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Violence Beyond Cartels

How Militias Impact Violence in Mexico

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Abstract

Although levels of violence in Mexico have generally decreased, since 2013 many self-defense groups have emerged across the country. Yet, little is known about the impact these militias have on levels of criminal violence. The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to the understanding of the impact militias have on violence outside civil wars. Through a case study comparing two states in Mexico where self-defense groups have gained importance, this thesis aims to uncover whether the development of self-defense groups in the states of Michoacán and Guerrero has impacted the levels and types of violence during 2013-2014. Self-defense groups are found to indirectly impact violence in Mexico. Defensive violence by self-defense forces has partially interrupted the illicit activities of drug trafficking organizations in the areas under the control of self-defense groups. Self-defense groups played a crucial role in urging the government to take swift action; hence, their presence can cause more enforcement violence. Together enforcement and defensive violence can diminish the capabilities of drug trafficking organizations and thus lead to competitive violence between drug cartels. While the cooperation of government and militia can be helpful, a lasting peace can only be achieved if drug trafficking organizations stop competing for control over lucrative illicit businesses.

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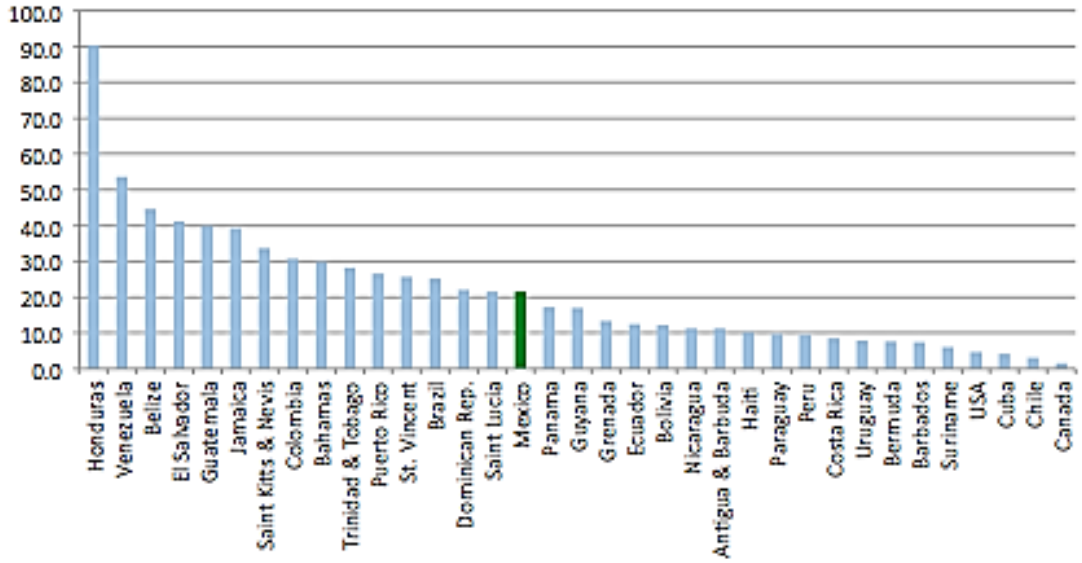
1. Introduction

Since 1961, the United States and the United Nations (UN) have implemented several conventions to criminalize the production, transportation, and consumption of narcotics on a global scale. This approach has focused mainly on combating the supply of narcotics. This strategy is based on the idea that prohibiting narcotics will cause an increase in price, making drugs less affordable, thereby reducing demand for the various products (UNODC 2009). However, this strategy has not been as successful as its founding members hoped. Neither the price nor the demand for narcotics has significantly decreased (UNODC 2014). Many have denounced the consequences this strategy has had on various areas across societies, from the increasing levels of violence to the impact it has had on public security (Reuter 2008).

Mexico experienced a sudden increase in rates of homicide since 2006, when former president Felipe Calderon decided to make the combat against drug cartels the defining policy of his presidency. Violence has become more gruesome. There has been a surge in public assassinations that have become increasingly grotesque; extortions, kidnappings, and an unprecedented impunity for criminals have become the norm. Not only have the types of violence become more appalling but also more frequent; the number of homicides attributed to criminal organizations rose from over 2,000 in 2006 to over 15,000 in 2010 reaching its peak in 2011 with almost 17,000 drug-related homicides (SESNSP 2015). Additionally, thousands of people have gone missing. According to one estimate 26,000 people have disappeared since Calderon took office (Heinle, Molzahn and Shirk 2015a, 19).

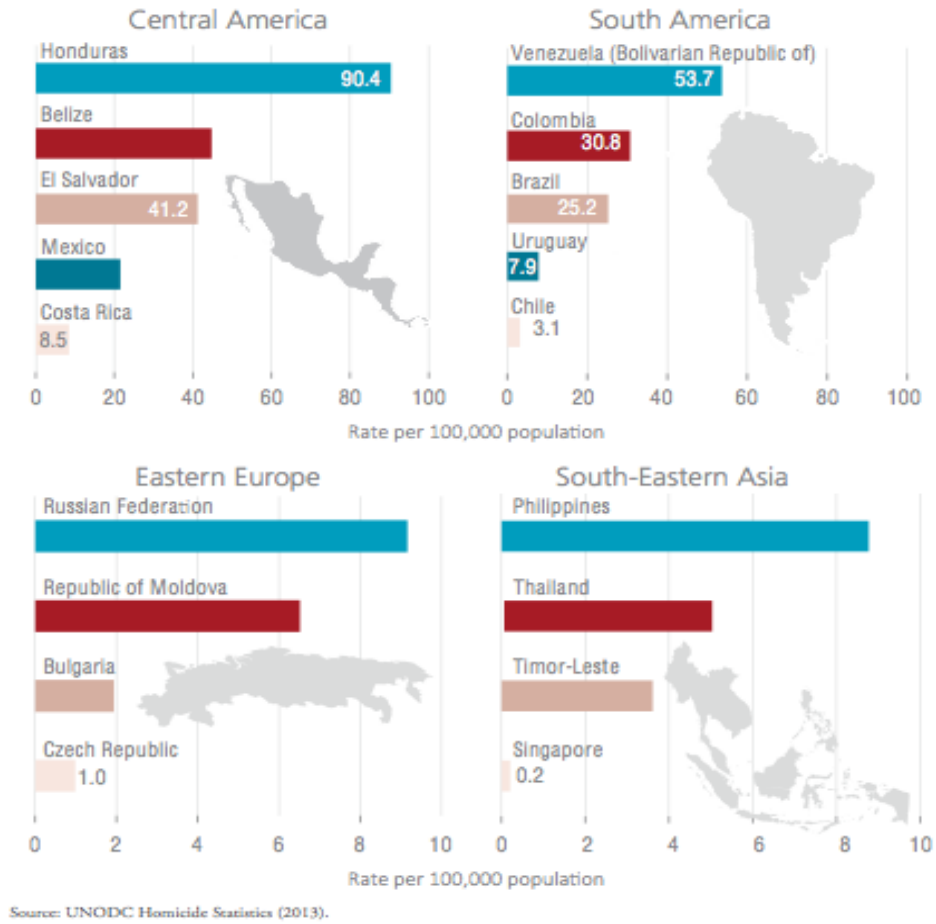
Figure 1: National Homicide Rates (per 100,000 inhabitants) for Selected Latin American Countries in 2012



Source: UNODC, *Global Study on Homicide 2014*

Some have seen the recent escalation of violence in Mexico as a process of Latin American "naturalization" (Azaola 2012; Bergman 2012). The levels of homicides in Mexico per 100,000 inhabitants was 21 in 2012, close to the Latin American average of 16 homicides per 100,000 people (see figure 1) (OAS 2012). This has led some officials and scholars to denunciate the overemphasis of the international community and the media on violence in Mexico, arguing that the violence is part of a wider phenomenon that encapsulates the entire region (see figure 2) (Heinle, Rodriguez Ferreira, and Shirk 2013). Yet, this understanding of the levels of violence depends on what is accepted as "normal". According to the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC), in 2013, 36% of world homicides took place in the Americas, where only 8% of the world population resides (UNODC 2014, 11). Even if current levels of violence across the Americas are a part of a "structural" change, it is important to understand the mechanisms that can best explain the recent upsurge of violence in Mexico. Only by understanding the underlying mechanisms that lead to more or less violence can the government implement reliable and efficient policies to counter violence.

Figure 2: Homicide Rates at the National Level, Selected Countries, by Sub-Region (2012 or latest year)



Source: UNODC Homicide Statistics (2013).

Although some novel attempts exist that combine criminal sociology and political science to study riots, protest, crime, and assassinations (e.g. Grahamond and Gurr 1969, Gurr 1989), scholars of conflict have largely neglected the study of criminal organizations and the impact they might have on the escalation of violence. Scholars of conflict have mainly focused on understanding political violence, neglecting criminal violence, as this is considered non-political in nature (Sambanis 2004). However, organized crime poses a challenge to the political order of many states, sometimes leading to the collapse of order in certain regions (Kalyvas, Shapiro, and Masoud 2008). Understanding the mechanisms that drive criminal violence can help governments across the world overcome the endemic challenges that criminal organizations pose to the status-quo and the social order of nations.

This thesis contributes to the study of the micro-dynamics of conflict. Instead of focusing on the analysis of violence against civilians during civil wars (Kalyvas 2006; Valentino 2014; Hultman 2014), the emphasis here is on the impact that civilian populations may have on levels and types of violence. Through a case study comparing two states in Mexico where self-defense groups have gained importance, this thesis aims to uncover whether the development of self-defense groups in the states of Michoacán and Guerrero has impacted the levels and types of violence during 2013-2014.

Criminal organizations are understood "as a set of stable, hierarchically organized groups of criminals with the ability to use violence – or the [credible] threat of it – for acquiring or defending control of illegal markets in order to extract economic benefits from them" (Osorio 2013, 22). This definition distinguishes between individuals that sporadically engage in criminal behavior and criminal organizations that systematically conduct illicit activities. The literature differentiates criminal organizations from insurgents or rebels in civil wars because their main goal is economic rather than political in nature.[1] Furthermore, it is understood that criminals do not attempt to change the status quo, but rather employ violence to maintain the status quo, which has allowed them to profit illicit business (Blattmann and Miguel 2010).

The increase in Mexico's levels of violence has been attributed to a specific group of criminal organizations, drug trafficking organizations (DTOs)[2]. These DTOs have not only been fighting the government, but also other DTOs and the civilian population in order to profit from illicit activities (Alvarez Cervantes et al. 2014; Dickenson 2014). DTOs primarily focus on the growing, manufacturing, transportation, distribution, and marketing of substances that are subject to drug prohibition laws (UNODC 2013). Yet, DTOs also engage in other illicit activities such as extortions, money laundering, kidnapping, or weapon smuggling, but these activities are seen as secondary and usually undertaken to reinforce or compensate drug trafficking (Osorio 2013).

1 There are instances in which rebels during a civil war seem to be more like rent-seeking, economically motivated actors with an opportunity to loot. This predatory behavior by some rebel groups has been the main argument for many scholars that dismiss grievances or political objectives as the main motivation of rebels (Collier 2000; Collier and Hoeffler 2004). Grossman (1999, 269) has gone as far as stating that "insurgents are indistinguishable from bandits or pirates".

2 DTOs, criminal organizations, criminal groups, and drug cartels will be used interchangeably for referring to drug trafficking organizations.

2. Background Literature

2.1. Defining Mexico's Conflict

While Mexico is not witnessing a civil war, criminal organizations challenge the state's monopoly on the use of force in some regions of the country, just as rebels do during intrastate conflicts. However, rebels, DTOs, and self-defense groups attempt to obtain control of the means of coercion for different reasons. Rebels usually attempt to change the status quo to benefit politically or economically. Criminal organizations aim to maintain the status quo that has allowed them to conduct their illicit activities, or challenge the status quo of regions where competing DTOs have more influence (Osorio 2013). Self-defense forces attempt to bring back stability to a region, thus they attempt to change the status quo, but only in so far as to expel DTOs and corrupt officials from the territory. To better understand the mechanisms that can explain how DTOs, the government, and self-defense forces impact levels and types of violence in Mexico, first a discussion on the similarities and differences between criminal violence and civil war violence will help frame the analysis around the existing conflict literature.

Most of the literature bases the definition of civil war on the classical Weberian notion of the sovereign state: "[…] the state is that human community which within a defined territory successfully claims for itself the monopoly of legitimate physical force; and 'territory' […] is characteristic of the state […] The state is the sole source for the 'right' to exercise violence" (Weber 2004, 131-132). Thus, the formation of the state has been connected with the control of the means of coercion in order to impose order within a given territory. However, the state is not always able to maintain this monopoly. According to Tilly (1992, 15-17), the extent of domination and order is defined by those who control the means of coercion. Those who apply coercion on others attain their compliance, and through that compliance they draw multiple political and economic benefits that are unavailable to the less powerful (Tilly 1992). As Kalyvas, Shapiro and Masoud (2008) argue, violence is not only used by the authorities to maintain their privileged position, it is also used by those who want to overthrow the existing order. DTOs and rebels in civil wars challenge the state's monopoly over the use of force in different ways. While rebels challenge the status quo, criminal organizations use force to maintain the existing order (Osorio 2013). Both aims have important implications for the levels of violence in states. Hence, understanding the violence related to criminal organizations may be equally important as

understanding civil war violence.

Definitions of parties in civil wars share the following aspects: parties are (1) politically organized, (2) engage in sustained large scale physically armed confrontation (3) within the boundaries of a state, aiming to control the monopoly of physical force (Gersovitz and Kriger 2013; Sambanis 2004); (4) groups have to be numerically significant (at least enough to challenge the government on its monopoly on the use of force), and their goals must be credible (Gersovitz and Kriger 2013). In addition, most scholars agree, that numerically, (5) civil wars are those internal civil conflicts that count more than 1,000 battle deaths per year, with at least 50-100 battle deaths on each side (Blattmann and Miguel 2010; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Collier and Hoefler 2003). By and large, there is consensus that "[a] civil war is not just a sufficiently large group of people over a sufficiently long time period who make trouble for the government and undermine security, such as large drug cartels, because they do not aim to possess the monopoly of force" (Gersovitz and Kriger 2013,161). While DTOs do not aim to challenge the state on the monopoly of the use of force across the entire territory, criminal organizations resemble rebels in other ways.

First, although Mexican drug cartels are not politically organized, they have a strong element of hierarchical organization, allowing DTOs to solve collective action problems and to coordinate members to conduct violence and engage in illegal activities. Lichbach (1998, 20-21) identified two mechanisms that solve the collective action problems of rebels; rebels engage in market mechanisms whereby they rely on economic incentives to motivate members. Additionally the use of hierarchical structures that helps monitor and enforce agreements within lower ranks, also solves collective action problems. Criminal groups engage in both of these mechanisms to motivate and control members (Osorio 2013, 18).

Second, DTOs engage in sustained and large-scale physical armed confrontations not only against government forces, but also against other DTOs, and even against the civilian population (Alvarez Cervantes et al. 2014). Third, partially due to the endemic weakness of police forces, and the high levels of corruption, Mexico's government has deployed its military forces to patrol the streets and combat organized crime within its territory (Guerrero 2011). Fourth, due to the vast economic resources that drug cartels are able to extract, DTOs can recruit support to effectively resist state forces. Finally, the war on drugs in Mexico has reached a level of lethality that would satisfy most definitions of civil war.

Criminal violence, and violence perpetrated by rent-seeking rebels during civil wars is similar,

yet conflict literature has largely neglected the study of criminal violence, primarily because DTOs do not aim at altering the status quo. However, drug cartels across Mexico have infiltrated all levels of social, economic, and political activities (Carpenter 2010, 405). Through bribes and extortion, cartels across the country have been able to influence politicians (Birns and Sanchez 2007, 1). Even though DTOs do not attempt to seize political power but attempt to maintain the status quo, which allows them to conduct their illicit activities through violence, criminal organizations engage in acts of violence just like rebels do during civil wars (Osorio 2013). These criminal organizations do not only profit by selling illegal drugs; they have extended their business model to all areas of the economy, from the sale of natural resources to the collection of "rent" payments from the local population for "protection" (Birns and Sanchez 2007).

