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**The Rise of Homicides on the Baja California Peninsula
in 2017: A Bloody Mess**

A thesis
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Abstract

The Baja California Peninsula (BCP) is situated in the northwest of Mexico and consists of two major Mexican states, Baja California and Baja California Sur. For decades the peninsula has remained relatively quiet in the overspill of violence generated by the early War on Drugs pursued by Vicente Fox in 2000 and again with a more rigorous approach by Felipe Calderon in 2006. Drug-related violence is affecting areas that have previously not been reached before, causing the Baja California region to become a battleground for drug trafficking organizations' contesting drug routes. From 2014, homicide levels began to rise in the Baja California Peninsula, with a spike of homicides in 2017 causing the region to have one of the highest rates nationwide. The spike of 85.6% in homicides on the BCP and a difference of 325% - three times the national average for homicide rates in 2017, is the reasoning why this paper will seek to understand and answer the question 'Why has the homicide rate in the Baja California Peninsula spiked in 2017?'

The rise of homicides on the BCP is analysed and discussed in relation to three main factors. Factor one discusses how Joaquin Guzman's controlled the police, government officials, and cartel routes through key cities on the BCP, the relationship between Joaquin Guzman's Sinaloa Cartel, the Jalisco New Generation Cartel and the splintering factions fighting for cartel routes. It also discusses the destabilizing of cartels, also called the top-down approach. This model is discussed in relation to the increase of homicides and the role it played with the emergence of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel. A case study is provided of homicides in relation to the turf wars and the impacts this had on the spike of homicide rates. Factor two focuses on Government initiatives such as the militarisation strategy and the deployment of soldiers contributing to a spike in homicide rates. Factor three analyses the increased attack on women and journalists and how these attacks are often over-looked but have contributed to the Spike of homicides on the Baja California Peninsula.

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List of Acronyms

AFO	Arellano Felix Organisation
AMLO	Andreas Manual Lopez Obrador
AVGM	Gender Violence Alert Mechanism
BCP	Baja California Península
C4	Integrated Command, Control, Communications and Computer
CDS	Sinaloa Cartel Initials
CJNG	Jalisco New Generación Cartel
CNPEVCM	Comisión Nacional para Prevenir y Erradicar la Violencia Contra las Mujeres (México)
CTNG	The Tijuana Cartel
DEA	Drug Enforcement Agency (US)
DTO	Drug Trafficking Organisation
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation (US)
LGAMVLV	General Law on Women's Access to Life of Violence
LGBTQ	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer
NACLA	North American Congress on Latin America
OCNF	Observatorio Ciudadano Nacional del Femicidio
PAN	National Action Party
PRD	Party of the Democratic Republic
PRI	Institutional Revolutionary Party

Map of Mexico



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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Baja California Peninsula (BCP) is situated in the northwest of Mexico and consists of two states, Baja California and Baja California Sur. For decades the peninsula was relatively peaceful, despite high levels of violence in other parts of Mexico. However, homicides began to increase in the mid-2010s across the BCP, and a surge in deaths in 2017 resulted in the region experiencing one of the highest homicide rates in the country. This thesis explores the sudden recent rise in homicides on the Baja California Peninsula and seeks to explain its most significant causes.

The political context is essential to understanding changing patterns of violence in Mexico. History was made in 2000 when President Vicente Fox ended the Institutional Revolutionary Party's (PRI) 71-year uninterrupted time in office and became the first National Action Party (PAN) leader in power. President Fox began destabilizing the leadership of Mexico's major drug cartels. Under Fox, the police killed the Tijuana Cartel drug boss Ramon Arellano Felix and jailed his brother in 2001 in Baja California (Miró, 2003). Two years later, the armed forces captured Osiel Cardenas Guillén, leader of the Gulf Cartel, which sparked violence across the country as the Gulf Cartel's trade routes were contested by rival cartels (Cook, 2007). When President Felipe Calderon continued the PAN's leadership in government with a controversial win in 2006, he waged war on drugs, but few would have predicted the mass death toll that followed. The administration's drug policy was characterized by military operations against drug trafficking organizations, police reform, and the support of the Merida Initiative. By 2011, Calderon had deployed more than 96,000 militarised personnel (more than half of the Mexican army) to fight against the drug cartels (Chalk, 2013).

The National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico reports that the total homicides during Calderon's time in office surpassed 120,000, more than double the 50,000 homicides that the Mexican government released at the time (Karlin, 2012). The year 2011 saw Mexico's highest national homicide rate average on record with 19.37 homicides per 100,000 population. That was until 2017 when the record was surpassed at 20.51 homicides per 100,000 population under the leadership of the reinstated PRI party and President Enrique Pena

Nieto, elected in 2012 (Pasquali, 2018a). The national average of homicides initially decreased at the beginning of President Nieto's term in office, but since 2014 there has been a reported steady rise both nationally and in key provinces (Guerrero, Sinaloa, Chihuahua, Morelos, Michoacán, and Zacatecas), with the Baja California Peninsula (Baja California and Baja California Sur) surging in 2017 (Correa-Cabrera et al, 2018).

The two Baja states have typically been PAN-led, with only the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) challenging PAN in Baja California Sur for the state governorship in the early 2000s. Under the governorship of the PAN party in the mid-2000s, homicides in the region remained a relatively low rate per 100,000 population. In 2010, the Baja California Peninsula homicide rate average (17.75) narrowly surpassed the national average (17.63) for the first time since official analytical data of homicide rates were recorded in Mexico. In 2017, the average homicide rate for the BCP spiked to 87.26 per 100,000 population with the national average at 20.51 per 100,000 population. The average rate of homicides nationally increased from 2016 to 2017 by 20.1% with an increase of 85.6% in the Baja California Peninsula. In 2016, there was a difference of 179% between the Mexican national homicide rate and the BCP rate. In 2017, the difference had risen to 325%, an increase of 81.5%. The peninsula had an 85.6% spike in 2017, causing the homicide rate to jump from 47.02 to 87.26 per 100,000 population. A further analysis is presented in Chapter 2, but this summary of the data is the premise for this thesis.

Why did the homicide rate in the Baja California Peninsula spike in 2017? This thesis discusses three main hypotheses, which are outlined below and then examined in detail in chapters 3 – 5.

Hypotheses

H₁: Violence initiated by organized crime syndicates on the Baja California Peninsula significantly contributed to the increased homicide rate.

Mexican federal and local governments have released official statements condemning the actions of drug trafficking organizations and attributing the increase of homicides on the Baja California Peninsula entirely on the drug

trafficking organizations (DTO's) in the region. The reasons for such DTO behaviour including the history of DTO activity in the region are further examined in chapter 3 in relation to this hypothesis. The emergence of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel and the extradition of Joaquin Guzman is instrumental in explaining the relationship between DTO's and the increase of homicide rates on the BCP. To curb cartel dominance across Mexico, the Mexican government instituted a top-down model approach, destabilizing cartels and creating a market for opportunists. However, there is evidence that the government's claim that DTO's are entirely responsible for the rise in homicides on the Baja California Peninsula is not accurate, with research indicating that there are other contributing factors.

H₂: International, federal, and local government initiatives to decrease homicide rates have instead significantly contributed to the increased homicide rate on the Baja California Peninsula.

