find a way to maintain their own level of sovereignty and power while at the same time resolving the issue of transnational drug cartels.  

This is what makes it difficult when trying to get states to remedy the conflict. Robert Putnam’s article, “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games,” presents a two-level game theoretic framework. In Putnam’s model, there are two game levels occurring at the same time: the international game (level 1) and the domestic game (level 2). National leaders must first create a plan at the international level and then present that plan to their constituents at the domestic level. If there is opposition at either level, then action cannot and will not be taken. When international affairs are occurring that means a balance or equilibrium between the domestic and international constituency interests is occurring.

When applying this theory to the violence and lack of action from both the U.S. and Mexico domestically and internationally, why nothing has occurred to remedy the problem becomes apparent. The concepts and plans presented by many scholars and even in this thesis are not popular in any of the game levels proposed by Putnam. The actors are self-interested and rational individuals, and bringing an unpopular plan to their constituency could cost them their elections and thus their jobs as world leaders. What becomes necessary is the need for both levels of the game to find their own rational

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9 Goldstein, *International Relations*.


11 Ibid.
interests in taking some sort of legitimate and long lasting action. This is what is seen when one applies Putnam’s theory to the situation of cartels in Mexico.

The research and theories presented here are not solely coming from the perspective of problem solving, but they also come from the process of trying to look beyond the single issue of violence and destabilization in Mexico. When one does that and tries to focus on the myriad factors surrounding cartels and drug trafficking, one will find that many of today’s “hot button” issues of both the United States and Mexico are actually feeding into the violence of Mexico. Since both countries share an extremely long border, legislation on either side will inevitably have an effect on the other. This is why drug policy, gun policy, infrastructure building, corruption and the subsequent investigations of corruption, immigration, trade and state failure are issues that both the United States and Mexico must deal with together; the results from any and all decisions being made will be shared. On issues like these that obviously affect each state, the discussion between the two countries should at least be there. This is literally a war. In order to win it, both countries must stand together or risk failing separately. Time is running out.
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