Mexico is not going through a conventional civil war, despite engaging in a 'war on drugs'. War can take many forms and be perpetrated by different actors. However, the levels of violence seen in Mexico throughout the past decade or so, resemble levels of violence found in civil wars. Furthermore, the criminal actors in Mexico's drug war are well-organized, engage in large-scale sustained physical force against the state's military forces, and are able to recruit supporters. However, unlike rebels, DTOs are not usually ideologically motivated. Government can afford to relinquish certain powers to criminals without losing complete control of the areas, as their motive is not to change the status quo. In contrast, governments that see a challenge from rebels must take a proactive stance, since the goal of rebels is to supplant the government. Hence, the level and type of violence is directly affected by the perceived challenge the state identifies (Staniland 2015). The government of Felipe Calderon (2006-20012) decided to take a proactive stance against DTOs, resembling strategies taken by governments during civil wars. As discussed, Mexico is not witnessing a civil war, but the overlap of the type of violence that results from the underlying conditions of the war on drugs makes it helpful to frame the levels of violence in the light of an intrastate war.

2.2. Militia Violence

Clearly, there are similarities between the violent behavior of rent-seeking rebels and Mexican DTOs. However, the uprising self-defense groups are actors that should not be overlooked. By framing the current crisis in Mexico in the civil war literature, this thesis will draw inferences from the limited

literature on militia violence, to better understand the impact self-defense groups might have on levels and types of violence. This is important because while the impact that predatory armed groups have on violence are widely discussed, little is known about the role self-defense groups have on levels of violence in a conflict, especially outside the civil war context.

Militias can be hard to identify and define. Different types of militias exist, ranging from pro-incumbent to pro-insurgent, with formal, semi-formal or informal ties to either party of the conflict (Mitchell, Carey, and Butler 2014). For the purpose of this thesis, self-defense groups will be defined in line with civil-defense units, which "constitute pro-incumbent militias that harness the active participation of civilians and defected members of the [criminal] insurgency in the counterinsurgency efforts, taking up intelligence security, and limited combat roles" (Clayton and Thomson 2014, 922). This kind of militia is usually sedentary, and does "not actively seek to engage or 'neutralize' insurgents and their civilian sympathizers" (Clayton and Thomson 2014, 922). This definition does not imply that militias have to be pro-incumbent at the time of formation, but rather that in the long-term they will fight alongside government forces.

Some literature that attempts to understand the effects militias have on levels of violence emphasizes the principal-agent logic (Mitchell, Carey, and Butler 2014), whereby the principal (government) delegates the perpetration of acts of violence to the agent (militias). The argument stipulates that since the principal can formally or informally recruit militias to perpetrate the most gruesome acts of war, the government will be able to escape national and international accountability (Mitchell, Carey, and Butler 2014). Governments may not want to outsource the use of violence to militias, but may rather be unable to control them. Both, outsourcing the use of force or the lack of control over militias have been connected to higher levels of human rights abuses and general levels of violence in civil wars (Mitchell, Carey, and Butler 2014).

Militias may however also have an effect on levels of violence because the formation of civil-defense units "effectively refocus[es] the primary target of insurgent violence from the incumbent forces to civilians" (Clayton and Thomson 2014, 921). This, together with an increase in counterinsurgency efforts leads to a temporary increase in the levels of violence in the regions where civil-defense units are present (Clayton and Thomson 2014). The type of violence might be influenced by the presence of militias as well (Jentzsch, Kalyvas, and Schubiger 2015). Militias can help governments move from indiscriminate violence to more selective violence, since they usually have access to high-quality local knowledge, as they usually operate within a given area (Kalyvas 2006, 107;

Jentzsch, Kalyvas, and Schubiger 2015).

Internal characteristics of militias might help explain how militias engage in different levels of violence. Some authors have emphasized the organizational structure of militias to explain the variety of violence perpetrated by militias. Cohen and Nordås (2015) examine the effects recruitment methods of militias might have on levels of violence. They find that militias that forcefully recruit (children) are more likely to perpetrate acts of sexual violence. They argue that because forced recruitment leads to lower internal cohesion in militias, sexual violence is used as a bonding mechanism between the members of the group.

Stanton (2015, 2), finds that internal characteristics of militia's best explain the likelihood that they will engage in acts of violence. However, for Stanton (2015, 3) it is not the recruitment methods that best explain acts of violence, but the target group for mobilization; apparently militias that recruit from the same group as insurgents are less likely to engage in violent acts since this would mean that they are violating their own people (Stanton 2015, 3).

2.3. Violence in Mexico

Scholars that attempt to understand the increasing levels of violence in Mexico have by and large overlooked the impact self-defense groups might have on levels of violence. Most scholars attribute the escalation of the conflict to the military and law enforcement approach pursued by the Mexican government of arresting and extraditing cartel leaders (Bergman 2012). Apparently the capture or termination of cartel leaders brings about internal fractionalization of the groups, leaving contenders fighting each other to fill the artificially created power vacuum. This group disintegration has led to the application of harsher tactics to portray overall strength, and to deter would-be-challengers. Most scholars see this strategy as having a negative effect on the levels of violence in Mexico (e.g. Dickenson 2014).

The strategy implemented by Calderon has led to a decay of public support for state institutions. According to Schedler (2013, 2), the Mexican government has been:

> Bolstering the security apparatus without strengthening the justice system, drawing the military into police functions without subjecting it to oversight, chasing down cartel leaders without dismantling cartel networks, pursuing drug trafficking while giving traffickers a license to kill each other, conducting massive arrests of suspected criminals while lacking the capacity of subjecting them to fair and effective trials, seeking mass confiscations of drug money and arms

while lacking serious strategies against money laundering and the importation of arms.

The government's inability or unwillingness to protect its citizens has caused violence to spread beyond the government and the criminal organizations, drawing the civilian population into the war on drugs.

Osorio (2013) attributes the escalation of violence not only to the government, but also, to the democratization process that has taken place since 2000 when the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional or PRI) lost the first national elections in 70 years. This led to the erosion of the "peaceful configurations between the state and criminal organizations motivat[ing] politicians to fight crime, thus triggering a wave of violence between the state and organized criminals and among rival criminal groups fighting to control valuable territories" (Osorio 2013, 5).

Others have emphasized economic and social causes to explain the increased levels of violence in Mexico. Vilalta (2012) attributes this increase to the rupture of institutional and social norms. This rupture has led to an increasing number of citizens engaging in criminal activities in order to gain economic benefits, which in turn has led to more violence (Vilalta 2012).

Several mechanisms have been identified that can help explain the rapid escalation of violence levels in Mexico. Government policies, democratization, social and economic factors seem to be associated with the increased levels of violence in Mexico. These mechanisms might be related to the onset of self-defense forces in Mexico. However, except for the social and economic motivations for joining DTOs, the literature has largely neglected the impact that the civilian population might have on levels of violence. This is perhaps because the first self-defense groups in Mexico formed in 2013, and prior to the exponential escalations of self-defense forces, the civilian population was seen as a bystander in the conflict. Or perhaps it has been so because the central government has been reluctant to allow armed self-defense groups to freely operate throughout the country, for fear of further escalation of violence, and thus self-defense groups have had short, yet influential life spans. Either way, since enforcing Calderon's strategy to combat organized crime, revenue from the sale of drugs has dropped, leading to the escalation of drug-related violence in order to extract economic resources (Alvarez Cervantes et al. 2014). The targets of violence have slowly shifted from the government and various DTOs to the civilian population. Therefore, to better understand the dynamics behind the levels of violence in Mexico, the impact of self-defense groups is an important variable that must be accounted for (Jentzsch, Kalyvas, and Schubiger 2015). To better understand the potential impact self-

defense groups have on levels on violence in Mexico, this thesis will closely analyze *whether the development of self-defense groups in the states of Michoacán and Guerrero had an impact on the levels and types of violence in those states during 2013-2014.*

3. Theoretical Framework

Societal violence has many forms and is understood in different ways, from extortion, kidnappings, and homicides, to torture. Violence emerges as a consequence of the collapse of order. Yet, violence is not the same as conflict; violence is the result of a social, political, and economic process. It is a particular form of resolving a conflict, which has important implications on how conflicts develop and are resolved (Bergman 2012). In general, violence is endogenous; it is the cause as well as the consequence. According to Osorio (2013, 24), "violence refers to the deliberate infliction of physical harm on people or damage on their property that can be inflicted for either tactical reasons – to eliminate a specific group – or strategic motivations – to prevent certain behavior." In order to disentangle the forces that lead to the escalation of levels of violence in Mexico it is necessary to understand the different components of violence in the country.

For the purpose of this thesis, violence will be understood in line with Osorio's (2013,24) definition of drug-related violence, as "violence perpetrated either by DTOs, the state security forces, [or by self-defense group members], when conducting [pro or] anti-criminal activities." In line with Kalyvas' (2006) discussion on violence, this broad definition of drug-related violence is based on the rationalist perspective, which understands violence as a strategic calculation by those that perpetrate it. Although there are other types of intentional homicides that take place outside of wars (such as interpersonal and socio-political homicides), the emphasis of this thesis is to understand the increase in levels of violence in Mexico, which have been associated with criminal activities throughout the literature (UNODC 2014, 39). Drug-related violence will be used, primarily because data on drug-related homicides is readily available, whereas other types of criminal violence are not (Heinle, Molzahn, and Shirk 2015a). Given the available data, drug-related homicides are the best proxy to help understand the impact self-defense groups might have on levels of violence in Michoacán and Guerrero. However, to better understand the impact self-defense groups have on the underlying dynamics of all types of violence, intentional homicides, recorded by government officials, will also be used.

3.1. Self-Defense Groups' Impact on Types of Violence

According to Osorio (2013, 6), law enforcement by state forces in Mexico led to violent confrontations with drug cartels, inviting retaliation against state forces by DTOs, which allowed other DTOs to challenge the weakened criminal organizations and compete for a given territory. Thus, in the Mexican context, drug-related violence has been differentiated into three different categories: enforcement, retaliation, and competition (Osorio 2013, 24-25). Enforcement refers to the coercive use of force by state authorities taken against DTOs (or self-defense groups) to enforce the law. This type of violence is grounded in political motivations to change the status quo of the area where criminal groups operate. Retaliation is the "deliberate use of violence by members of drug trafficking organizations against state security forces or government authorities" (Osorio 2013, 25). In contrast to enforcement, this type of violence aims to preserve the power structures that allow DTOs to conduct illicit activities in a given area. Both of these types of violence impact competition violence. Competitive violence refers to "acts of violence perpetrated by members of a criminal organization against members of other criminal organization" (Osorio 2013, 25) to alter the power structures of a territory. These types of violence have spread beyond government forces and criminal organization members, to reach the civilian population in many areas of Mexico.

A fourth type of violence that has taken place in Mexico has been largely overlooked by political scientists studying violence in Mexico, namely violence against the civilian population. Even though much of this violence is non-lethal, it has impacted the willingness of citizens to take up arms to defend themselves. Clearly civilians play a crucial role in civil wars. They are the main targets of indiscriminate and sometimes selective violence (Kalyvas 2006).

Criminal organizations engage in indiscriminate acts of violence against the civilian population, creating resentment and frustration. This is especially true when the government is unwilling or unable to protect civilians and the rebels or criminal organizations do not rely on civilian support for their survival (Weinstein 2007), as is the case in Mexico. This has led communities to take matters into their own hands, rising up against the criminal organizations creating their own militias. The violence derived from self-defense groups can be described as defensive.

Militia involvement can not only increase or decrease the levels of violence in a conflict, but can also impact the type of violence found (Jentzsch, Kalyvas, and Schubiger 2015). However, the span

of defensive violence is limited; local populations conduct defensive violence in order to defend or deter criminal organizations from entering a given territory. The main aim of this type of violence is to bring back order to areas that have been controlled by DTOs, or to protect areas that are at risk of becoming prey to coercive violence perpetrated by predatory criminals.

In addition to defensive violence, the appearance of self-defense groups can lead to two more types of violence – reprisal and predominance violence. Reprisal violence occurs when DTOs conduct violence against self-defense which may be risking an alteration to the status-quo that has allowed DTOs to profit from illegal activities. Finally, self-defense forces might fight each other for the control of a given territory, this type of violence is called predominance violence, and it aims at altering the status quo of a region where self-defense forces have established a stronghold. Table 1 provides a summary of the types of violence present in Mexico today.

Table 1 – Types of Violence in the Mexican Conflict

Types of Violence	Actors	Impact on Status Quo	Impact on Monopoly of Force
Enforcement	Gov. vs DTOs or Self-defense	Change	Change – Government
Retaliation	DTOs vs Gov.	Remain	Remain - DTOs
Competition	DTOs vs DTOs	Change	Change – other DTOs
Defensive	Self-defense vs DTOs	Change	Change – Self-defense
Reprisal	DTOs vs Self-defense	Remain	Remain – DTOs
Predominance	Self-defense vs Self-defense	Change	Change - Self-defense

Source: Osorio 2013

The defensive actions taken by self-defense groups force the government to take a stance, either supporting the actions of self-defense forces or suppressing them. Additionally, if self-defense forces are successful in expelling criminal members and bringing back order to the region, other DTOs might see an opportunity, which can lead to violence because of competition. Hence, defensive violence perpetrated by self-defense force might have an impact on all types of violence, which can lead to higher or lower levels of violence. Whether the impact self-defense groups have on the levels of violence is positive or negative largely depends on the way militias interact with the government, and the effect this cooperation has on the capabilities of DTOs (Staniland 2015).

3.2 Self-Defense Groups' Impact on Levels of Violence

There are five main aspects of self-defense groups that can help explain a change in levels of violence. The government outsourcing the use of force to self-defense groups, DTOs shifting the target from the government and other DTOs to the self-defense groups, the gathering of highly accurate information by self-defense forces so the government can target criminals more selectively, and the recruitment methods and target group for mobilization of self-defense forces. Beyond the fact that self-defense members usually engage in acts of defensive violence, these aspects of self-defense groups might also have an impact on the levels and types of violence that are perpetrated by all parties.

Outsourced use of force and negligence (Outsource/Negligence): Democratic governments are accountable to the people and therefore cannot engage in indiscriminate acts of violence against the people. Thus, in some cases governments outsource the use of force to militias to evade accountability. If this is the case in Mexico, the presence of militias may lead to higher levels of violence since they might be used as a strategic form of outsourced violence by the state (Mitchell, Carey, and Butler 2014). However, governments may also be unwilling or unable to control the actions of militias. Such government negligence has been associated with an increase in levels of violence (Mitchell, Carey, and Butler 2014). Either way, if the government endorses or neglects the defensive violence of self-defense forces, the types of violence might also be affected. Outsourcing or negligence implies that self-defense forces would engage DTOs, which in turn might lead to reprisals against self-defense members or to predominance violence with various self-defense groups fighting each other for control of a given territory. Together reprisal and predominance violence can give place to competition violence, where other DTOs see an opportunity to control a territory given the weakened capabilities of all parties in the region.

Refocus on civilians (Shift): Militias (self-defense forces) have been found to refocus the target of insurgents (in the case of Mexico criminal organizations) from the state to the civilians (Clayton and Thomson 2014). Even if self-defense groups are not pro-government, but merely anti-insurgents, if civilians take a confrontational approach, it can lead to criminals refocusing their military efforts to defeating the self-defense forces, leading to higher levels of violence. Additionally, the shift of focus can also impact the types of violence. Self-defense forces will defend themselves from the attacks of DTOs. Furthermore, while DTOs are occupied with confrontations against self-defense forces, the

government, other self-defense groups, and other DTOs can take advantage of the weakened capabilities of the criminal organization and the self-defense group in order to engage in enforcement, predominance, or competition violence.