In response to the rise of homicides in the first four months of 2017, the Mexican government used the militarisation strategy theorem and deployed 1,000 military personnel into Baja California Sur and began work on building a permanent barracks. The attempt to lower homicide rates by military action failed, as the commanding presence of military personnel provoked a violent response from drug trafficking organizations. The security crisis had local governments and state authorities under scrutiny with reports stating 10% of police officers were unfit for service with many failing drug screens, polygraph exams, and competency tests (LaSusa, 2016a). The poor standard of policing coupled with a lack of resources and training saw private security firms and more military personal sent to the peninsula.

In 2017, the new U.S. president, Donald Trump, reportedly made aggressive anti-Mexican slurs and prepared to build a wall between the two nations. His stance on immigration saw the U.S. close its border to asylum seekers and migrants from the south. Tijuana felt the pressure as caravans of migrants flooded into the city seeking refuge and passage across the border.

H₃: A reported increase in group-targeted homicides significantly contributed to the increased homicide rate on the Baja California Peninsula.

Women and journalists are two key groups who reportedly experienced an increase of homicides during 2017. If these increases were sizeable throughout 2017, there could be a relationship between group homicides and the spike in homicide rates. Journalists have been a target for drug trafficking organizations and organized crime due to their investigative methods and reporting on discreet underground activity. Femicides have rarely been considered different from homicides and some states in Mexico do not yet to collect data on femicides. However, femicides experienced an all-time high in 2017 and the federal government initiated a new reporting structure on deaths which include femicides as separate in homicides.

Data Sources

The data provided as the premise for official homicide rates in Mexico and throughout the Mexican regions can be found in Chapter 2. This data has been obtained and compared from three organizations: The National Institute of Statistics, Geography, and Informatics (INEGI), Statista, and InSight Crime. INEGI is an autonomous public organization that regulates and coordinates national statistics and geographical information. INEGI analyse political and economic resources and are nationally recognized in Mexico as the most ethical and reliable source of statistics. However, INEGI often requires long periods to generate statistical reports and disseminate accurate information to the public. Statista is a provider of market research for corporate organizations and provides analytical services to support consumer markets worldwide. They are an independent leading provider of statistics globally who use 22,500 different sources to comprise data and are renowned globally for their reliability. Their data has been consistent with data released from INEGI. InSight Crime is a hybrid of media, academia, and think-tankers. Professional journalists, Fundacion Ideas para la Paz (FIP), a think tank in Bogota, and American University's Center of Latin American and Latino Studies (CLALS) work in association to combine three worlds that study and investigate organized crime in Latin America. They monitor, analyse and investigate ongoing issues within the Latin American region independent of any government or non-government organization and base all research, studies and analyzing of data on an ethical commitment of the highest

standards. Insight Crime state “contributors of InSight Crime must never permit their personal interests to conflict, or appear to conflict, with the interests of the organization, its clients or affiliates” (Insight Crime, 2019). Due to the code of conduct and ethical commitments within InSight Crime and the validity of their data being dissected from three separate angles, Insight Crime has been found as a reputable source and is used throughout this thesis. Scholars from Harvard, Oxford, Berkeley, and the Australian National University as well as reputable organizations such as the World Health Organisation and the Statistical Office of the European Union have utilized INEGI, Statista, and InSight Crime in their research (Waller, 2019; World Bank, 2018). For these reasons, these three sources have been prioritized for the creation of infographics and official homicide rates in this thesis. Other organizations such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the World Bank Group, and Justice in Mexico have been sourced for data and provided in this thesis, however, the data used the analytical comparison in chapter 2 has been provided by INEGI, Statista, and Insight Crime.

Misinformation from the Mexican government has become indicative of Mexican politics and it is not implausible that the recent press releases are again another form of disregarding fact and an unwillingness to reveal the truth to the public (Correa-Cabrera & Nava, 2013, pp. 107-111). No statistics released formally by any department of the Mexican government have been used in this thesis for statistical analysis. Newspapers, magazines, journals, and other sources often report inaccurate data as they depend on hasty accounts of events or government released data which is later proven to be inaccurate. It is for this reason as to why no data has been directly used from these sources for statistical analysis, however, these sources have been used to gain a perspective on specific accounts and case studies relating to the rise of homicides in the Baja California Peninsula in 2017.

Literature Review

The dramatic increase of homicides in Mexico since 2006 has been related to drug trafficking cartels and organised crime (Shirk & Wallman, 2015). Shirk and Wallman (2015) discussed the increased rates of violence, kidnapping, and extortion, especially toward government officials, journalists and civil society

activists (also known as freedom of speech workers). Their findings highlight that although the magnitude of the events is enormous, the scholarly literature on the topic is limited. As Shirk and Wallman (2015) analysed the trends in violence and their causes, they connected much of the violence to the role the Mexican government has played in “the business of illegal drugs and the violence that accompanies it” (p. 1348). This is not the first time that politics has played a role in drug warfare in Mexico with cartels having an altercation with government officials during the 1990s. Trejo and Ley (2018) explained that the rotation of parties in “state gubernatorial power undermined the informal networks of protection that had facilitated cartel’s operations under one-party rule” (p. 900). Without the protection of government officials, cartels created their own private militia for the purpose of defending themselves and protecting their drug trafficking routes from rival cartels. Trejo and Ley (2018) demonstrate that from 1995 to 2006, “the spread of opposition gubernatorial victories was strongly associated with intercartel violence” (p. 900). Their first-hand interviews with opposition governors showed that removing senior and medium-level personnel from institutions that protected the cartels (the government, police, and judiciary) triggered an outbreak in cartel violence (Trejo & Ley, 2018, p. 901).

The spike in homicide levels on the Baja California Peninsula has been researched by Laura Calderon (2018) of the University of San Diego. She writes that there is an objective analysis needed on this topic in order to properly assess the risks posed to locals and visitors (Calderon, 2018, p. 2). Elevated levels of violence in vacation destinations, especially La Paz and Los Cabos, has concerned authorities. The analysis discovered that the violence in Baja California Sur is largely due to organised crime-fighting for key drug trafficking routes and subsequent efforts by the government to address the problem (Calderon, 2018, p. 3). Calderon (2018) concludes by stating the homicide spike is largely due to the downfall of Joaquin Guzman and the emergence of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (p. 12). The competition for dominance in areas the Sinaloa cartel occupy, such as Baja California and Baja California Sur, has seen internecine battles among the cartels causing the homicide spike.

Yashar (2018) highlights that extensive security-sector reforms in countries transitioning from authoritarian rule to democracy risk creating criminal

violence traps, particularly when authoritarian specialists such as the military, pro-government militia or the police force combine with the illicit activities and become entwined with underground activity. When the Mexican government launched an attack on the war on drugs in 2006, its security policies differed from previous administrations by targeting cartel leaders. The primary approach post-2006 has been the top-down model, or as Calderon, Robles, Diaz-Cayeros, and Magaloni (2015) describe it, the “beheading of criminal organisations” (p. 1455). These writers believe that this strategy is effective in disrupting a targeted organisation but can have unintended consequences such as “increasing inter-cartel and intra-cartel fighting and fragmenting criminal organisations” (Calderon et al, 2015, p. 1457). They analysed whether the capture or killing of cartel leaders has increased drug-related violence and if the overspill of violence has caused an increase in homicide rates. Their research found that the killing or capture of a cartel leader exacerbated drug cartel-related violence and homicide rates, not just within cartels but also the general public (Calderon et al, 2015, p. 1456). The violence and homicide rate increase were found to occur in the first six months after the incarceration or killing of a cartel leader (Calderon et al, 2015, p. 1480). The capture of lieutenants within an organisation only increased violence in strategic places or municipalities located along the drug cartel route that lieutenant occupied (Calderon et al, 2015, p. 1456). Duran-Martinez (2018) investigated the crimes committed by drug cartels since 1980, with only a handful of the most serious crimes being reported. She showed that violence began escalating when drug trafficking organisations competed and when the state security apparatus was fragmented. The research was conducted in Ciudad Juarez, Culiacan, and Tijuana in Mexico and Cali and Medellin in Columbia. When the criminal market was monopolized and the state security was cohesive, violence became hidden and rarely reported. Duran-Martinez (2018) claims that there is no relation between the size of drug profits and the violence levels and violence is similarly not affected by the degree of state weakness. She concluded that “the forms and scale of violent crime derive primarily from the interplay between marketplace competition and state cohesiveness” (Duran-Martinez, 2018, p. 34).