Information to the state (Information): Militias may aid counterinsurgency efforts, as they have valuable local knowledge and can collect intelligence for the state (Kalyvas 2006). This information can enable the state to use selective violence as opposed to indiscriminate violence (Kalyvas 2006). Armed with high quality knowledge the state can target the combatants more effectively, thus reducing the numbers of collateral damage (Peic 2014). Enabling the government to target criminals more effectively, can increase or decrease levels of violence, depending on what the government does with the information. If the government decides to take extensive action against DTOs then it might lead to an increase in the levels of violence. However, if the government targets only the most important players in the conflict, the provision of information can lower levels of violence, at least in the short term. The types of violence can also be influenced through this gathering of information. Enforcement efforts might increase, leading to retaliation perpetrated by DTOs against the state or reprisal against self-defense forces. Enforcement can also lead to competition violence, if other DTOs see an opportunity to exploit.

Recruitment methods: Forcefully recruited militias can use acts of violence against civilians as a type of bonding mechanism to create more internal cohesion (Cohen and Nordås 2015). If self-defense members are recruited forcefully this could lead to higher levels of violence in the region. If this is the case, in order to maintain control of the monopoly on the use of force, the government's enforcement efforts and DTOs' capabilities might refocus to target self-defense forces, depending on who controls the territory prior to the appearance of self-defense forces. Additionally, since the goal of self-defense groups should be to protect the civilian population, other self-defense forces could engage in combat against the forcefully recruited self-defense members.

Target Group for Mobilization: Finally, it has been found that when militias recruit from the same group as the insurgents they will be less likely to engage in violent acts, since this would mean that they are engaging against their own people (Stanton 2015). Thus, if the recruitment ground is similar for self-defense groups and DTOs, then the levels of violence should be lower. If this is the case however, it can become difficult to distinguish DTOs from genuine self-defense forces, which in turn might impact the enforcement efforts of the government, leading to higher levels of violence. This could lead to other DTOs or self-defense forces engaging in violence to gain control of the status quo.

Table 2 – Expected Impact of Self-Defense Groups on Violence

Aspects of Militias	Violence Perpetrated by	Type of Violence	Expected Impact on Level of Violence	Expected Types of Violence Impacted
Outsourced / Negligence	Self-defense	Defensive	Higher	Reprisal, Predominance, Enforcement and Competition
Shift	DTOs	Reprisal	Higher	Enforcement, Competition, Defensive and Predominance
Information	Government	Enforcement	Higher or Lower	Retaliation, Reprisal, and Competition
Recruitment Method	Self-defense	Defensive	Higher	Enforcement, Reprisal, Competition, and Predominance
Target Group for Mobilization	Government	Enforcement	Lower or Higher	Competition, and Predominance

Sources: Osorio 2013; Mitchell, Carey, and Butler 2014; Clayton and Thomson 2014; Kalyvas 2006; Cohen and Nordås 2015; and Stanton 2015.

The left column in table 2 identifies the aspects of militia engagement that might impact the levels and types of violence. Outsourcing the use of force, shifting the focus of violence by DTOs from the government to self-defense groups, information gathered by self-defense groups, recruitment methods, and the target group for mobilization, can all impact the levels and types of violence through different mechanisms. Derived from the outsourcing of force or the recruitment methods, self-defense forces can engage in defensive violence, which can lead to higher levels of violence and have an impact on all types of violence, except for retaliation. Information gathered by self-defense forces and the target group for mobilization of these groups can lead to the government engaging in enforcement violence, which can lead to higher or lower levels of violence, depending on the interaction between the government and militias, and the impact this interaction has on DTOs. In addition, enforcement efforts by the government can have an impact on almost all types of violence, with the exception of defensive violence, which should decrease as the government enforces the law. DTOs can lead to higher levels of violence in the region through reprisal. DTOs aim to maintain the monopoly on the use of force; if there is a challenge from self-defense forces, as opposed to the state, then criminal organizations are more likely to engage in acts of violence against self-defense groups. This violence

can impact all types of violence except for retaliation. Finally, violence perpetrated by DTOs, self-defense groups, or the government can lead other DTOs to take advantage of the weakened capabilities of all the actors and engage in acts of competitive violence, leading to higher levels of violence.

4. Methodology

Through a case study, this thesis aims to uncover the effects that self-defense groups might have on the levels of drug-related violence. This is relevant because Mexico and many other countries (especially in Latin America) are facing increasingly strong threats from well-organized criminal organization, which can lead to the formation of self-defense militias. The findings can potentially help develop future strategies to address the evolution of self-defense groups, not only throughout Mexico, but wherever such groups might emerge.

Violence in Mexico wears many masks. Though other types of violence will be taken into account, in order to make this study more reliable, drug-related and intentional homicides will be the focus. Since self-defense forces are technically created for defensive purposes, using measures of drug-related homicides that take place in the territory of such groups should capture instances of defensive violence. Furthermore, drug-related homicides also capture instances of retaliation, competitive, reprisal, and predominance violence. Because gathering reliable information on drug-related homicides is difficult, intentional homicides will help understand the overall impact of self-defense groups on levels and types of violence. Intentional homicide records are gathered by government offices, and capture enforcement and general levels of violence in a given region.

Although the Mexican government has not published reliable numbers of drug-related homicides in the past few years, existing government data must be considered to understand the larger picture of violence occurring in Mexico. The official numbers published by the Mexican government differentiate between intentional homicides and unintentional homicides. Around 30-50% of intentional homicides recorded by the Mexican authorities are drug-related (Heinle, Molzahn, and Shirk 2015a). In Mexico, there are two government bodies that collect and publish homicide data. The Instituto Nacional de Estadisticas y Geografia (INEGI) gathers the most comprehensive data, relying on public health records gathered by the many offices across the country. In comparison, the National Public Security System (SNSP) relies on data gathered by criminal investigations of law enforcement agencies. This thesis will use both INEGI and SNSP data to understand the overall variation in levels of violence across Mexico.

Since the government does not publish reliable data concerning drug-related homicides, data gathered by non-official sources will also be employed. The national newspapers *Reforma* and *Milenio*

have made an effort to tally the numbers of drug-related homicides. Various other national and international organizations have also made an effort to gather all the available data on drug-related homicides to better analyze long-term trends (e.g. Justice in Mexico and Lantia). Thus, data on drug-related violence in Michoacán and Guerrero will have to rely on secondary sources of information, which seem to be more conservative than government numbers (Shirk 2010).

In order to evaluate the impact that self-defense groups have on violence, the time span of the study will be limited from January 2013, when most groups were created in Michoacán and Guerrero, to December 2014, when the government intervened to disarm the militias in Michoacán. This study will also analyze the causal mechanism between violence and self-defense groups. This will be done firstly, through the analysis of primary sources, from government legislations concerning self-defense groups to legislations to combat crime derived from criminal organizations. Secondly, through the gathering of information from scholarly work concerning the history, goals, and types of self-defense groups that took up arms in the states of Michoacán and Guerrero. Finally, news articles will be used as a further source of information. The dependent variable will be homicides, while the independent variable will be active self-defense groups.

As noted, Mexico has experienced high levels of violence during the past decade or so. In line with Lieberman's (2005) nested analysis, the first section of the analysis will quantitatively evaluate the escalation in levels of violence across the 31 states of Mexico. The time frame will be limited to 2013-2014, although the years 2011 and 2012 will be taken as a base to assess whether levels of violence have indeed increased or decreased in the observed time.

Next, a small-N comparative analysis will be employed. Self-defense groups are not an entirely new phenomenon in Mexico; however, since 2013 the number of militia-like groups has sharply risen across the nation (Fuentes Diaz 2014). Michoacán and Guerrero, have been selected as case studies to better understand the relationship between violence and militias outside of civil wars; these two states showcase some of the different types of self-defense groups that have emerged throughout Mexico. Even though self-defense groups in Guerrero and Michoacán are not identical, they were chosen, as according to Mill's (1843) first canon, the fact that both states have seen an increase in levels of drug-related violence in 2014, points to self-defense groups being a likely probable cause for an increase in violence. Furthermore, as self-defense groups differ in Michoacán and Guerrero, process tracing (Bennet 2010; Collier 2011) will help discover whether the internal or external characteristics of the groups had something to do with a fluctuation in the levels and/or types of violence.

The first part of the small-N comparative study will identify whether the levels of violence have increased or decreased since 2013 in the two states. According to the existing literature, and primary sources of information on homicides, it seems that violence (measured by number of drug-related homicides) has indeed increased in both Michoacán and Guerrero since 2013 (Heinle, Molzahn and Shirk 2015a).[3] The presence of self-defense groups thus seems to be correlated with an increase in levels of violence in both states. However, it remains unclear if there is a causation between self-defense groups and increased drug-related violence.

Next, the causal relationship between the self-defense groups and the levels and types of violence will be examined. Though, some might argue that it is not that self-defense groups have an effect on violence, but that violence leads to the appearance of self-defense groups, the purpose of this thesis is not to determine why and how self-defense groups developed, but to identify whether self-defense groups have an impact on violence. The onset of self-defense forces might have a direct or indirect impact on levels and types of violence (see table 2). Hence, the analysis gather evidence from Michoacán and Guerrero, which supports either of the possible impacts self-defense groups have on levels and types of violence.

Outsourced/Negligence: Measuring to what extent the government has intentionally outsourced the use of force is difficult. Actions taken by the government, especially the federal government, to deal with the rising number of self-defense groups can shed some light on the government's intentions. While the government might not disclose information about their interaction with militias, especially if they are being used as a form of outsourced violence, the information that has been disclosed could give some insight on the motives behind government actions. The negligence of the government to react to the appearance of militias can be more easily verified. In this case, it would suffice if the government engaged with the self-defense forces (violently or peacefully) in order to maintain order in the area.

Shift: To measure a shift in violence from the government to self-defense groups, the number of deceased members of self-defense groups will be quantifiably verified. The source of the killing must be tested: whether it was perpetrated by a criminal organization, the state, or self-defense groups. Statements by group leaders to the media can help understand the underlying motivations behind acts

3 However, the total number of intentional homicides has decreased in both Guerrero and Michoacán from 2013 to 2014 and in Guerrero from 2012 to 2013, while Michoacán saw an increase in the level of intentional homicides from 2012 to 2013 according to SPNP.

of violence committed by self-defense forces during the period in question.

Information to the state: Government attacks (or arrests) against criminal organization and government officials will be used to quantifiably measure if information is being provided to the state. As it is difficult to verify if attacks indeed resulted from information provided by self-defense groups, or other means, the quantity of successful attacks will be corroborated with official documents, and news articles.

Recruitment methods: Establishing recruitment methods from the various self-defense groups can be done through primary sources, as the appearances and development of such groups are discussed in detail.

Target group for mobilization: Michoacán and Guerrero are home to numerous ethnic groups. Self-defense groups might recruit along ethnic lines; if these ethnic groups are more or less attacked by the criminals, perhaps it can shed light on the implications recruitment from the same group has on violence. Information on ethnicity is readily available on a geographical basis. This information can be corroborated with the appearance of self-defense groups and homicides on a geographic basis. The target group for mobilization might make it hard for the government to distinguish between genuine self-defense groups and criminals disguised as militias. Primary sources of information will help understand who the members of self-defense groups are.

5. Case Study

Understanding underlying dynamics that might have played a role in the increasing levels of violence in the states of Michoacán and Guerrero is essential to understand the impact self-defense groups have on violence. First an overview of the different types of militias present in Guerrero and Michoacán is necessary (for an overview of the DTOs involved in the conflicts in Michoacán and Guerrero see appendix 1).

5.1. The Roots and Development of Vigilantism in Mexico

The wave of drug-related violence that has struck Mexico in recent times has changed the security situation in Mexico. The civilian population in Guerrero and Michoacán has been greatly affected by the predatory behavior of criminal organizations. Partially due to the fractionalization of DTOs, and partially due to the unwillingness or inability of the Mexican government to deal with predatory criminals, people have taken up arms to defend themselves and their territories from the extortion of criminal organizations. This has led to the development of militia-like groups across Mexico.

It is important to differentiate between the longstanding community police forces that have created a social and political system parallel to the state government in Guerrero, and the self-defense groups that have emerged since 2013 in both Guerrero and Michoacán. Differentiating between these groups and understanding their formation is essential, as the literature suggests, that the internal aspects of militias can impact levels of violence. While self-defense groups that have recently emerged in both states attempt to deal with external threats to their security, the longstanding community police forces in Guerrero aim at managing internal community matters (Estrada Castañon 2014).

Even if these two types of groups are different in many respects, they must be differentiated from paramilitary groups, such as the ones seen in Colombia. Both civil self-defense forces and paramilitary militias emerged from similar circumstances. However, Colombia's military and government influenced the formation of the paramilitaries; in Mexico self-defense groups emerged as a civic response to the deteriorating security situation (Althaus and Dudley 2014). This differentiation is crucial since paramilitaries are a means for government or private recruiters to outsource violence

(Estrada Castañón 2014). Most self-defense forces in Mexico, at least at their formation, had no link to the state and their main goal was to expel corrupt officials and predatory criminal organizations from their territory (Ramirez Cuevas 2014). This does not mean that self-defense groups may not morph into something that resembles paramilitaries in the future. While some paramilitary groups, sponsored by private or criminal interests, have disguised themselves as self-defense forces in Mexico (Ramirez Cuevas 2014), the great majority of self-defense forces in Mexico today are clearly distinct from paramilitary groups.

Community-based vigilantism has a long tradition in (southern) Mexico. The right to this type of policing has been reserved for indigenous communities (Sierra 2006). The Mexican constitution defines indigenous people as the descendants of those who inhabited the national boundaries of Mexico before colonization, and that conserve their own social, economic, cultural, and political institutions (Article 2 Paragraph 2). Supporters argue that the legal legitimacy for self-policing of indigenous communities has been enshrined in the Mexican constitution of 1917, which permits local frameworks for the regulation and solution of internal conflicts (Estrada Castañon 2014). Additionally, the constitution stipulates that state governments have the liberty to sign laws that are deemed necessary to maintain indigenous "customs and traditions" (usos y costumbres) (Article 2, Paragraphs 4 and 5). In 2011 the government of Guerrero approved law 701, which in article 37 recognizes the right of the indigenous people to form community police forces (Matías Alonso 2014, 239). As a result, some indigenous communities across Guerrero have developed their own policing system, which not only involves active policing of the streets by local volunteers, but also trials and convictions of alleged criminals according to indigenous traditions (Sierra 2006). These community police forces are under the direct control of community elders and are not accountable to the state government (Estrada Castañon 2014). However, these community police did not emerge to challenge the state, rather to guarantee peace in their territory (Sierra 2014, 207).

5.1.1. Guerrero

Guerrero is located south of Michoacán. Its nearly 3.5 million inhabitants continually rank among the poorest across Mexico (Kyle 2015). Around 15% of the population in Guerrero is considered to be of indigenous descent (Romero Gallardo 2014). Much of the population is located in rural areas; more than 7,000 communities are populated by less than 2,500 inhabitants (INEGI 2010). While there are some middle class pockets in urban areas, the majority of urban settlements are characterized by lower class populations working in the informal sector of the economy (Kyle 2015).

Figure 3: Guerrero State

Source: Kyle 2015

In Guerrero, indigenous community police units were first established in the early 1990s, when the local government was not able to protect the indigenous people from a wave of violence that struck

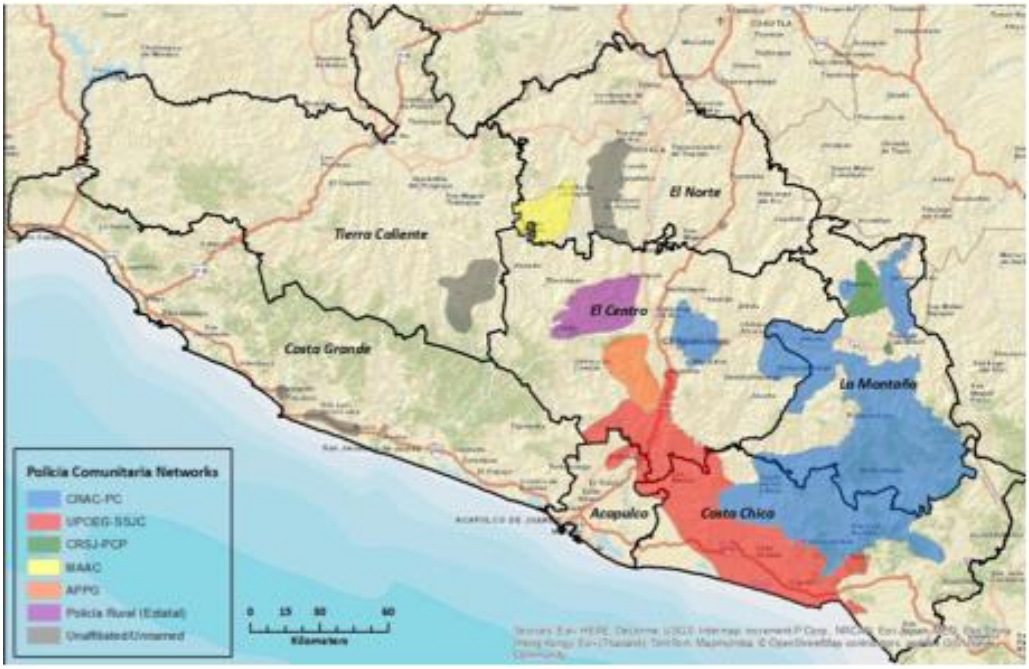
the state (Estrada Castañon 2014). However, it was not until 1997 that the former governor, Angel Aguirre Rivero, gave formal recognition to the community police forces (Estrada Castañon 2014). Following the recognition of autonomy by state authorities, the indigenous communities of Costa Chica and la Montaña formed the *Coordinadora Regional de Autoridades Comunitarias y Policia Comunitaria* (CRAC-PC), which coordinated the policing efforts of numerous communities (Romero Gallardo 2014). Additionally, the formation of the *Sistema Comunitario de Seguridad, Imparticion de Justicia y Reeducacion* (SCSIJR), allowed for the establishment of a legal system for self-protection (Sierra 2006). Through a slow process, the organization went from being a simple group of community police forces to a complex system of justice and security, outside the reach of the state. Their main role is to keep internal order, not only securing the streets, but also dealing with all types of unlawful action, from petty crime to drug-related incidents (Althaus and Dudley 2014, 9).

Due to the current wave of violence that has swept through Guerrero, an indigenous self-defense group arose in 2012 around La Montaña (see figure 3). In contrast to the CRAC-PC, the group *Coordinadora Regional de Seguridad y Justicia – Policia Ciudadana y Popular* (CRSJ-PCP), was established as a direct response to the rising activities of DTOs in the region (Kyle 2015, 44). The CRSJ-PCP invoked the same rights as the CRAC-PC had received, due to their indigenous decent. In early 2013, a group of communities surrounding the mountainous region near Acapulco formed another group of community police forces, the *Unión de Pueblos y Organizacion del Estado de Guerrero y Sistema de Seguridad y Justicia Ciudadana* (UPOEG–SSJC). In contrast to CRAC-PC this militia was formed out of necessity to confront the rising numbers of extortions, kidnappings, and murders in the region (Global Post 2013). Although the members of the UPOEG-SSJC were mainly indigenous, in contrast to both CRAC-PC and CRSJ-PCP the UPOEG-SSJC did not make any claims under state law 701. Today, all of these groups engage in confrontations against DTOs that extort the local population, but do not aim to eradicate the narcotics production in the area (Kyle 2015, 46).

In addition to these mainly indigenous self-defense groups, a number of non-indigenous militias have emerged in Guerrero. Although, the *Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Guerrero* (APPG) initially formed in 2006, it was not until 2012, amid illegal logging in the area, that it created a small policing unit (Kyle 2015, 47). At least another three self-defense groups appeared in Guerrero in 2014. The *Movimiento Apaxtlense Adrián Costrejón* (MAAC), in the municipality of Apaxtla is the best organized of these groups (Kyle 2015, 48). The MAAC, together with other unnamed groups that emerged in the town of Quetzala and villages neighboring Teloloapan, have focused on fighting La

Familia Michoacana (El Sur 2014). Other groups in the vicinity of San Miguel Totolopan have been fighting to keep out the Guerrero Unidos cartel (see figure 4) (Ramirez Garcia 2014).

Figure 4: Self-Defense Networks in Guerrero (2014)



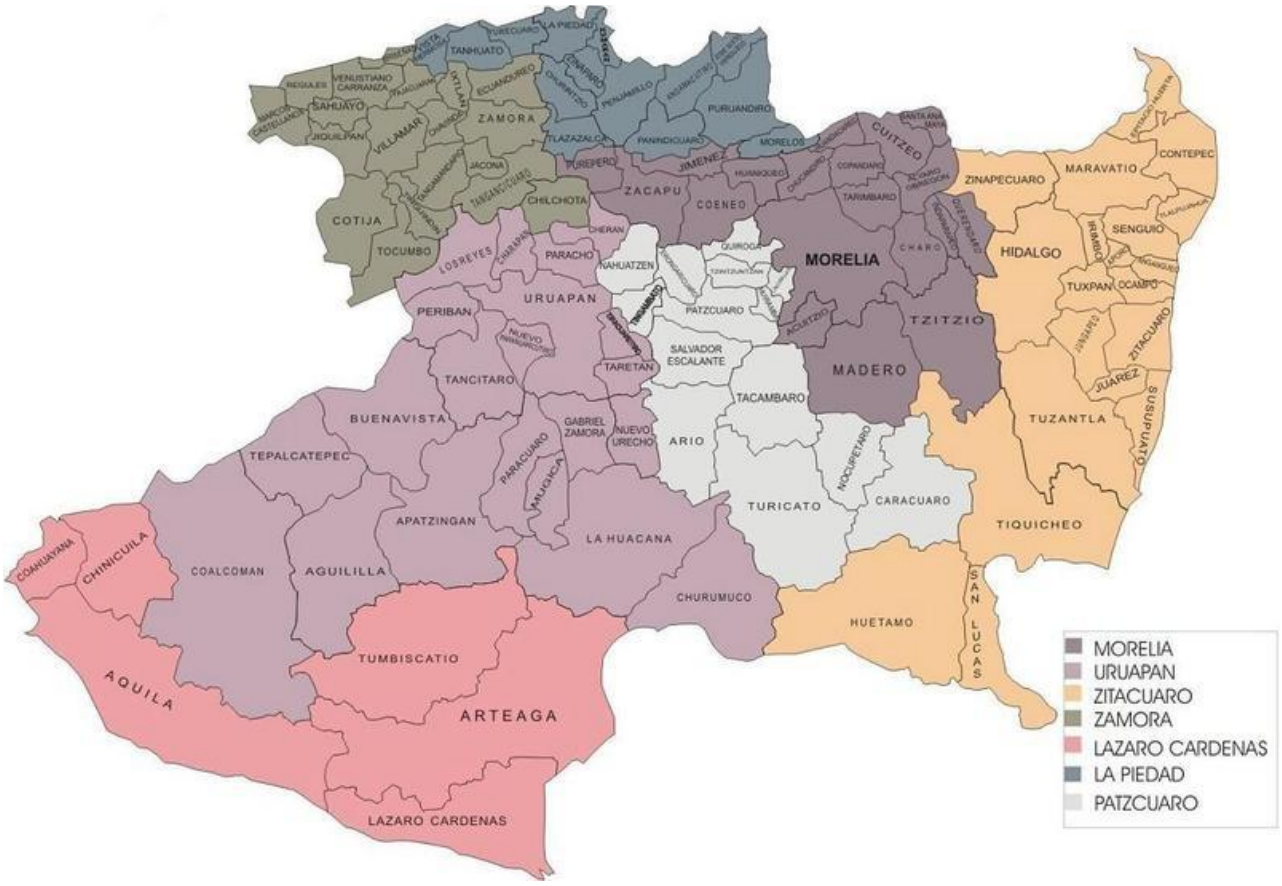
Source: Kyle 2015

As a response to the rising number of militias in Guerrero, the state enacted a law that provided a pathway to incorporate self-defense groups into the police forces in 2013. However, the two largest and best organized indigenous forces, the CRAC-PC and the UPOEG-SSJC rejected the calls of the government. Other smaller, non-indigenous militias welcomed the legislation with caution. Only one group in the El Centro region has been reported to have agreed to join police efforts (Kyle 2015).

5.1.2. Michoacán

Michoacán is located in the southwest of Mexico. It has a 230-kilometer Pacific coastline, which houses one of the biggest deep-water ports of Mexico. It has a population of around 4.3 million, with around 3.5% of the population speaking one of the four main indigenous languages. Michoacán is a state rich in natural resources, and one of Mexico's largest agricultural producers (INEGI 2015). The people of Michoacán have historically been influential players when it comes to defying the status quo, from the independence from Spain in the early nineteenth century to the revolution in the twentieth century; citizens from Michoacán have been at the forefront in the fight for a homeland and civil liberties.

Figure 5: Michoacán State



Source: mapainteractivo.net

While community police forces in Guerrero have a long history, in Michoacán, only one truly indigenous police force has recently emerged – Cherán. Due to the unwillingness or inability of local security forces to deal with illegal logging the community of Cherán, formed an indigenous community police to fight off criminals in 2011 (Ramirez Cuevas 2014, 59). Unlike Guerrero, Michoacán's government has not enacted any state legislation to legitimize indigenous police forces. Thus, the legality of the community police force in Cherán is solely founded on article 2 of the Mexican constitution.

By and large, the majority of self-defense groups that have emerged in Michoacán are of non-indigenous decent. In 2013, various self-defense groups emerged across Michoacán's southern rural regions, the first of which took up arms in the town of Ruana, near Apatzingán. From the beginning these groups aimed at expelling DTO members and corrupt officials from their territory, establishing civil order in the region (Valdivia-Garcia 2014). As Jose Manuel Mireles Valverde, a former leader of a self-defense group stated:

> The vacuum of authority was filled by organized crime in the form of The Knights Templar, who became something that resembled an alternative government, extracting taxes, and imposing their justice, by blood or fire. While the people from Michoacán had nobody to rely on[4] (CNN Mexico 2014c).

Similar self-defense forces soon emerged across the state. By the end of 2013, there were reports of some 20,000 self-defense group members, spread across southern Michoacán (Heinle, Molzahn, and Shirk 2015b, 18). Even though, the federal government implemented plans to regulate self-defense groups in January 2014, the number of militia groups in the Michoacán kept increasing. By May 2014, 34 municipalities reported active self-defense groups (see figure 6) (Valdivia-García 2014).

4 "El vacío de autoridad fue llenado por el crimen organizado, en la forma de Los Caballeros Templarios, quienes se volvieron algo así como un gobierno alterno, que cobraba impuestos, e imponía su justicia a sangre y fuego. Sin que la población michoacana tuviera a quién recurrir"

Figure 6: Self-Defense Groups Presence in Michoacán (2014)

Source: Valdivia García 2014.

Partially due to the rapid increase in self-defense groups, the types of recruits have been difficult to verify. Some reports suggest that former DTO members have managed to infiltrate the ranks of self-defense forces (Proceso 2014a). Others argue that cartels themselves are arming these groups. The Mexican government has accused self-defense groups, such as the one in La Ruana, Buenavista, of receiving support from DTOs fighting the Knights Templar (Excelsior 2013). However, the government has also acknowledged the valuable support from various other self-defense groups (Althaus and Dudley 2014, 14).

The presence of self-defense groups in Michoacán has forced all levels of government to take the threat of DTOs seriously. While President Enrique Peña Nieto was initially reluctant to increase federal police and military presence in the state, the appearance of self-dense groups across the state in 2013 caused the federal government to take action (Valdivia-García 2014). In mid-May Peña Nieto announced a new strategy to combat organized crime in Michoacán. This strategy centered around increased cooperation between federal and state forces (Valdivia-García 2014). The operation also included the deployment of army and navy forces across the various regions. These operations first began in the Tierra Caliente region, but later spread across Michoacán. In January 2014, the president

appointed Alfredo Castillo Cervantes as public security commissioner, in an effort to bring the state under control. Castillo Cervantes was given the authority to determine the state's security strategy (Valdivia-García 2014). He was able to broker a deal with various self-defense forces that would see them either dismantle, or join the state policing apparatus through the newly formed rural defense corps operating under the authority of the Mexican army (Valdivia-García 2014). The agreement was signed by Castillo Cervantes, Governor Vallejo, and leaders of some self-defense forces (Heinle, Molzahn, and Shirk 2015b). The agreement specified that the self-defense groups are temporary, and it asked the leaders to register their members and weapons with the federal forces. However, not all groups were present at the signing of the document, suggesting that there might be some disagreement on the deal.

Whether or not self-defense groups cooperate with DTOs could have an important impact on the levels of violence, however this information is not available. Nevertheless, the fact that in July 2014 the state government implemented a plan to integrate self-defense groups into the state security apparatus, suggests that at least the majority of these groups are not controlled by DTOs (Valdivia-García 2014). Two different types of self-defense groups have emerged in Michoacán. On the one hand, there are those groups that have taken up arms and are stationed in the communities where they are supported by the local population, on the other there are some group, like the one from la Ruana, that have spread across the region, taking control of various towns (Heinle, Molzahn, and Shirk 2015b). Whether self-defense groups act within their community or expand across the state might have different impacts on the types and levels of violence seen in that region.

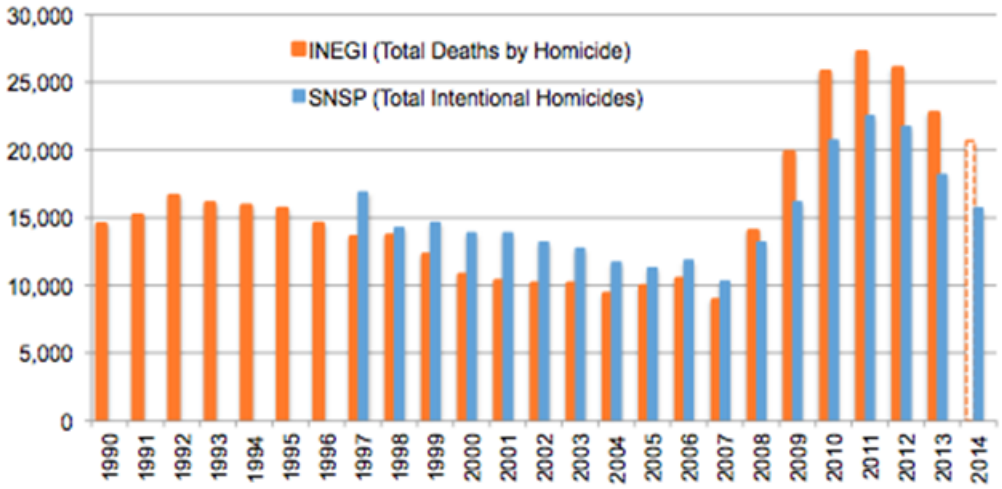
While both the self-defense groups and the longstanding community police forces in Guerrero have emerged due to the inability of the government to guarantee the security of the population, and both types engage against DTO members, an important distinction lies in the legitimacy and structural development of the different groups. The community police forces in Guerrero rely on the indigenous people and laws that protect their rights to operate parallel to state law. The self-defense groups are mainly rooted in rural areas, and their leaders are not considered to be indigenous. In addition, community police forces in Guerrero have developed through a slow process, allowing the leaders to maintain strict control over who membership (Estrada Castañon 2014). In contrast, self-defense groups and their members have rapidly increased in numbers, making it harder for the leaders to control the quality of the recruits. This plays a role in how the state interacts with each group. While the government in Guerrero has largely allowed community police forces to enforce indigenous laws, some self-defense groups across both states have been accused of being just another DTO or having

connections to such groups (Rivera Velázquez 2014, 13). The government response to the rise of self-defense groups has been cautious. While the state has cooperated with self-defense groups in some operations, most recently the government has implemented a policy to dismantle independent self-defense groups. The strategy perused by Castillo in Michoacán has been to incorporate self-defense forces into the state security apparatus, as rural police forces with certain autonomy (Rivera Velázquez 2014). Whether this has a positive or negative impact on the levels of violence remains to be seen.