Espinosa and Rubin (2013) analysed publicly available data to estimate the effect of military intervention on homicide rates in certain problematic regions

across Mexico. They compared pre-militarisation homicide rates with post-militarisation homicide rates in each problematic region militarised and found that militarisation is rarely specific to a municipality or state and the effects of militarisation can over-spill into other regions (Espinosa & Rubin, 2013, p. 20). However, overall, they concluded that militarisation does make a difference. They reported that “military interventions resulted in an increase in the average homicide rate. However, the estimated effects vary considerably across the treated regions” (Espinosa & Rubin, 2013, p. 24).

Journalists across Mexico encounter hundreds of attacks each year that range from harassment to violence. Bartman (2018) has written extensively regarding the violence in Mexico and says that “the murder of journalists cannot be attributed to the country’s general criminal violence problem alone” (p. 1093). She indicates that journalists have a much higher risk of being murdered than the general public, which is attributed to journalists being targeted (Bartman, 2018, p. 1105). She also sought to understand how the murder of journalists across Mexico is affected not just by a general increase in violence, but also due to political killings (Bartman, 2018, 1097). Brambila (2017) documented and provided statistical data about mass killings and the killings of Mexican journalists from 2010-2015. His research found a relationship between journalists being killed and the levels of violence in society. His work suggests that journalists are more at risk in regions with higher levels of violence and the killings are related to drug cartels and journalists trying to expose the workings of cartels (Brambila, 2017, p. 316). The research found political violence was common as journalists attempted to uncover corrupt officials and police officers. States with more human rights violations had more murders of journalists (Brambila, 2017, p. 317). Alma Guillermoprieto writes extensively about the affairs of Mexico. In 2015, she reported on how the Mexican government has yet to find the answer on why so many journalists are being killed and how to stop it (Guillermoprieto, 2015a). She discussed several cases of journalists being killed, in particular Ruben Espinosa and activist friend Nadia Vera. Throughout the investigation of each journalist killed she identifies a lack of law enforcement action as critical. She concludes

given the almost complete lack of trust under which law enforcement authorities labour everywhere in Mexico, it is not surprising that the

Mexico City district attorney's preliminary conclusion, [was] that Rubin Espinosa and his friend... were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. (Guillermoprieto, 2015a)

In 2017, Guillermoprieto discussed the death of a journalist and friend, Javier Valdez, who was murdered for writing an article about drug cartels (Guillermoprieto, 2017). The execution of Valdez sparked anger and disappointment that journalists continued to be killed in Mexico with no repercussions.

The purpose of this thesis is not to undermine the Mexican government, but to highlight a current gap in the market. Many scholars have studied violence in Mexico. However, the literature on why there was a spike of homicides on the Baja California Peninsula in particular is limited. This thesis will build upon and expand the work of Calderon (2018). The literature review identified no research that examined the effect of government initiatives on homicide rates, specifically how militarisation affected in the BCP for 2017. This indicates that there is an objective rationale in dissecting these hypotheses to increase the literature on and examine why there was a spike in homicides on the Baja California Peninsula in 2017.

Methodology

The case study approach has been implemented in this thesis. A case study is:

The detailed examination of a single example of a class of phenomena, a case study cannot provide reliable information about the broader class, but it may be useful in the preliminary stages of an investigation since it provides hypotheses, which may be tested systematically with a larger number of cases. (Abercrombie, Hill & Turner, 1984, p. 34)

This description may be over-simplified, but it does highlight that there must be a “detailed examination of a single example” and that a case study may be used in “the primary stages of an investigation” to generate hypotheses (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 220). Conventional views of a case study approach indicate that a case or case study has little value without hypotheses (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 220). With case

studies being intensive, they comprise more depth, detail, variance, richness completeness and variance than a cross-unit analysis (Flyvberg, 2011). A case study has also been defined as a comparative study that “is simply the study of numerous cases along the same lines, with a view to reporting and interpreting numerous measures on the same variables of different individuals” (Eckstein, 1975, p. 85). The term individuals can refer to a person or collective in different time periods or contexts (Eckstein, 1975). One of the purposes of conducting a case study is to discover questions and puzzles for theory. This idea offers insights for comparative study which expounds a larger scope than serendipitous studies that sacrifice intensive for extensive research (Eckstein, 1975).

The research methodology is a qualitative case study approach with quantitative analytical analysis and uses secondary resources provided by groups and individuals such as non-governmental agencies within Mexico, governmental agencies outside of Mexico, research facilities, educational centres, statistics and analysis organisations, media outlets, journals and foundations for the purpose of identifying why there has been a spike on the Baja California Peninsula in 2017. A qualitative case study “provides tools for researchers to study complex phenomena within their contexts” (Baxter & Jack, 2010, p. 1). This ensures that the phenomena is not explored solely through one lens, but through multiple lenses allowing the phenomena to be revealed and understood. Yin (2003) states that a qualitative case study should be used when “the focus of the study is to answer how and why questions” (p. 1). Quantitative analytical analysis is a tool enabling the analysis of events using numeric values (Cresswell, 1998). Unique to case studies is the combining of qualitative and quantitative data sources for a holistic understanding of the studied phenomenon. These data sources are collectively analyzed in this thesis to add strength to the findings and promote a greater understanding of the case (Baxter & Jack, 2010). Flyvbjerg (2011) discussed the role of quantitative (statistical analysis) and qualitative (case study approach) methods within political science and stated that it is “common sense to finally acknowledge that case studies and statistical methods are not conflicting but complementary” (p. 313). Both approaches have strengths and weaknesses but they are essentially compatible. He argues that the strength of the case study is “depth – detail, richness, completeness, and within-case variance – whereas for

statistical methods it is thoroughness” (Flyvberg, 2011, p. 314). To achieve a study with depth and thoroughness, this thesis will adopt both approaches as “the complementarity of the two methods is that simple, and that beautiful” (Flyvberg, 2011, p. 314).

To help investigate this topic, visiting the Baja California Peninsula to collect data, such as from interviews with political leaders, researchers, and civil workers, would have been desirable. Unfortunately, however, this was beyond the scope of the project and therefore was a limitation in the acquisition of research under the qualitative case study and quantitative analytical analysis approach. Instead, the techniques of experimental examination used in this thesis will produce data processing and analysis to ensure high degrees of non-subjective reliability for determining analytical comparisons. The research is comparatively analyzed and subjectively partitioned to establish three hypotheses that are built on several case studies that each provide insight. The comparative study conducts a large number of observations with an empirical rationale to determine if the hypotheses have been engaged in exploration and if conclusions can be derived from such research.

Chapter 2: A History of Violence in Mexico and the Baja California Peninsula

History of Mexico

Mexico is the second-largest country in Latin America by population, behind Brazil (Rhoda & Burton, 2010). Mexican society is characterized by extremes of wealth and poverty with a small number of middle-class citizens who are wedged between the elite investors, landowners, entrepreneurs and the masses of poor urban and rural lower classes. Although Mexico faces challenges as a developing nation, it has become a chief economic and political force in the Central and South American regions with a dynamic industrial base, extensive mineral resources, an ever-expanding service sector and the world's largest population of Spanish speakers. Mexico's official name is Estados Unidos Mexicanos which is translated to mean United Mexican States. The country is divided into 31 states that differ socially, physically and financially between each state and the federal district (Palerm et al 2018). The three colours of Mexico's flag hold special significance for the country. Green represents hope and victory, white stands for purity of ideals and red is symbolic of the blood spilled by Mexican heroes through the many previous wars. The acknowledgment of history wrought with bloodshed and war is indicated in the red segment of the flag which represents modern Mexico's rich history of contention and fighting spanning over 500 years.

The history of Mexico is rooted in violent patriotism. It appears that the value placed on human life dating back to Hernan Cortez's first landing in Mexico, 1519 is very meagre and quite possibly inconsequential to the elite ruling class. Hernan Cortes arrived in Veracruz with 11 ships, 509 soldiers and 20 horses, and it is estimated that 24 million indigenous people died within eighty years of Cortes arriving due to diseases brought through colonization alone (Rhoda & Burton, 2010). Key people from Mexico's history, who are revered or disgraced in reputation and hailed as heroes or villains, have overseen violent periods that continue to impact Mexican belief systems, political systems or cultural appropriations today. Cortez witnessed 300,000 deaths in his claim to

conquer Mexico, 200,000 alone in the Battle of Tenochtitlan. The rebellious parish priest Miguel Hidalgo y Costillo delivered the Grito de Dolores (Cry of Dolores) and issued the call to revolt resulting in 23,000 deaths and 450,000 wounded in the War of Independence against Spain (Fehrenbach, 1995). Some believe it was republican leader Santa Anna's patriotism and courageous leadership that led the nation into the Mexican-American War in 1846. Others believe it was the turning point of Mexican fortunes that not only saw 38,000 people die but also an important loss of Mexican land to neighbours the U.S. Santa Anna developed a reputation of being a traitor, tyrant and bloodthirsty for his need to execute all prisoners taken at the Goliad (Cortes, 1928). Benito Juarez's leadership against the French Intervention earned him praise and recognition lasting over 150 years and has consequently written his name in folklore. It was during this war where 300,000 people were killed and marked the separation between the state and the church (Fehrenbach, 1995). These portray a pre-modern Mexico, but the examples of violence in modern Mexico during PRI's authoritarian reign still characterized Mexico as a violent patriotic country. Citizens of Mexico have learned to live in constant danger of being murdered, extorted, raped and assaulted, particularly those who do not belong to the political and economic elite. These forms of violence that have plagued a nation are not only perpetrated by external sovereignty, criminal organizations and internal revolts, but also the state apparatus itself. The state has consistently failed to provide adequate security measures to protect its citizens, stretching back when Cortez first landed in Veracruz. Pablo Piccato (2017, p. 1) of the University of California wrote:

For Mexico, the present means violence and impunity of such scale that the name of the country has become virtually synonymous with infamy. Violence and impunity seem to be rooted in the dehumanization of victims, which both the government and a large sector of the public accept as inevitable. Murder is not usually investigated but rather is simply explained on the basis of disputes among victims or criminals whose rights are routinely violated.

Toward the end of the 20th century, America has been working closely with Mexico to stem the tide of growing violence (Selee, Arnson & Olson, 2013). Most

of this focus has been toward drug trafficking and fighting the ongoing ‘War on Drugs’ (Magaloni & Razu, 2016).

In 1929, the National Revolutionary Party (PNR) was founded by Plutarco Elias Calles who was Mexico’s most significant leader at the time. The party was created as a platform for all politicians who had survived the Mexican revolution to participate in solving the political crisis caused by the assassination of Obregon. The party changed its name and is known today as the National Revolutionary Party (PRI). The PRI party held executive power continuously in Mexico from 1929 – 2000 building the foundation of the modern-day Mexican political system (Langston, 2017). During these 71 years, the PRI party adopted a wide array of ideologies. However, in the 1980s, party reforms shaped policies leaning more to the right, such as free-market capitalism, privatization of state-run companies and strengthened relations with the Catholic Church. Left-wing members of the PRI party left to form the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) in 1986. The PRD has never won the presidency; however, they came very close in 2006 losing by a margin of 0.58% to Felipe Calderon of the National Act Party (Eisenstadt & Poire, 2006). Throughout the time of PRI dominance, scholars almost universally agreed that the political system in Mexico was authoritarian. The PRI party moved to centralize power under a single institution that dominated all areas of public office, notwithstanding Mexico’s liberal constitution and elections. A successor to the serving president was chosen by the president who had full control over the PRI’s candidate list for all public officers and therefore dominated and controlled the party and congress (Booth & Seligson, 1984). The PRI party had the longest tenure of any single-party government worldwide in the 20th century which highlighted the leadership of a group of elites, often to the detriment to individuals who did not align with the same political beliefs. The stability of one party that imposed a legal or constitutional requirement upon itself and obeyed these requirements over such a period is virtually unheard of worldwide. The constitutional requirement imposed was the *sexenio*, which limits a president to a single six-year term in office. Most of the power did not reside within the PRI party, but in circulating political and military elites who controlled the federal and at times regional bureaucracy. It is described as a controlled and executive branch autocracy with six-year tenures (Camp, 2015). The PRI party

transformed Mexico from an impoverished rural country dominated by peasants to an urban manufacturing country with close trading ties with North America.

During the PRI dominance of the 20th century, there were several major incidents of violent massacres across Mexico causing world governments to notice the injustice. In 1968, the Massacre of Tlatelolco occurred. After unrest by students, who were opposing the Olympic games in Mexico City, soldiers opened fire for over two hours on a gathering of protesting students with the official report from the government stating that the students had fired first, and military soldiers only returned fire in retaliation. No formal investigation by the PRI government was conducted but the estimated number of deaths that might have risen to 3,000. It was subsequently revealed that military snipers were stationed in buildings around the student gathering and shot at the military to act as a reason for the military to respond and massacre the students present (NPR, 2008). In 1971, the Mexican government in collaboration with the U.S. trained a para-military group called the Halcones (Hawks) to infiltrate education campuses and repress protests. This was conducted in response to the 1968 student unrest. During a friendly protest, a group of students marching toward their institution's central plaza were fired upon by snipers and agents disguised as students. M1 and M2 weapons were fired killing over 130 students and disbanding the march. Students who had been injured and were laying in hospitals or other forms of health facilities were visited by groups of Hawks who had been instructed to eliminate all evidence of the Corpus Christi Massacre (Raphael, 2018). In 1995, the Aguas Blancas Massacre saw 17 farmers killed and 21 injured in an event that eventually led to the creation of the Popular Revolutionary Army, a leftist guerrilla organization. Members of the South Mountain Range Farmer Organisation and the Southern Sierra Peasant Organisation were on route to attend a protest march to demand the release of a peasant activist who had been imprisoned. The march was to also demand drinking water, roads, schools, and hospitals. Survivors of the event recounted that the group was ambushed by police officers and executed. Recordings were taken of the event with police placing guns in the hands of the executed and stating that they were acting in self-defense against the protestors. It is reported that the executions of the protestors were planned by the governor of Guerrero, Ruben Figueroa Alcocer (MAHR, 1995).