6. Violence Levels in Mexico

President Peña Nieto came to office in 2012 with a promise to reduce levels of violence (Aristegui Noticias 2012). According to government data and the newspaper Milenio general levels of violence across Mexico, measured as intentional homicides and drug-related homicides, have indeed decreased since the president took office (see figure 7 and table 3). Yet, there has been an increasing number of self-defense groups emerging across the country. Through defensive, reprisal, or predominance violence self-defense groups might directly impact levels of violence in the territory where they operate. In addition, self-defense forces could have an indirect impact on enforcement, retaliation, and competitive violence, as they engage with DTOs and the government.

Figure 7: Intentional Homicides in Mexico



Source: Heinle, Molzahn and Shirk 2015a

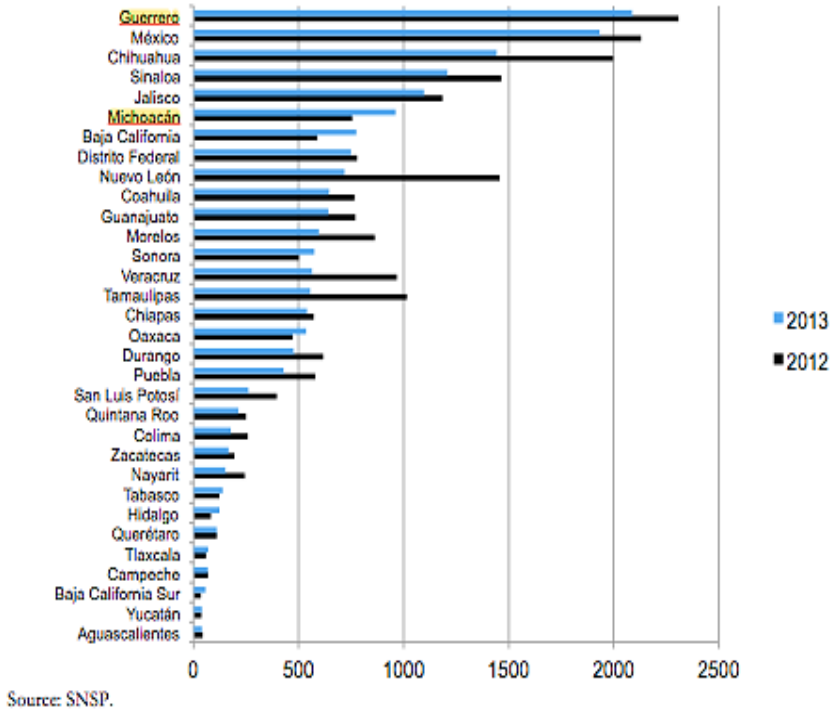
Table 3: Drug-Related Homicides

	2012	2013	2014
Guerrero	1,408	961	1,075
Michoacán	497	439	597
Mexico	12,390	10,095	7,993

Source: *Milenio*

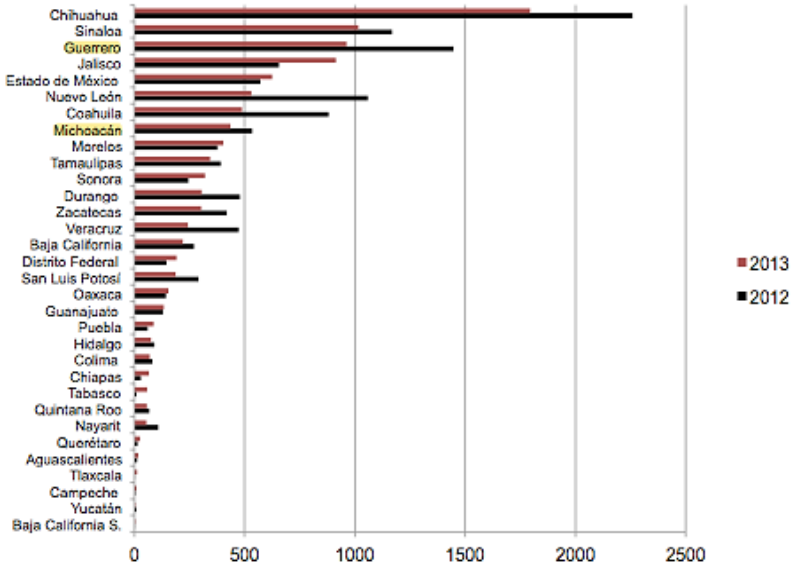
Most self-defense groups started to appear in early 2013 in Guerrero and Michacán (Valdivia-Garcia 2014; Kyle 2015). In 2013 levels of intentional homicide decreased in Guerrero (from 2,310 homicides in 2012 to 2,087 in 2013), but increased by 27% in Michoacán (from 755 homicides in 2012 to 903 in 2013) (see figure 8). Levels of drug-related violence decreased in both states (see table 3 and figure 9). While the decrease in drug-related violence echoes the decrease in intentional homicides in Guerrero, the decrease of drug-related homicides in Michoacán does not reflect the increased intentional homicides. This discrepancy could be explained by the method of data gathering, as not all homicides can be considered to be drug-related, especially if they are committed by the government in order to enforce the law. This suggests, that while violence perpetrated by DTOs and self-defense forces might have led to a decrease in levels of drug-related violence in Michoacán in 2013, enforcement violence might have increased, as represented through intentional homicides. If the impact self-defense groups have on levels of violence is to be fully understood, levels of intentional homicides must be considered. This will shed light on the indirect implications self-defense groups have on levels of violence.

Figure 8: Intentional Homicides by State – Comparing 2012 and 2013



Source: SNSP.

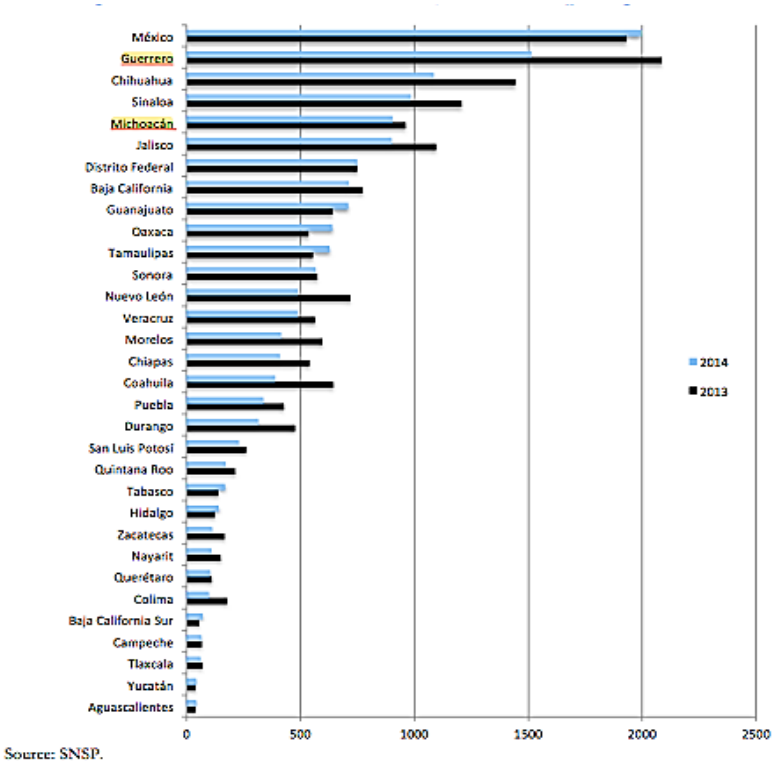
Figure 9: Drug-Related Homicides by State: Comparing 2012 – 2013



Source: *Milenio;* Heinle, Molzahn and Shirk 2015a

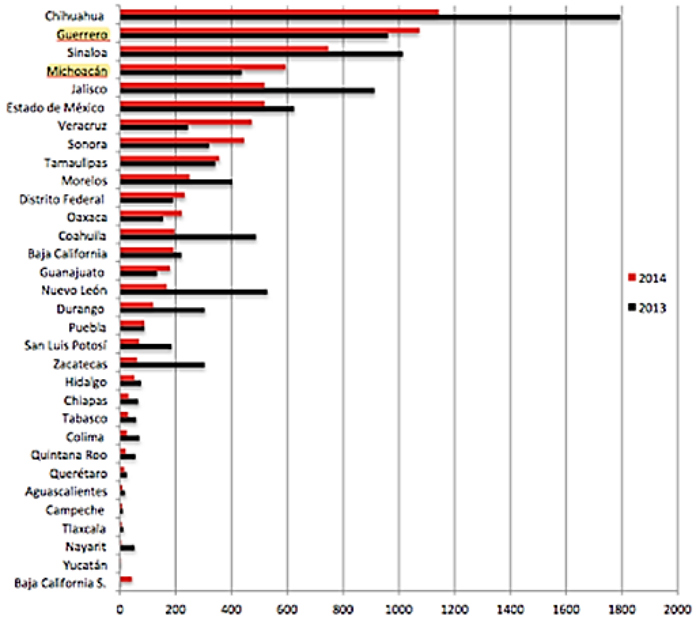
In comparison to 2013, 2014 saw an increase in levels of drug-related violence, and a decrease in intentional homicides in both states (see table 3 and figures 10 and 11). The reduction in the levels of intentional homicides in 2014 could be related to the enforcement efforts by the government, suggesting that the efforts of the government to control self-defense groups and DTOs decreased in 2014. This could have allowed self-defense forces or DTOs to engage in higher levels of violence, which were recorded as drug-related homicides.

Figure 10: Intentional Homicides by State: Comparing 2013 and 2014



Source: SNSP.

Figure 11: Drug-Related Homicides by State: Comparing 2013 – 2014



Source: *Milenio;* Heinle, Molzahn and Shirk 2015a

7. Impact of Self-Defense Groups on Types and Levels of Violence

7.1. Recruitment Method

Forcefully recruiting militia members can lead to higher levels of violence in a conflict (Cohen and Nordås 2015). In Mexico, however, there is no evidence of forceful recruitment. In fact, it seems that members of self-defense groups and community police forces in Michoacán and Guerrero started as volunteers. Grillo (2013) described the recruitment process in the small town of Tierra Colorada, Guerrero, in a TIME magazine article. People had suffered too much at the hands of criminal organizations, and given the inability of the government to uphold the rule of law, people decided to take action. The leader of the local self-defense group Esteban Ramos gathered the people of the town and said: "It is time to fight back. If you are in favor of our community police and want to join or support us, then step forward" (Grillo 2013, 1). At first nobody reacted, but soon a man stepped forward, followed by another nine men. The crowd cheered on. A new self-defense group had been formed (Grillo 2013). While not all self-defense groups formed in this way, Grillo's description of the formation of the militia reflects the overall development of self-defense groups in Mexico (Valdivia-García 2014). This suggests that the recruitment methods of self-defense forces did not have an impact on the levels or types of violence in neither Michoacán nor Guerrero, as they were not forcefully recruited.

7.2. Outsourced /Negligence

The deliberate outsourcing of violence to self-defense groups by the government, or the negligence of the state to control self-defense forces is expected to lead to higher levels of defensive violence. Furthermore, defensive violence could have a direct or indirect impact on reprisal, predominance, or competition violence. The onset of both self-defense forces, and community police took place as a civic response to the unwillingness or inability of the Mexican government to protect its civilian population from predatory criminal organization (Asfura-Heim and Espach 2013). This suggests that the Mexican government had nothing to do with the development of self-defense groups in Michoacán and Guerrero. When President Peña Nieto was asked about the legitimacy of self-defense groups he stated that the government, has made it clear that the Mexican state is the only responsible

body for maintaining security conditions for its citizens (CNN Mexico 2014b). He added that the Mexican government had no part in the expansion of such groups (CNN Mexico 2014b).

Even before the appearance of self-defense forces, the government was facing national and international criticism for the high levels of violence in the country; some even went as far as to argue that Mexico was a failed state (Sullivan 2011). The President's statements demonstrate how the government has been at odds with the recent development of self-defense forces. The government was permissive of self-defense forces, realizing the people's frustration over the security situation (INEGI 2014). Yet the government did not want to lose its legitimacy, or be seen as a failed state by the international community, thus it took action to limit the scope of operation of self-defense forces across Michoacán and Guerrero. Hence, it seems unlikely that the government would use self-defense groups as a form of outsourced violence to evade accountability, as outsourcing violence to these groups brings the legitimacy of Mexico's government into question. Additionally, the fact that the Mexican government implemented policies to incorporate self-defense groups into the state apparatus in Guerrero and Michoacán, suggests that the government had little (if any) control over self-defense forces and their actions.

While it seems unlikely, given the available information, it is impossible to establish with all certainty whether the government deliberately used self-defense groups as a means to counter DTOs from areas under their control. At least until January 2014, state and federal government officials did not take actions to dismantle self-defense groups. President Peña Nieto implemented a plan in May 2013 to deploy federal forces to Michoacán, but federal forces did not attempt to dismantle these groups. In fact, federal police forces were reported to escort self-defense groups in the state of Michoacán as early as April 10, 2013 (El Universal 2013). This suggests that at least in 2013, the government was unwilling to control the actions of militias, which in theory should lead to higher levels of defensive and thus drug-related violence. Yet, in 2013 the numbers of drug-related homicides decreased in both states.

Levels of intentional homicide increased in Michoacán in 2013. This suggests that either the gathering of drug-related homicide data was inaccurate in 2013, and thus violence actually increased with the appearance of self-defense groups, or that the increased intentional homicides reported by the government were perpetrated by state security forces. The answer probably lies somewhere in between. While self-defense forces engaged in sporadic confrontations against DTOs in 2013 the government also increased its presence in the state (El Pais 2014a). The demise of the strong Knights Templar in

Michoacán in 2013 probably included intentional homicides, in an effort to quell cartel support. This suggests that defensive violence together with enforcement efforts led to the increased levels of intentional homicides in Michoacán in 2013.

Contrary to the expected increase of levels of violence due to the negligence of the government to take actions against the development of militias (Mitchell, Carey, and Butler 2014), the levels of drug-related violence and intentional homicides actually dropped in Guerrero in 2013. This points to the efficiency of self-defense groups in reducing the levels of violence in that state. Without much direct support from state forces, and with the element of surprise on their side, self-defense groups and more importantly community police forces, were able to push DTOs, its members, and corrupt officials out of the regions where self-defense groups operated.

However, as in Michoacán, levels of drug-related violence in Guerrero increased in 2014, while intentional homicides decreased in the same year. This could suggest that the government may have decreased its engagement, leaving self-defense forces and DTOs to fight each other, leading to lower numbers of intentional homicides, but higher levels of drug-related violence in Guerrero in 2014. However, the government actually increased its efforts to regulate militias in 2014. In Michoacán the government went as far as creating a police corps to integrate self-defense groups into the state security apparatus. Hence, militias were not able to freely engage in acts of defensive violence. The demise of the Knights Templars, a result of government and self-defense efforts, allowed foreign DTOs to challenge the status quo of the various regions of Michoacán, leading to higher levels of competitive drug-related violence in 2014. A similar situation occurred in Guerrero in 2014. While the police worked closely with some self-defense groups, the community police forces in the southern regions of the state managed to keep DTOs and the government out of their territory, leading to lower levels of violence in those regions. Thus, the empirical evidence suggests that it is competitive violence, not defensive violence, that led to an increase in levels of drug-related violence in both states in 2014.