The history of Mexico illustrates that violence may be considered a part of the country's political and cultural heritage. With such a violent history that has deep political undertones, questions have been raised if Mexico can erase the dangerous reputation it has developed as a result of violence and establish and sustain peace throughout a nation, possibly for the first time in Mexico's history.

Political and Geographical History of the Baja California Peninsula

The Baja California Peninsula is unique in comparison to other regions within Mexico. It is situated in the northeast of the country and is an isolated strip of land that extends between the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of California (Sea of Cortez). The peninsula is divided between the states of Baja California and Baja California Sur. The population of Baja California is 3,432,900 people and Baja California Sur has 763,929 people (Pasquali, 2019b). The peninsula is nearly 800 miles long and borders California to the north, Arizona to the northwest and the Mexican state of Sonora to the west. The peninsula's economy is bolstered by mining, agriculture, manufacturing in maquiladoras, and tourism (Rhoda & Burton, 2010).

The governor of Baja California is democratically elected and serves six years without re-election. Post-1989, the governorship of Baja California has been dominated by the National Action Party (PAN) (Pasquali, 2018a). During the 2013 election, PAN won the closest contest to date by narrowly edging out the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) (Langston, 2017). Baja California Sur has experienced a balance within party power with the PRI, PAN and The Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) all being elected twice. For the past two terms, the PAN party has been elected into office. Both PAN governors in Baja California and Baja California Sur have stated that their priorities are to provide peace and security to the citizens of the region whilst also increasing economic development (*The Baja Citizen*, 2013).

Comparative Analysis of Homicides in the Baja California Peninsula

The comparative analysis includes figures that have been created for the purpose of this thesis. The data collected has been sourced from reliable studies and reports and has been used to identify a spike in homicides on the Baja California Peninsula.

In 2011, Baja California Sur was ranked as Mexico's least violent state. Tourism was growing in the region with Cabo San Lucas a huge draw for North Americans with an estimated one million U.S. visitors during that year (Calderon, 2018). Baja California Sur has dropped in the rankings between 2011 – 2018 with an all-time low in 2017, with the advocacy group, Citizen Council for Public Security and Criminal Justice (CCPSCJ) stating “such is the high level of violence and inter-cartel feuding that increasing numbers of high-ranking Mexican drug traffickers are surrendering to US police for protection” (quoted in Starr, 2019). The district of Los Cabos which includes the vacation destination Cabo San Lucas had a higher per-capita homicide rate than any other city in the world for 2017 whilst the capital of Baja California Sur, La Paz was ranked 6th most violent city in the world despite not appearing in the world's top 50 list previously (Calderon, 2018). The 2017 homicide rate for the state was the second-highest in the country at 78.6 per 100,000 residents, which was over triple the national average at 22.5 per 100,000. The 2017 spike is indicative of the direction homicides have been going within the state. A state record of 126 homicides was set in 2014 and the number of homicides increased each year until 2017 (Corcoran, 2018). The steady increase from 2014 – 2016 of homicides indicates that 2017 was likely to have an increase. However, the average increase of homicides from 2014 – 2016 was 33 homicides, whereas from 2016 – 2017 the increase was 368 homicides. That is a 1,015% increase in 2017 for homicides in Baja California Sur justifying the term spike (Pasquali, 2018c).

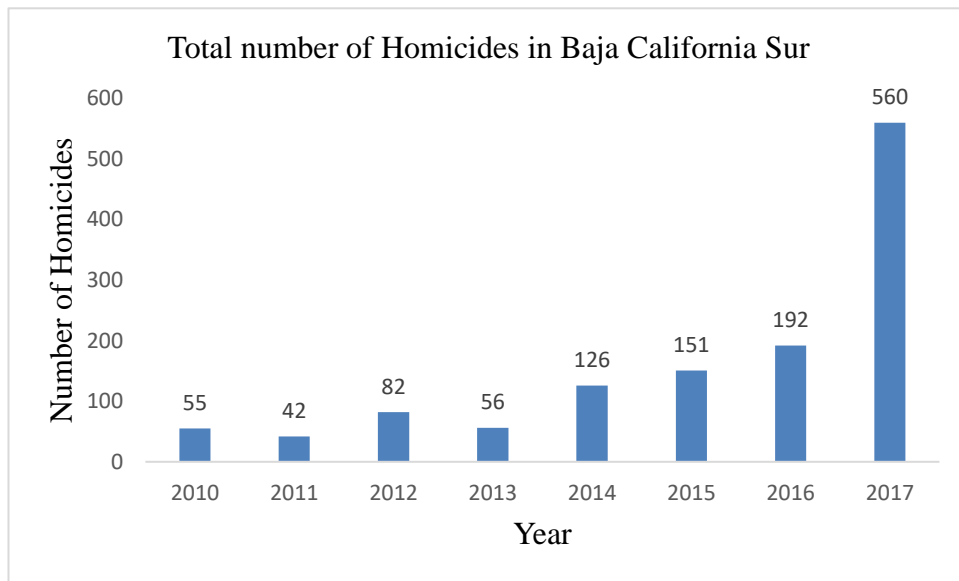


Figure 1. Total Number of Homicides in Baja California Sur

Baja California has not always been as peaceful as their neighbours Baja California Sur. The 2010 increase of homicides were at the height of Pena Nieto’s war on drugs and the spill-over of violence from Sonora had an impact on Baja California. The number of homicides levelled off between 2011-2016 with an average of 778 homicides a year before following Baja California Sur’s spike in 2017 and reaching a reported 2317 homicides. This was a 198% increase in homicides from 2016 – 2017 (Pasquali, 2018c). The state’s increase in homicides is largely due to the violence in Tijuana with an 85% increase in homicides between 2016 – 2017 (Pasquali, 2018d). Cecilia Farfan-Mendez, a scholar at San Diego’s Centre for U.S.–Mexican Studies and an expert in Mexico’s organised crime said that during President Calderon’s war on drugs (2006-2012), the violence in Tijuana was a statement to the government by organized crime, shown through “dramatic and showy” acts with bodies hanging from bridges, buildings, and monuments (quoted in Srikrishnan, 2019). However, there has been a different approach to the murders of 2017 to that of Pena Nieto’s time in office with fewer showy acts in defiance of the government and more of a structural breakdown due to organized crime syndicates (Srikrishnan, 2019).

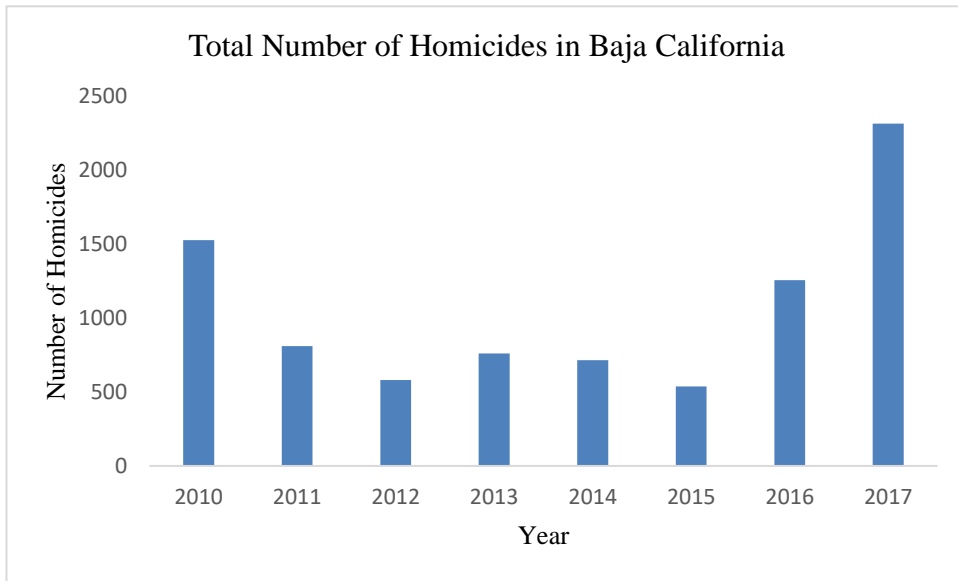


Figure 2. Total Number of Homicides in Baja California

To establish an average for the total amount of homicides for the Baja California Peninsula in 2017, the 2017 totals are combined from both states (Baja California and Baja California Sur) and divided by two. The average homicide rate for the peninsula is established by how many homicides have been committed per 100,000 people living in both Baja California and Baja California Sur combined.

2017 saw the highest number of homicides on record for both Baja California and Baja California Sur resulting in the Peninsula recording its highest amount of homicides. After the war on drugs hit a peak in 2010 for homicides in the region, there was a decrease for the remainder of President Calderon's and the PAN's time in office with a decade low of 664 homicides in 2015. However, there was a gradual increase of homicides across the region during the first four years of President Enrique Pena Nieto's tenure as president from 782 homicides in 2013 to 1894 homicides in 2016. 2017 recorded a spike in homicides with 3,515 homicides in the region, a 1,621 or 85.6% increase from 2016. There was a decrease of 171 homicides in 2018 across the region (Pasquali, 2018d).

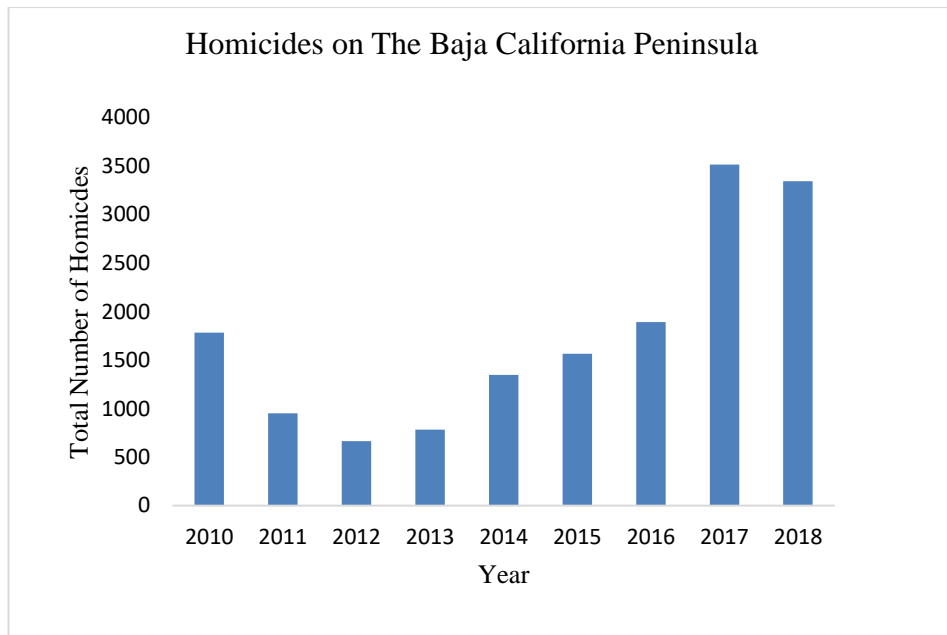


Figure 3. Total Number of Homicides on The Baja California Peninsula

The average rate of homicides in the Baja California Peninsula in 2017 was 87.26 per 100,000 with the national average at 20.51 per 100,000 (INEGI, 2018). The national average rate of homicides between 2016 – 2017 increased by 20.1% from 16.8 to 20.51 per 100,000 (Pasquali, 2019). During that same period, the BCP rate increased by 85.6% causing the homicide rate to jump from 47.02 – 87.26 per 100,000 in one year. The 2018 homicide rate nationally had an increase of 19.6% (25.49 per 100,000). For the BCP, the average homicide rate decreased in 2018 decreased by 9% (79.68 per 100,000) indicating that an increase in homicide rates nationally does not necessarily directly cause an increase in homicide rates on the BCP in the same year (Valle-Jones, 2018).

In 2016 the difference between the national and the Baja California Peninsula homicide rate was 179% (Almost twice the national average homicide rate). The peninsula has been above the national average since 2013 with significant increases in 2015 and 2016. In 2017 the difference in the national and regional homicide rates for the BCP had increased to 325% (Over three times the national average of homicide rates). That was an increase of 146% in the homicide difference between the BCP and the national rate from 2016 - 2017.

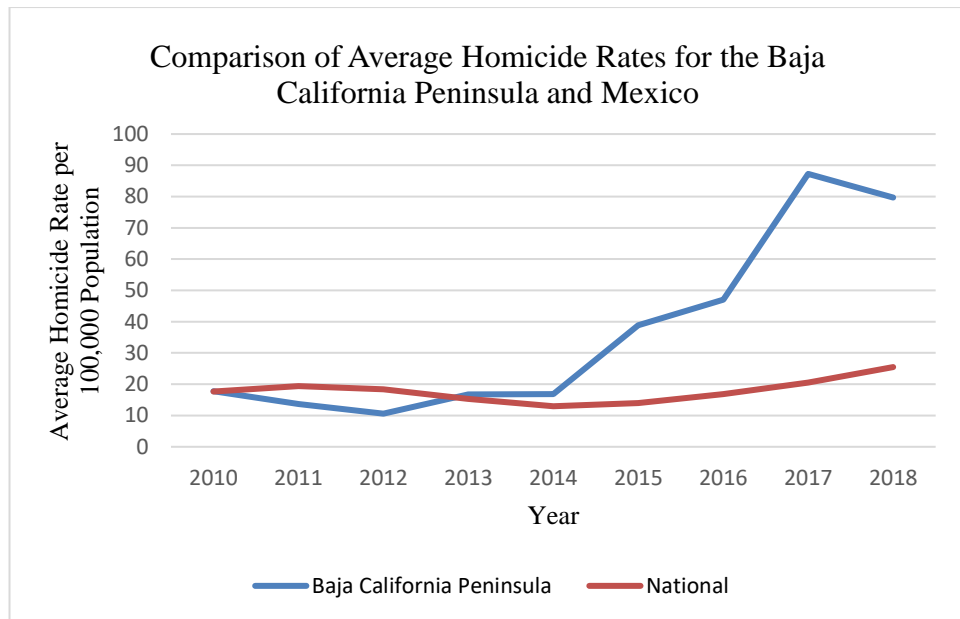


Figure 4 . Comparison of Average Homicide Rates for the Baja California Peninsula and Mexico