As mentioned, there are at least two types of self-defense groups in Michoacán. Those that aim to protect their community from outside intrusion, and those that expand their sphere of influence across the region. The former, does not engage against other self-defense groups, unless they are being attacked, since by definition they are static. The latter has been found to engage in predominance violence. At least one confrontation between two self-defense groups in la Ruana has been registered. The confrontations between the group saw 11 self-defense members be killed (La Jornada 2014b). This confrontation between self-defense forces has been the exception rather than the rule. Thus, the

increase in levels of violence in 2014 in the state of Michoacán could not have been caused by predominance violence between self-defense forces. Evidence that self-defense groups or community police forces engaged in violent actions against each other in Guerrero is also lacking.

While there in no evidence suggesting that the government outsourced violence, it is clear that the negligence of the government had an indirect impact on the escalation in levels of violence in Guerrero and Michoacán. While sporadic confrontations between self-defense groups did take place in both states, the number and intensity of these confrontations cannot fully explain the escalation of violence levels from 2013-2014. In addition, defensive actions taken by self-defense groups, and community police forces seem to have culminated in the apprehension of criminals (Althaus and Dudley 2014). Thus, self-defense forces have had an indirect impact on violence. The appearance of self-defense groups forced the government, to take a proactive approach to combat predatory criminal organizations. In addition, in 2014 competitive violence between DTOs dramatically increased in Michoacán, largely due to actions taken by self-defense groups to take down the Knights Templar. In Guerrero, however, self-defense groups do not seem to have had such an effect on DTOs, since confrontations between criminal groups have been common since 2009.

7.3. Target Group for Mobilization

The target group for mobilization of self-defense forces is expected to lead to higher or lower levels of violence (Stanton 2015); it can also have an impact on competition and predominance violence. As mentioned, the rapid expansion of self-defense forces, especially in Michoacán, makes it difficult even for militia leaders to verify the background of their recruits. Additionally, while various ethnic groups exist across Mexico, indigenous communities comprise a minority in Michoacán and Guerrero (Serrano Carreto 2006). Around 15% of the population of Guerrero is of indigenous decent, while only 3.5% of the citizens of Michoacán are indigenous (Serrano Carreto 2006). The great majority of indigenous people are located in the southern region of Guerrero, while in Michoacán indigenous communities are found in the central highlands (Serrano Carreto 2006). In the community of Cherán in Michoacán, and in the Costa Chica and La Montaña region of Guerrero, community police forces recruited volunteers along ethnic lines. In Guerrero areas with a high concentration of indigenous people (Costa Chica and La Montaña) experienced lower levels of violence than the rest of

the state (Kyle 2015). However, DTOs in general are not known to have recruited along ethnic lines. This leads to the conclusion that while levels of violence are lower in indigenous regions of Guerrero, it is not because the recruitment ground of community police forces and DTOs is the same in the state. Rather, the relatively lower levels of violence in Costa Chica and La Montaña can be best explained by the organizational structure of community police forces; having developed a complex system that includes trials and convictions of criminals outside the state apparatus, the community police forces in Guerrero have been able to keep DTOs out of their territory in Guerrero.

Although, the community police force in Cherán, Michoacán does not enjoy the same rights as similar groups in Guerrero, at least in 2013 there were no homicides reported in the municipality (INEGI 2015). This trend demonstrates that even without the complex system that has been developed in Guerrero, indigenous community police forces are able to seal their territory from the intrusion of foreign DTOs. Just as in Guerrero, the recruitment ground of DTOs and community police forces in the municipality of Cherán are not a likely causes for the lower levels of violence seen in those regions. Rather, in Cherán, it seems that the ability of the indigenous people to work together against the threat of DTOs has allowed the community police in the area to keep violence out.

If the recruitment ground plays a role in increased levels of violence, then only because it has become increasingly difficult for the government to distinguish between self-defense forces and criminals disguised as such. The government found itself involved in a number of altercations against self-defense forces. In January 2014, after the federal government announced plans to regulate militias in Michoacán, confrontations between the military and self-defense groups left only two dead in the Tierra Caliente region (La Jornada 2014a). It was not until January 2015 that further confrontations between federal security forces and alleged self-defense groups took place in Apatzingan killing 11 and seeing 44 people arrested (Proceso 2015). The government insists it was not fighting a self-defense group (although this is disputed), but a criminal organization linked to the Viagras cartel (Proceso 2015). This confrontation demonstrates how difficult distinguishing between criminal self-defense groups and legitimate ones has become. Nonetheless, Mexico has been reluctant to take concrete actions against self-defense forces. The plans by the government to integrate Michoacán and Guerrero's self-defense forces into the state security apparatus, demonstrates a willingness to cooperate with such groups.

It has become increasingly difficult for the government to distinguish self-defense groups, as these are often recruited from the same grounds as criminal organizations. However, despite the

overlap of recruitment grounds, this has not impacted violence levels. Enforcement efforts to counter self-defense groups have been limited, suggesting that the government has decided to take a cautious approach towards self-defense forces, even if they are suspected of being criminal groups. This is perhaps because the government's approval rating in Michoacán and Guerrero is extremely low, as exemplified by both governors renouncing their post in late 2014 (El Universal 2014). The government did attempt to enforce the rule of law in 2014, not by fighting self-defense forces, but rather by attempting to regulate them, leading to some arrests of alleged criminal self-defense members (El Universal 2014). This suggests that due to the difficulty in distinguishing the two types of groups, the government has decided not to engage in frequent violent confrontations; this has led to lower levels of enforcement violence directed at self-defense members. Indigenous areas have seen lower levels of violence in general, due their exclusive recruitment grounds, which has allowed them to avoid becoming entangled with DTOs and government forces fighting DTOs.

7.4. Information to the State

Militias can serve as a reliable source of information for the government. While community police forces work parallel to the government, self-defense groups have been known to work in tandem with the state. Theoretically, given the local knowledge of self-defense groups, cooperation with the government can lead to the sharing of high quality intelligence, which can help the government move from indiscriminate violence to selective violence against DTOs (Kalyvas 2006). However, whether the sharing of information leads to higher or lower levels of violence depend on how the government uses the information. If the government decides to target DTO members, then this can lead to higher levels of enforcement violence. However, if the government decides to only target the leadership of criminal organizations then it might lead to lower levels of enforcement violence. Either way the enforcement of the law can lead to competition or retaliation violence against state security forces or reprisal against self-defense groups if they are found to be providing information to the government.

In Michoacán the federal intervention led to cooperation between self-defense groups and the state security apparatus (Althaus and Dudley 2014). In comparison, the federal government did not respond to continuing violence (and thereby also to self-defense groups) in Guerrero until the 26 of September 2014, when 43 students in the municipality of Iguala disappeared, shocking the nation (El

Pais 2014b). Prior to the incident in Iguala, the state government had made some efforts to regulate self-defense groups by integrating them into the state police. However, the level of cooperation between state forces and self-defense groups has not reached the level seen in Michoacán, where self-defense forces were often seen working closely with federal security forces (Althaus and Dudley 2014).

Government has been enforcing the law on three different levels: federal, state, and municipal. While the federal government has better trained, paid, and equipped police officer and the support from the military, the municipal government has limited police forces, funds, and training. The state police capacities are somewhere in between (Rivera Velázquez 2014). This discrepancy of professionalism at the different levels of police has been acknowledged by top officials, there are plans to improve and unify the structure of police force across Mexico (Schedler 2013). Nevertheless, this discrepancy has slowed down counter-criminal efforts ever since former president Calderon decided to implement a policy to eradicate DTOs from Mexico (Schedler 2013).

As the development of self-defense groups exemplifies, the civilian population in Mexico lacks trust in government officials, especially at the municipal level. Across Mexico at least 90% of crimes go unreported (INEGI 2014). Statistics say that in 2014 around 94% of crime went unreported in Michoacán and in Guerrero 96.7% (INEGI 2014). Yet, if the government wants to fight crime it needs to restore the people's trust, which can also lead to need access to high quality information. Self-defense groups might be the link between the government and the people that is needed to better target criminals in Mexico. However, in order for the information gathered through cooperation with self-defense groups to be efficient, cooperation between the different levels of government must also improve.

The attitude towards cooperation in Michoacán improved dramatically with the election of Governor Fausto Vallejo in 2012. While at first Peña Nieto was reluctant to increase federal police and military presence in the state, once self-defense groups started to appear across the state in early 2013, the federal government decided to take swift action (Valdivia-García 2014). In mid-May the president announced a new strategy to combat organized crime in the state. In January 2014, appointed by the federal government, Castillo set out a plan to regulate militias in Michoacan.

The levels of cooperation between militias and the federal government have fluctuated since 2013. At the beginning, the government seemed willing to fight alongside the expanding self-defense forces. State security forces and self-defense members were reported to enter towns in tandem (Althaus and Dudley 2014). Self-defense groups operated check points across the state handed over alleged

criminals to federal police forces. This cooperation led to the sharing of high-quality intelligence, leading to the arrest and killing of various Knights Templar members (Althaus and Dudley 2014). The arrest of one of the founders of the Knights Templars, Nazario Moreno, in March 2013, demonstrates that this cooperation led to high profile arrests of DTO members. In early April of the same year, Michoacán's interior minister, Jesus Reyna was arrested for having alleged ties to the Knights Templar (Proceso 2014b). Through this early cooperation, the government was able to target law enforcement efforts accurately, leading to the arrest of hundreds of DTO members and supporters. Confrontation between DTOs and state forces led to the death of at least 22 people by July 2013, two of which were part of the state security forces, while the remaining 20 were said to be criminals (BBC 2013). By the end of 2013, a total of 39 members of federal forces were said to have deceased in the state of Michoacán alone (Animal Politico 2013).

This cooperation might explain that while drug-related violence decreased in 2013, intentional homicides increased in the same year in Michoacán. As the government was able to target criminals, the number of enforcement efforts increased, leading to an increase in levels of intentional homicide in 2013. In turn, partially due to the enforcement efforts, the Knights Templar were not able to engage in too many violent acts, leading to a temporary decrease in levels of drug-related violence.

Over time, self-defense forces became problematic for the government, challenging the state on the monopoly of the use of force, just as the cartels had done in the past. With the arrival of Castillo to Michoacán in 2014, cooperation between self-defense forces and the government started to decrease. Those groups that agreed to form part of the rural police corps reported that they were not able to curve violence to the desired extent (Animal Politico 2015a), pointing to a reduction in the enforcement efforts of the government in 2014.

The financial and operative capabilities of the Knights Templar in Michoacán were diminished by 2014 (Animal Politico 2015a). Yet, this has not led to a lasting decrease in the level of drug-related violence. On the contrary, the actions taken by the government to contain the expansion of self-defense forces and to challenge the status quo of the regions where the Knights Templar had control, directly contributed to the rise of intentional homicides across the state in 2013, and indirectly to the rise of drug-related violence in 2014. In 2014, there was a decrease in government casualties, but an increase in deaths of self-defense members as a result of confrontations (Animal Politico 2015a). The reduction in the number of deceased security forces, and the increasing death-toll of self-defense group members in 2014, suggest that the government stepped back its enforcement efforts in Michoacán in 2014. This

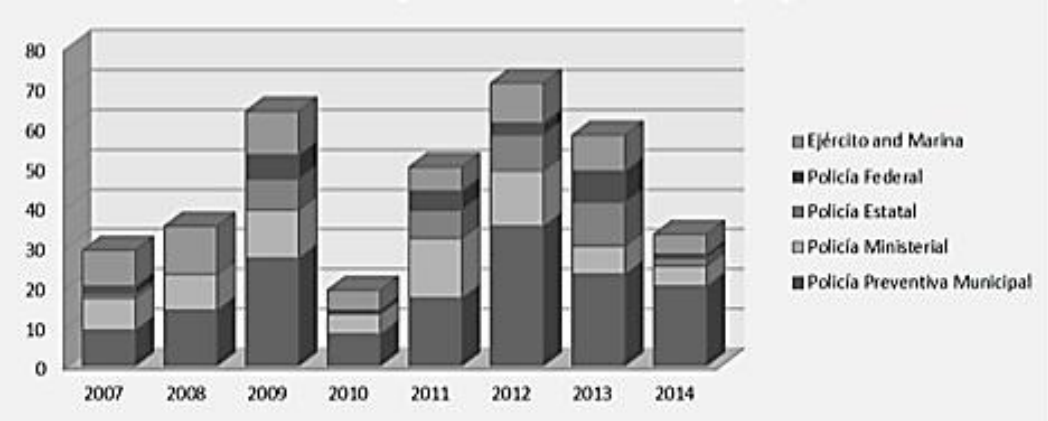
perhaps led to a decrease in the levels of intentional homicides, and an increase in levels of drug-related homicides in 2014, as other cartels and self-defense groups fought for control over the lucrative trading routs in Michoacán.

Inaction by the government has contributed to the increasing levels of violence in Guerrero; rather than enforce the law, the government stood aside, allowing various groups in the region to fight each other (Seguridad Paz y Justicia 2014). In part government negligence can be attributed to corruption of officials who took bribes to turn their heads when DTOs were conducting illegal activities (Kyle 2015, 38). According to Raúl Núñez Salgado, former financial operator of the Guerreros Unidos cartel, his organization would make payments of up to 600,000 Mexican pesos per month (about US$40,000), to the local police forces in Iguala, allowing the DTO to operate freely in the area (Proceso 2014c).

While some police officers deliberately engage in illegal activities with DTOs, by far the preferred strategy for the survival of state security forces is avoidance (Kyle 2015). This has been the case not only at the municipal level, but also state and federal level (Kyle 2015, 39). The number of casualties suffered by security forces has dramatically decreased since 2012 (see figure 12). However, the reduction in casualties is not due to a reduction in the levels of violence, since levels of drug-related violence increased from 2013-2014. The decrease in the number of casualties can be best explained by the lack of confrontations between DTOs and state security forces. Hence, Guerrero saw a decrease in intentional homicides, while Michoacán saw intentional homicides increase in 2013 due to the presence of federal forces.

Partially due to the reduction of confrontations between DTOs around Acapulco, Guerrero, drug-related homicides also decreased in 2013 (Kyle 2015, 23). It was not until after escalating protests across the state due to the disappearance of the 43 students in Iguala that former governor Aguirre Rivero stepped down in October 2014 (Milenio 2015). Following the resignation of the governor, the Federal government took over security efforts of the state, leading to an increased presence of federal police forces across Guerrero.

Figure 12: Police and Military Casualties in Guerrero, 2007-2014



Source: Kyle 2015

It is too early to tell whether the deployment of federal forces to Guerrero will have an impact on the levels intentional homicides. The community forces are not known to engage in extensive cooperation with state security forces, hence, they have not shared tactical information. As for the somewhat dispersed self-defense groups, cooperation with the government has been limited as well. In fact, self-defense leaders have downplayed the presence of federal police forces, stating that their presence is only temporary (El Sur 2013). Thus, the steady decrease in levels of intentional homicides does not seem to be correlated with the provision of information from militias to the government in Guerrero. Instead, it seems plausible that the lack of engagement of the security forces can explain the decreasing levels of intentional homicides.

Drug-related violence slightly increased from 2013 to 2014. However, this increase does not seem to be due to enforcement efforts, rather it seems that the capture the leader of the Beltran Leyva cartel in October 2014 has created yet another power vacuum in the state, which several DTOs in the region are attempting to fill (Kyle 2015).