From 2008 – 2012, the city of Ciudad Juarez in the state of Chihuahua was widely deemed the most dangerous place on Earth (Duran-Martinez, 2018). At its peak, 3,700 were killed in 2010 whilst a quarter of cars stolen in Mexico were in Juarez and thousands of businesses closed. The National Geographic describes the city as “anarchy descended” (Quinones, 2016). Chihuahua had Mexico’s highest homicide rate in the state’s history with 114.6 homicides per 100,000 people in 2010. During the same year, the Baja California Peninsula had 17.75 homicides per 100,000 people (Pasquali, 2019). The homicide rate gradually decreased for both regions until 2015, where the BCP surpassed Chihuahua for the first time on record and by 2017 had almost doubled the homicide rate of the notoriously dangerous state. Other key states in Mexico comparable to the BCP are Sinaloa and Guerrero. Similar to Chihuahua, Sinaloa peaked in 2010 with an 81.3 per 100,000 homicide rate which decreased from that point until 2016. The homicide rate in Sinaloa in 2017 was 44.9 per 100,000. This was just under half the homicide rate of the BCP. Guerrero’s homicide rate in 2010 was 44.3 per 100,000 and remained above that rate through to 2017. During that time there were peaks in 2010 with 68.2 per 100,000 and again in 2017 with 65.6 per 100,000. Out of the eight deadliest regions in Mexico, no region had a surge or spike in homicides comparable to the BCP in 2017 other than Zacatecas which saw a 96% increase

between 2014 – 2015. Zacatecas saw their homicides rate increase from 7.6 per 100,000 – 14.9 per 100,000 (Valle-Jones, 2018).

The figure below shows the analytical comparison of Mexico’s deadliest regions by homicides rates. These regions are the eight highest for homicides from 2010 – 2017 and highlight the extensive spike in homicide numbers and rates for the Baja California Peninsula in 2017. These rates have been squared so they are more effectively interpreted on the figure.

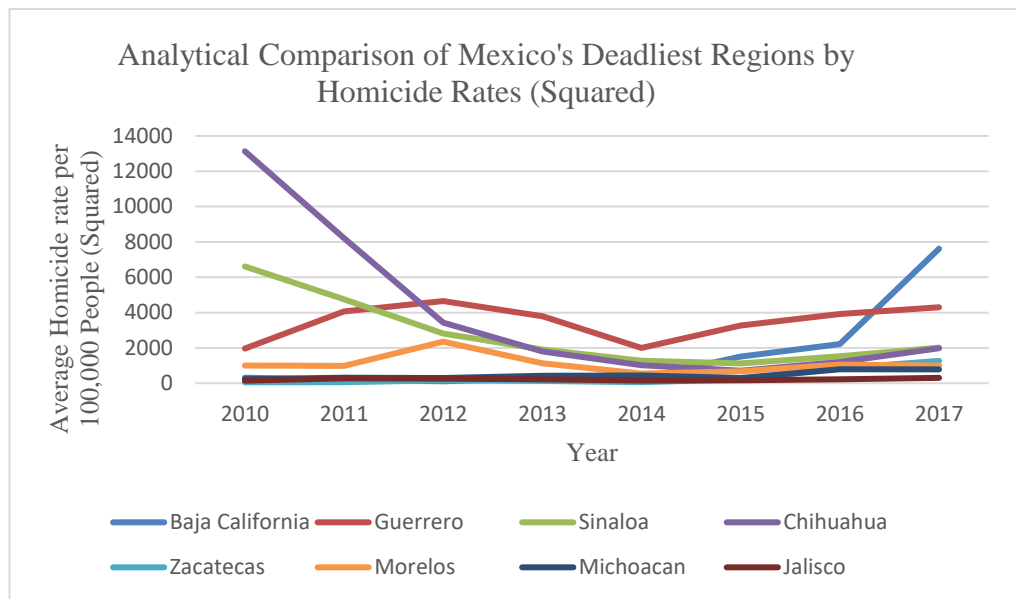


Figure 5. Analytical Comparison of Mexico’s Deadliest Regions by Homicide Rates (Squared)

Summary

In comparison to 2016, the Baja California Peninsula recorded for 2017 an increase of homicides by 1621, an 85.6% increase in homicide rates, a 146% increase on national homicide rates and in total a 325% difference to national homicide rates. This analytical analysis concludes that with this empirical data as its premise, the BCP has experienced such an increase of homicides during 2017 that it can be considered a surge or spike. This is consistent with Justice in Mexico’s Laura Calderon (2018), InSight Crime’s Patrick Corcoran (2018), and Business Insider’s Christopher Woody (2018a), who all describe the increase in homicides in the Baja California region as a surge or spike.

Chapter 3: The Violence of Organized Crime

Chapter 3 examines the hypothesis ‘Violence initiated by organized crime syndicates on the Baja California Peninsula is causing the homicide rate to increase’. Research into the recent history of drug trafficking organizations on the BCP and across Mexico will give insight into the background of how the Sinaloa Cartel became instrumental in drug trade in the region and the effect of El Chapo on the homicide levels pre-2017. His bribery and extortion created relative peace in the region and until his arrest in 2016, the Sinaloa Cartel maintained complete control over drug trafficking routes on the peninsula. The top-down models (kingpin) with case studies highlights that violence and homicide level increase when cartel leaders are incarcerated or killed due to warring factions and opportunistic cartels seeking new drug trafficking routes and power. The BCP is subject to the effects of the top-down model approach with El Chapo’s arrest and the emergence of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) causing turf wars. The purpose of researching and analyzing this hypothesis is to ultimately answer the question, why has the homicide rate in the Baja California Peninsula spiked in 2017

History of Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTO’s) on the Baja California Peninsula

The history of drug trafficking organizations on the Baja California Peninsula gives insight into the current formation of cartel behaviour and the development of cartel power in the region. The Sinaloa, Arellano, and Jalisco New Generation Cartel have been prominent in the region over the past 20 years and are all instrumental in why there has been a spike of homicides in 2017.

Miguel Angel Felix Gallardo, referred to by his alias El Padrino (The Godfather), was sentenced to 37 years in prison, 4 years after the murder of US Drug Enforcement Administration agent Enrique Camarena in 1985 (Starkey, 2018). El Padrino formed the Guadalajara cartel in the early 1980’s with the cartel primarily focused on shipping Mexican grown marijuana and heroin into the United States. The focus shifted when El Padrino became Mexico’s liaison with the infamous Pablo Escobar of the Colombian cartel, Medellin. Cocaine

became the core focus of El Padrino and the influence of the Guadalajara and Medellin cartel's conspiring together was felt across Mexico as El Padrino seized control of almost every drug trafficking route between the Mexico–United States border (Starkey, 2018). The burgeoning cocaine trade built the vast Guadalajara empire and with this rapid growth, and El Padrino's partner, Rafael Caro Quintero being arrested, El Padrino held a summit among all of Mexico's drug cartels. The purpose of the summit was to divide Mexico into "plazas" or regions to be formally controlled by specific drug trafficking organizations (Woody, 2017a). The agreement solidified key drug trafficking organizations (DTO's) to be major players in the cocaine trade, including the Arellano Felix brothers of Tijuana (Baja California), Armado Carrillo of the Juarez cartel and Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman of the Sinaloa cartel. The arrest of El Padrino sparked the collapse of the Guadalajara cartel opening territory opportunities for other cartels to take advantage of (Woody, 2017a). There seems to be no other documented account from the last 40 years of cartels peacefully meeting at a summit to divide Mexico into plazas to be controlled by DTO's.