In contrast to the reaction and the consequent cooperation that emerged between the federal government and self-defense forces in Michoacán, in Guerrero, cooperation between community police forces and self-defense forces, and the government has been limited. The cooperation in Michoacán led to the arrest of many Knights Templar members, and their leadership in 2013. However, once the Knights Templar had been weakened, the government moved to regulate the self-defense groups. Together, these actions have opened up an opportunity for other DTOs to battle over control of the lucrative trading routes of the state. In Guerrero, it was not the sharing of information that led to the

intervention by federal forces; rather, it was the shocking events that took place in Iguala, which demonstrated the levels of influence DTOs had reached in the state. Thus, in Guerrero the sharing of information between the government and militias had little to do with the escalations of violence, it is more likely that the avoidance by state security forces have allowed for further confrontations between DTOs in Guerrero.

7.5. Shifting DTOs' Focus from Government to Self-Defense Groups

The rise of self-defense groups has had an impact on the operations of DTOs in Michoacán and Guerrero. Self-defense groups engaging against DTOs can lead to reprisal violence, which in turn can lead to higher levels of drug-related violence. In addition, reprisal violence can give place to defensive and predominance violence, if self-defense groups are attacked or if self-defense groups become criminals themselves. Reprisal violence can force the government to become more engaged in the conflict, leading to higher levels of enforcement violence. Finally, if DTOs shift their focus from the government to self-defense groups, it might weakened their capabilities, opening up an opportunity for other criminal organizations to compete for territory, leading to higher levels of drug-related violence.

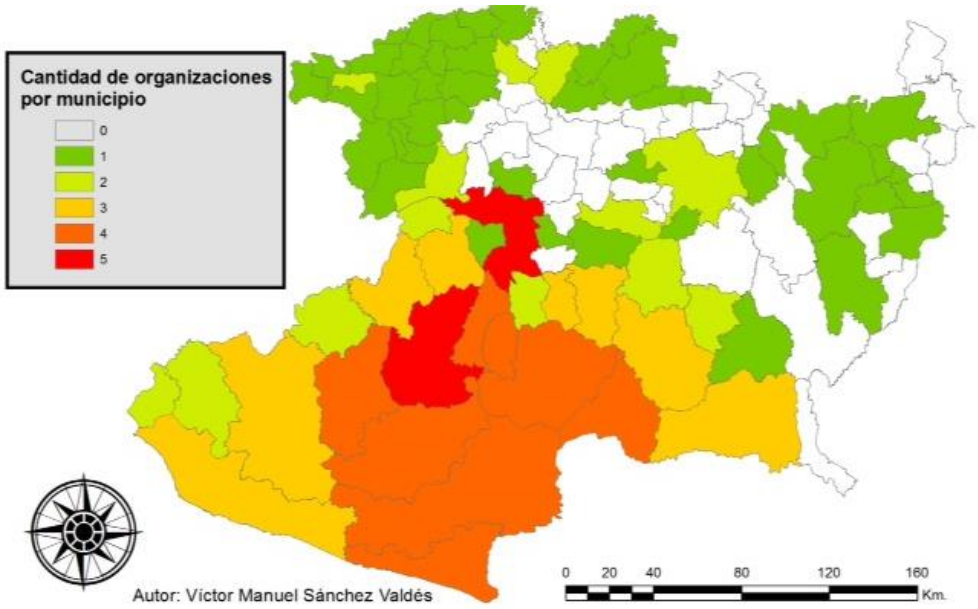
As the main aim of self-defense forces in Michoacán is stop the predation of the Knights Templar, self-defense groups in Michoacán have taken a more confrontational approach against DTOs, than similar groups in Guerrero have. Enforcement actions, together with the defensive actions taken by self-defense groups in Michoacán to challenge the status quo of the areas controlled by the Knights Templar have forced the cartel to engage in violent actions against self-defense forces. In comparison, self-defense forces and the government in the state of Guerrero have not been as efficient in challenging the many DTOs. Hence, confrontations between DTOs and self-defense forces in Guerrero have been limited.

In 2013, the rapid development of self-defense forces across southern Michoacán saw a few sporadic confrontations between self-defense groups and the Knights Templar. By the end of October 2013, 23 members of self-defense forces had perished while fighting the Knights Templar (Aristegui Noticias 2013). However, government officials put the death toll at only five (Aristegui Noticias 2013). Confrontations between the Knights Templar and self-defense forces reached a peak in January 2014, when on at least five different occasions altercations between various self-defense groups and the

Knights Templar were reported (El Diario 2014). However, as Michoacán saw a decrease in the level of drug-related homicides in 2013, the confrontations between DTOs and self-defense groups do not seem to have culminated in too many homicides that year. It seems that enforcement efforts conducted by the government helped diminish the capabilities of the Knights Templar before they could retaliate against self-defense forces.

Even though only a handful of confrontations took place between self-defense forces and Knights Templars, the fall of the DTO can be partially attributed to the rise of self-defense forces. This is primarily due to the cooperation of self-defense groups and federal police, which led to the arrest of hundreds of Knights Templar (Althaus and Dudley 2014, 14). While the lines between criminal organizations and the offensive self-defense groups has recently become somewhat blurry, the demise of the Knights Templar in Michoacán has created a power vacuum that is being filled by other DTOs. At least five DTOs are currently fighting for the control of the trading routes in Michoacán (see figure 13) (Animal Politico 2015b). At least one of them, La Tercera Hermandad, is alleged to have formed through cooperation between self-defense groups and some members of various DTOs (Excelsior 2014). Mireles, a former leader of a self-defense group in Michoacán, has warned of a possible "Colombianization" of the self-defense groups (Excelsior 2014). He argues that there have been too many former DTO members that have been allowed to join self-defense groups, at times even rising to the rank of leadership (Excelsior 2014). Thus, the power vacuum in Michoacán left by the Knights Templar has not only been filled by DTOs, but also by criminal self-defense groups, which have taken advantage of the situation, and have morphed into something that resembles a paramilitary group. Competition between DTOs and the rise of paramilitary groups can be considered as a main factor for the increased levels of drug-related violence in Michoacán in 2014.

Figure 13: Number of Criminal Organizations operating in the state of Michoacán (2015)



Source: Animal Politico 2015b

In Guerrero, community police forces can "properly claim that they have succeeded in significantly reducing DTO extortion activities in the areas they control" (Kyle 2015, 46). Similarly, self-defense groups have been relatively efficient at reducing the number of casualties in the areas where they operate. According to the Guerrero Violence Project, the number of deaths in the area where self-defense groups operate was 21 in 2013 and 10 in 2014, with only one self-defense member deceased (Kyle 2015). However, there are many DTOs operating within Guerrero, which could mean that DTOs cannot afford to refocus their efforts to confront self-defense forces, since preventing other DTOs from gaining territory is more important.

The long tradition of community police forces in the southern mountainous regions of Guerrero, has demonstrated that well organized community police forces, working parallel to the government, can help reduce the levels of violence (Kyle 2015, 46). By the end of 2014, 62 out of 81 municipalities in the state reported the presence of criminal organizations (Excelsior 2014). The 19 municipalities where no DTOs were recorded are all areas where community police forces are present (Milenio 2014). The remaining self-defense groups dispersed around the state have developed as a result of the fragmentation of DTOs and the competitive violence that has come with it (Kyle 2015). There is no

evidence pointing to confrontation between self-defense forces and DTOs, as a direct factor for the increasing levels of drug-related violence in Guerrero in 2014. Nor is there any evidence suggesting that government enforcement actions had a dramatic impact on the levels of drug-related violence in the state. The increasing drug-related violence in 2014 can best be attributed to the fractionalization of DTOs in the state and the resulting competitive violence (Kyle 2015).

While some fighting between self-defense forces and the Knights Templar took place in 2013 and 2014, the number of deceased due to the confrontations does not point to the shifting of focus of DTOs from the government to self-defense groups as being the primary cause of increased violence in Michoacán. However, the sporadic fighting impacted the willingness of the federal government to intervene in 2013 leading to higher levels of intentional homicides. The depleted capabilities of the Knights Templar triggered other DTOs to challenge territorial control. In contrast, Guerrero had seen an escalation in the number of confrontations between DTOs before the formation of self-defense groups. While self-defense forces seem to have been relatively efficient at maintaining peace in the areas they control, the ongoing infighting between cartels in other territories may be distracting DTOs from fighting self-defense forces. In other words, it appears that criminal organizations have to allocate their resources to fight other DTOs rather than to refocus their energy on self-defense forces in Guerrero. For its part, community police forces in southern Guerrero have been relatively efficient in keeping DTO influence outside their territory.

8. Concluding Remarks

Recent levels of violence in Mexico have reached levels comparable to intrastate wars. Yet, it would be wrong to define Mexico's situation as a civil war. While the government is partially to blame for the rapid escalation of violence, DTOs have carried out most of the homicides seen in Mexico in the past decade. However, contrary to most rebels in civil wars, criminal organizations in Mexico are motivated by economic incentives. While maintaining control of some territory has allowed DTOs in Michoacán and Guerrero to freely engage in illicit activities, today criminal networks do not attempt to challenge the political order, which has allowed them to illegally extract economic resources. While this approach has worked in the past, the increasing of state security forces to enforce the rule of law, have diminished the earnings of many cartels, leading to the predation of the local population to extract the foregone economic resources. Due to the inability or unwillingness of the government to protect its civilian population, the people of Michoacán and Guerrero have taken up arms in order to defend themselves. This has led to the creation of various forms of militias. The indigenous based community police forces in Guerrero (and partially in Michoacán), have developed a comprehensive governance system, independent from the government. In comparison non-indigenous groups across Michoacán and Guerrero have created self-defense groups, with the sole aim of protecting their communities by diminishing the influence of cartels in their territory.

Yet, most of the literature that attempts to explain the escalation in levels of violence in Mexico throughout the past decade or so has largely neglected the impact militias have on levels and types of violence. This thesis has relied on the limited literature on militia violence during civil wars, to better understand the impact militias have on levels and types of violence outside intrastate conflicts. Scholars of civil wars have identified different mechanisms through which militias impact levels and types of violence during conflicts. While these findings must be taken with caution, as Mexico is not in a state of civil war, the similarities between civil wars and the current conflict in Mexico make it possible to derive possible mechanisms through which militias can effect levels and types of violence in Mexico (see table 4).

Table 4 – Impact of Self-Defense Groups on Violence

Aspects of Militias	Violence Perpetrated by	Type of Violence	Impact on Level of Violence	Types of Violence Impacted
Recruitment Method	Self-defense	Defensive	No Impact	None
Outsourced / Negligence	Self-defense	Defensive	Higher	Enforcement and Competition
Target Group for Mobilization	Government	Enforcement	No Impact	Enforcement (Lower)
Information	Government	Enforcement	Higher	Retaliation, Defensive, and Competition
Shift	DTOs	Reprisal	No Impact	Enforcement (Higher), and Competition (Higher)

Sources: Osorio 2013; Mitchell, Carey, and Butler 2014; Clayton and Thomson 2014; Kalyvas 2006; Cohen and Nordås 2015; and Stanton 2015.

Militias had different impacts on the levels and types of violence in Michoacán and Guerrero. While sporadic confrontations between self-defense forces and the Knights Templar took place in Michoacán, defensive and reprisal violence alone cannot explain the increased levels of intentional homicides in 2013. Rather, the rapid development of self-defense groups in 2013 forced state security forces to combat the hegemonic Knights Templar in the state. Aided with high quality information gathered by self-defense groups in 2013, state security forces were able to confront the Knights Templar, leading to higher levels of intentional homicides in 2013. The actions taken by the government to dismantle the criminal networks present in the state temporarily decrease the levels of drug-related violence in 2013. In 2014 the government continued to apprehend leaders of the Knights Templar, but in general reduced its enforcement efforts, and started to regulate self-defense groups, leading to fewer confrontations against DTOs and thus a reduction in intentional homicides. By 2014 the capabilities of the Knights Templar had been diminished, which allowed other DTOs to fight for control over Michoacán, with the result being an increase in drug-related violence in 2014. Thus, in Michoacán self-defense groups had an indirect impact on the levels of violence, as their presence increased enforcement and competitive violence.

Guerrero had seen exceptionally high levels of violence since 2009 when various DTOs started to fight each other for territorial control. However, by 2013, the partial consolidation of various criminal groups around the Acapulco area led to a temporary reduction in levels of drug-related homicides. Levels of drug-related violence remained relatively low until October 2014, when the head

of the strongest cartel in Guerrero, the Beltran Leyva cartel, was capture by state security forces. This caused competition between DTOs in the state to escalate. Thus, self-defense groups had little to do with the fluctuation in levels of drug-related violence in Guerrero.

The appearance of self-defense groups in 2013 coincided with decreasing intentional homicides. The lower levels of intentional homicides in 2013 and 2014 seen in Guerrero, can partially be attributed to the efficiency of self-defense groups and community police forces to secure their territory from criminal organizations, without the need to engage in extensive violent confrontations. In contrast to the quick response by the federal government in Michoacán, which led to higher levels of intentional homicides, Guerrero did not see increasing enforcement efforts after the appearance of militias. This was perhaps so because Guerrero has had a long history of militia like groups (indigenous police forces) operating outside the control of the state. However, the lack of enforcement actions contributed to the reduction in levels of intentional violence. While, the reduction of intentional violence is a positive development, the lack of enforcement action is worrying. It seems that areas under the control of self-defense groups and community police forces are safer than other areas. This suggests that the civilian population may be better prepared than the government to make the necessary changes in order to restore peace and stability.

Even if the escalation in levels of drug-related violence cannot be directly attributed to self-defense forces in Michoacán or Guerrero, self-defense groups indirectly impact violence by effecting the types of violence found. Their presence can cause more enforcement violence; self-defense groups played a crucial role in urging the government to take swift action. The defensive violence by self-defense groups has partially interrupted the illicit activities of DTOs in the areas under the control of self-defense groups. This increase in enforcement violence and defensive actions by the militias has also led to an increase in competitive violence. The actions taken by the government in Michoacán, first to increase federal security forces in 2013, and then to integrate self-defense groups into the state security apparatus in 2014, have demonstrated that cooperation between civilians and the government can lead to diminishing the capabilities of DTOs. This then has created power vacuums that are filled via competitive violence perpetrated by other DTOs.

As long as the opportunity to profit from illegal activities is present, diminishing the capabilities of one cartel will invite an unknown number of challenging criminal organizations to perpetrate acts of violence. Therefore, while it can be helpful for the government to work in cooperation with militias, a lasting peace can only be achieved if DTOs stop competing for the control

of lucrative illicit businesses.

People are fed up with the lack of political will to change the status quo that has allowed criminal organizations to profit. The appearance of self-defense groups across Mexico can be seen a desperate effort by the civilian population to force the government to take responsibility for the security situation in the country. While militias have been willing to cooperate with the government in recent years, if the security situation does not improve, self-defense groups could turn violent and become something that resembles a paramilitary group, perhaps even challenging the authority of the state. While the federal government has started to implement a number of reforms to strengthen state and municipal police, the Mexican government has to do more to stop younger generations from joining criminal organizations. Beyond social development, only when economic benefits of joining a criminal organization are outweighed by credible consequences, will the number of future DTO recruits decrease. However, in order for this to happen the government must tackle the endemic impunity enjoyed by criminals all over the country. To do this, the government needs not only to implement far reaching reforms of the judiciary, but it must also fight against corruption. Self-defense groups do not challenge the legitimacy of the Mexican government today, however, the government must take notice of the unconformity of its people with the current security situation. If the situation does not change, then the Mexican government could face further challenges not only from criminal organizations, but also from the very people it represents.

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Appendix 1: The Criminal History of Michoacán and Guerrero

Criminal Groups in Michoacán

Partially due to its strategic geographic position, Michoacán has seen the development of criminal organizations across the entirety of the state. The origins of DTOs in the state go back to the 1970s, when José Valencia, owner of an avocado plantation started to cultivate cannabis and opium poppy (Heinle, Molzahn, and Shirk 2015b). By the 1990s, the criminal group had flourished under the leadership of Armando Cornelio Valencia, and it became known as the Milenio Cartel. Partially due to the cover that avocado exports gave to the Milenio Cartel, and partially due to the ties the cartel held with the larger Juarez Cartel and the Sinaloa Cartel[5], the cartel was able to freely operate without much interruption until the turn of the century (Althaus and Dudley 2014)[6].

This relative peace was interrupted when an associate of the Milenio Cartel named Carlos "El Tísico" (Tuberculosis) Rosales Mendoza splintered from the group, forming a new organization called La Empresa (the Company). Rosales Mendoza's close ties to Gulf Cartel[7] leader Cárdenas, allowed the newly formed cartel to challenge the existing status quo of the state with the support of the paramilitary arm of the Gulf Cartel, the Zetas[8]. When in 2003 Valencia was captured by the authorities, it seemed that Rosales would gain ground across Michoacán. However, Rosales was captured in 2004, leading to the splinter of La Empresa from the Zetas by two of Rosales associates – Nazario "El Chayo" Moreno Gonzáles and José de Jesús "El Chango" Méndez Vargas, which created La Familia Michoacana (The Michoacan Family). This newly formed cartel employed a semi-religious standing and vowed to protect the local population from outside intrusion, a strategy that had not been seen before anywhere in the country (Althaus and Dudley 2014). However, once competing DTOs were expelled from the state, La Familia Michoacana started to extort and kidnap the local population for economic benefits.

5 At the time, there were four drug cartels that controlled most of the drug trade in Mexico: they were the Gulf Cartel (Cartel del Golfo), the Juarez Cartel, the Sinaloa Cartel (and their smaller partner the Beltran Leyva Organization), and the Tijuana Cartel (also known as the Arellano Felix Organization).

6 The junior partner of the Sinaloa Cartel, the Beltran Leyva Organization, controlled the coastal area surrounding the Lazaro Cardenas port, while the Milenio cartel controlled the agricultural region of Tierra Caliente in Michoacán's mountainous region.

7 "The Gulf Cartel is one of the oldest and most powerful of Mexico's criminal groups, but it has lost some territory and influence to its rivals" in recent years, " including its former enforcement wing the Zetas" (Insight Crime).

8 The Zetas were largely ex-military personnel, which employed military tactics to combat other DTOs across Mexico. However, the Zetas also predated the local population for economic resources, through extortion, kidnappings and even the occasional homicide (InsightCrime).

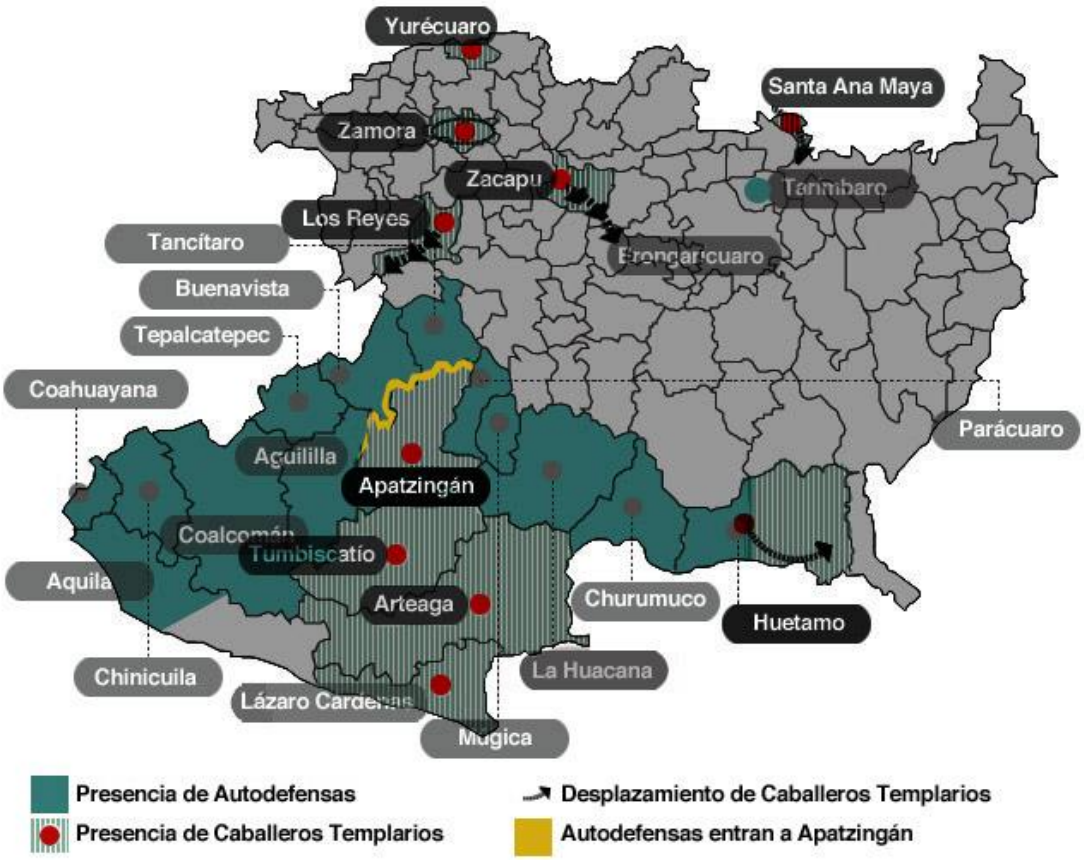
In 2009 the government of Felipe Calderon arrested 38 politicians who had alleged ties to La Familia. However, they were all released from custody within the following 16 months (Rivera 2009; El Universal 2011). These events point to two aspects of the relationship between DTOs and the state in Mexico. First, DTOs have been able to infiltrate the political sphere in order to maintain the status quo, which allows them to conduct their operation. Second, the government has not been very efficient in exercising the rule of law through non-violent means. Nevertheless, the government was able to hurt the organizational structure of La Familia Michoacana, as it was evident when a battle between government forces and La Familia members in December 2010 led to the alleged killing of "El Chayo" Moreno. This led to yet another splinter group from the Familia Michoacana cartel, led by Servando "La Tuta" Gomez and Enrique "El Kike" Placarte, what would become known as the Los Caballeros Templarios (Knights Templar). Even though at the beginning, the Knights Templar announced that they too, wanted to protect the civilian population from other DTOs, with time it became clear that they would be just another predatory cartel, extorting, kidnapping, and murdering civilians across the state (Althaus and Dudley 2014).

By 2012, while not the only cartel in the state, the Knights Templar had control of most of the territory of Michoacán. However, their main source of revenue from the sale of illicit drugs was diminished in 2012 due to efficient law enforcement operations across the nation (Althaus and Dudley 2014). This led the cartel to search for other sources of revenue. Having control over various municipalities across Michoacán, the leadership of the Knights Templar decided to extract "taxes" or rents from farmers and they even went as far as to charge the civilian population by square footage of homes and businesses (Althaus and Dudley 2014). This lead to the creation of self-defense forces across Michoacán in early 2013.

Similar to the paramilitary wing of the Gulf Cartel, the Zetas, the Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generacion (CJNG) was created in 2009 by the Sinaloa Cartel to become its armed wing. However, while the Zetas splintered from the Gulf Cartel, the CJNG remains loyal to "el Chapo" Guzman and its associates (Excelsior 2013). In 2011, the CJNG published a video in which they argued that the group was not simply just another cartel. In the video, the CJNG pledged to fight the Knight Templars, and other cartels in the states of Michoacán and Guerrero, in order to protect the civilian population that had suffered from the extortions and kidnappings by predatory criminals (Blog Del Narco 2011). Confrontations between the CJNG and the Knights Templar in the state of Michoacán were reported as early as April 2012. In addition, some self-defense forces across Michoacán have had alleged support

from the CJNG (Excelsior 2013).[9]

Figure 1: Presence of Knights Templar and Self-defense groups in Michoacán (2014)



Source: Animal politico

9 Due to the rapid demise of the Knights Templar criminal monopoly in the state during 2013 and 2014, by mid-2015 the DTO configuration of Michoacán had dramatically changed. In addition to the Knights Templar, which still have some influence in the region, four other criminal organizations have been fighting to fill the power vacuum left by the demise of the Knights Templar. These groups are: the CJNG, the Viagras, the "El Gallito", La Tercera Hermandad, and the Familia Michoacana (Sánchez Valdés 2015).

Criminal Groups in Guerrero

Mainly attributed to the increasing number of DTOs operating in the territory, violence in the state has increased dramatically in the past decade (Kyle 2015). However, throughout the 1990s the population saw acts of violence perpetrated by groups other than DTOs, and due to the inability of the Mexican government to enforce the rule of law, the state saw the emergence of community police forces already in the early 1990s (Estrada Castañon 2014). The indigenous population of the state have a long history of struggle for recognition, which has led to some instances of violent confrontation against state forces, as it was the case with the guerrilla movement led by the Ejercito Popular Revolucionario (EPR) in 1996 (Sierra 2014). The gravest confrontation between the EPR and state security forces took place in 1998; in what came to be known as the Masacre del Charco (Massacre of el Charco), 11 people lost their lives, 5 were wounded, and 22 were arrested (El Contralinea 2013).

Although it is not completely clear when DTOs started their operation in Guerrero, Kyle (2015) identified four distinct periods of criminal operations across the state. First, in the mid-1990s, the Beltran Leyva Organization worked closely with Armando Carriollo Fuentes and later with Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman[10], to expand their lucrative business to the state of Guerrero. Although little is known about this period, what is clear is that the levels of violence remained relatively low until 2005. The second period started in 2005, when the leader of the Gulf Cartel, Osiel Cárdenas, together with the commander of the Zetas, Hiriberto Lazcano, decided to challenge the Beltran Leyva Organization for the control of the state of Guerrero (Seguridad, Justicia y Paz 2014, 36). It is in this period that the first reports of DTO violence emerged (Kyle 2015). The Beltran Leyva Organization created a new cell under the command Edgar Valdez Villareal, called "The Pelones" (the baldheaded), in order to fight the incursion of foreign DTOs in the state. However, the confrontation between these two groups produced a relatively low number of DTO casualties. The main targets were government officials that had ties to either organization (Kyle 2015, 8). This period, however, saw the first public display of mutilated bodies by DTOs in the state of Guerrero, a tactic of intimidations that would become common in years to follow. Though brutal, these confrontations did little to diminish the power of the Beltran Leyva Organization across the state (Kyle 2015, 19). A real challenge to the status quo came in 2008 with a

10 Armando Carriollo Fuentes was the leader of the Juarez Cartel at the time, while Joaquin Guzman was the leader of the Sinaloa Cartel.

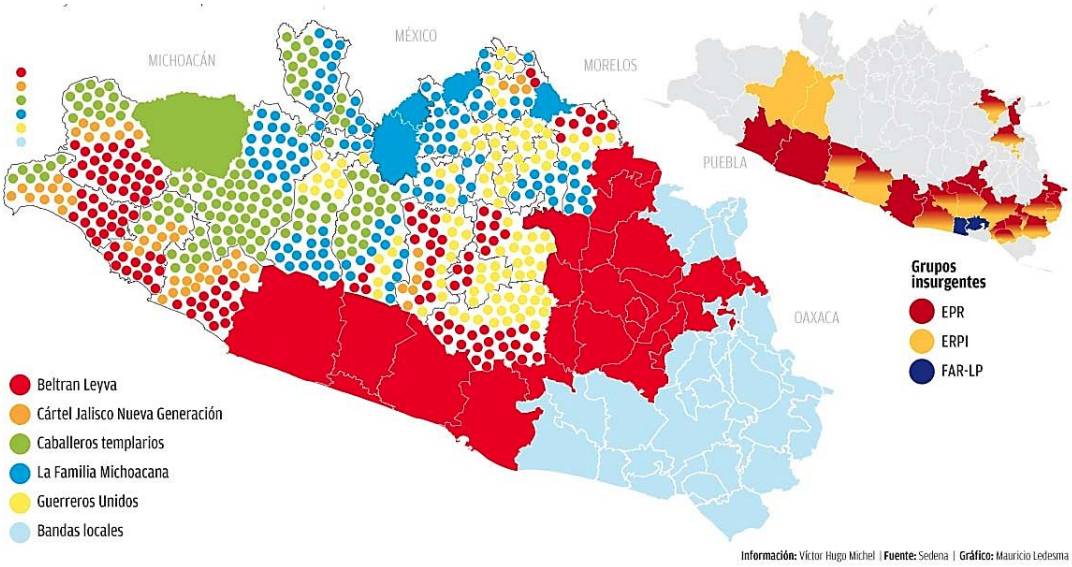
conflict between the Beltran Leyva brothers and Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, leader of the Sinaloa cartel (Seguridad, Justicia y Paz 2014). Since Guerrero was the home territory of the Beltran Leyva, they were able to maintain control of most of the territory. However, this set the stage for the violence that was to increase from 2009 onwards (Kyle 2015, 19).

The third period of violence took place after the Beltran Leyva brothers created their own DTO, separating themselves from the Sinaloa Cartel. This led not only to the escalation in levels of violence, but also to a change in the geographic distribution of drug-related violence within the state of Guerrero. The violence moved from the urban areas across the coastal region into the mountainous interior of the country (Kyle 2015). In Acapulco, the stronghold of the Beltran Leyva Organization, the cartel had little difficulty in fending off competition. However, in the adjacent regions the increasing number of criminal groups led to a high increase in drug-related violence from 2009 onward (Kyle 2015).

The fourth and current period of violence started with the killing of Arturo Beltran Leyva, leader of the Beltran Leyva Cartel, in December 2009, which led the group to splinter. While Edgar Valdez Villareal attempted to reunite the Sinaloa Cartel with the various local DTOs, the new leader of the Beltran Leyva Cartel, Hector Beltran Leyva, found willing partners with the Zetas. However, Valdez Villareal was unable to reunite with the Sinaloa Cartel, and was arrested on August 30, 2010. In the meantime, La Familia Michoacana started to gain influence across Guerrero, especially in the Tierra Caliente region and portions of El Norte region (Seguridad, Justicia y Paz 2014). By January 2011 the landscape of DTOs in Guerrero had changed dramatically. While some former allies of the Beltran Leyva remained loyal to their former bosses, others followed Valdez Villareal. In turn, after Valdez was captured, some of his associates found willing partners with large DTOs, while others remained with no alliance or affiliation to any other DTO. These numerous smaller groups did not have the capabilities to engage in large scale sale or production of illicit drugs. Instead, the groups have been able to survive through predatory behavior towards the local population of the area where they operate (Kyle 2015). In addition, they have engaged in previously unseen levels of violence against state security forces and rival DTOs[11].

11 These new DTOs are: in the Acapulco region - Cartel Independiente de Acapultco, La Barredora, and Beltrand Layva; in the Costa Grande region – the Guardia Gurerrense and Los Caballeros Templarios; in the Tierra Caliente region – Los Caballeros Templarios and Familia Michoacana; in El Centro region – Los Rojos and Los Ardillos; In the El Norte region – Familia Michoacana and Guerreros Unidos; The two remaining regions of La Montaña and Costa Chica do not have a dominant DTO in the region, however, these regions have traditionally been narcotic producing zone of the region, but are largely inaccessible and are controlled by local indigenous groups (Kyle 2015).

Figure 2: Criminal organizations operating in Guerrero (2012)



Source: Milenio

It is during this last period that the exploitation of the local population reached a level not seen before. Kidnappings and extortions, which were not unknown to the Beltran Leyva Organization, evolved into large-scale operations. Violence became even more gruesome and extensive as part of a strategy to deter would be challengers and supporter of other DTOs (Kyle 2015). Guerrero's new DTOs use violence in order to induce the local population to cooperate. They have become more openly predatory than any DTO seen before in the region (Kyle 2015), which has had a direct impact on the lives of the general population of Guerrero.