The Arellano Felix Organisation (AFO) was handed to the Arellano brothers (nephews to El Padrino) after El Padrino's arrest in 1989. It was a regional drug trafficking organization that controlled the drug trade routes between Baja California and southern California. The AFO was based on the outskirts of Tijuana throughout the 1990s and early 2000s and was dominant in controlling the trade routes into southern California during that time (Beittek, 2018). The reputation of Ramon Eduardo Arellano-Felix (considered to be the most violent sibling) saw the cartel increase in paramilitary activity and seize absolute control of the surrounding areas. Ramon's responsibilities included planning the murders of rival cartel leaders and Mexican enforcement officials (who were not on the cartel's payroll). Some of Ramon's more noticeable work included the bombing of the Camino Real Hotel in Guadalajara. He intended to murder a rival trafficker who was hosting a 15th birthday party for his daughter. His plan failed but still killed 2 people and injured 15 others (Beittek, 2018). Another planned assassination of a rival trafficker by Ramon saw Joaquin Guzman-Loera targeted at the Guadalajara airport in 1993. Ramon hired Mexican-Americans from a San Diego street gang known as 'Logan Calle 30' to gun down

Guzman's car as it passed by, however, an error of judgment on the car Guzman was being transported in led to the death of the Roman Catholic cardinal, Juan Jesus Posadas Ocampo and six others (Ellingwood, 1998). The United States and Mexican authorities began counteracting the rise of Ramon's violence by creating a joint task force between the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Mexican authorities. Key AFO and other DTO leaders were subsequently arrested due to the cohesive work of the task force. One of whom was Joaquin Guzman who had previously broken off from the AFO to lead the Sinaloa cartel (Aldrich, 2017). Any fractions that were beginning to grow within the AFO organization were solidified with these key arrests and the 1990s saw the AFO grow to unprecedented heights (Beittek, 2018). The task force may have been successful in arresting key DTO leaders, but it solidified the AFO and caused cartels to work together to transport drugs. After the arrests, Mexico and the Baja California Peninsula became relatively peaceful for drug cartels and cartel relating homicides as drug trafficking routes were designated to specific cartels. The Tijuana, Baja California – San Diego, California route belonged solely to the AFO during this time and became a lucrative and profitable route throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s. The Mexican government and U.S. authorities worked vigorously against the AFO in the early 2000s capturing 5 of the Arellano-Felix brothers and destabilizing the leadership of the cartel which created 2 major factions seeking power (Beittek, 2018).

In 2001, the AFO was still the dominant cartel in Mexico controlling key trafficking routes through the Baja California Peninsula and north to southern California (InSight Crime, 2018). This lucrative trafficking route allowed the AFO to maintain control of trade from Mexico to San Diego and then throughout North America. During this time, El Chapo escaped the prison and the Felix brothers became uneasy knowing the threat he potentially posed to AFO's operations.¹ Due to the prison escape, the name 'El Chapo' had become legendary across Mexico, comparable to only Pablo Escobar of Colombia as stories surfaced of his jailbreak. Ramon Felix sought to put an end to the Sinaloa cartel's resurfaced strength by killing faction leader Ismael Zambada Garcia (El Mayo)

¹ A more in-depth discussion on Joaquin Guzman's prison escape and its relationship to an increase of violence in the Baja California Peninsula is found later in Chapter 3 - 'The rise of Joaquin Guzman and the Sinaloa cartel'.

and destabilizing leadership within the cartel. Ramon travelled to Mazatlán to orchestrate the assassination of El Mayo but was killed by El Mayo's men as they returned fire. A month after the death of Ramon, his brother Benjamin was arrested by Mexican authorities leaving only two Felix siblings (Eduardo and Enedina) left to run the AFO cartel. With multiple other arrests of high-level cartel leaders, the AFO split into two factions. One faction was headed by Fernando Sanchez Arellano (El Ingeniero) and the other by Eduardo Teodoro Garcia Simental (El Teo). In 2008, El Teo allied with El Chapo and the Sinaloa cartel whereas El Ingeniero allied himself with the Zetas (InSight Crime, 2018).

These alliances opened the door for the Sinaloa cartel to gain a foot-hold in Tijuana (Baja California). Between 2008 – 2010, war emerged between the two factions of the AFO and with the support of Sinaloa cartel loyalists, El Teo's faction raged violent chaos in the streets on Tijuana (Jones, 2013). The resulting murder rate in Tijuana for 2010 was 57 per 100,000, whereas nationally it was 17.63 per 100,000 (Pasquali, 2019). El Teo lost the backing of El Chapo due to his violent behaviour and a conflict in business approaches which saw El Teo create a kidnapping ring as a source of revenue. El Teo was arrested in 2010 and El Chapo ended the relationship but the Sinaloa cartel remained in Tijuana. A deal was struck between the AFO and Sinaloa cartels that the Tijuana Plaza would be shared between the two DTO's with the Sinaloa cartel retaining primary control and the AFO paying a fee for use of the plaza (Jones, 2013). The truce led to lower homicide rates. By 2012, the homicide rate was over 50% less than 2010 at 28 per 100,000 and kidnapping rates decreased from 5.67 to 2 per 100,000 over the same period. Nathan Jones (2013) of Rice University's Baker Institute describes the arrest of El Teo as the catalyst for peace which enabled the truce to be formed and the homicide rates to decrease.

The Rise of Joaquin Guzman and the Sinaloa Cartel

Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman was arrested in 1993 but his arrest had little impact on his ability to lead the Sinaloa Cartel. The high-security prison, Puento Granda that El Chapo was serving his twenty-year sentence in became the base of his operations. The prison workers became El Chapo's guards and there are close similarities between how he ran the prison and how he ran his cartel. Most of the

prison was on El Chapo's payroll through either bribery or extortion. El Chapo would simply offer a certain amount of cash to each prison officer to disregard the illegal activity he and his cartel were performing, and if the prison officers would not accept the money – and therefore not be under El Chapo's control- he would simply remind them that it was their choice between accepting his money or taking the risk that their beloved family members could get hurt. El Chapo became arguably more powerful behind bars than he did as a free man (Aldrich, 2017). Using extortion, he built his empire from his fortress with guards and prison personnel under his control. During Christmas' he would have extensive Christmas parties with his extended family, enjoy regular visitations from multiple women and have access to privileged materials no other prisoner could access (Vulliamy, 2015). In January 2001, with the support of bribed guards, prison staff and local enforcement officers, El Chapo escaped prison. Conflicting accounts of the prison escape with differing theories have circled over the last 18 years, but one thing remains consistent, El Chapo could never have escaped prison without internal bribery and extortion (Berenson, 2016). It is believed the reason for El Chapo escaping prison was due to the Supreme Court approving a law making it easier for Mexican citizens to be extradited to the United States to be tried for crimes against the United States or simply to serve out the remainder of their sentences (Guillermoprieto, 2015b). This would have effectively ended the reign of El Chapo over the Sinaloa cartel as incarceration in a country where he would have little or no influence on the guards would prevent the drug lord from manipulating cartel affairs (Saviano, 2015). The escape led to El Chapo managing the affairs of the cartel from outside the constraints of the prison walls and implementing his strategical plan to make the Sinaloa Cartel the most dominant cartel in Mexico and throughout the Baja California Peninsula (Guillermoprieto, 2015b).

In 2014, El Chapo was arrested for the second time as a federal operation, with support of U.S. intelligence, captured and detained him. The Sinaloa cartel had reaped a projected \$14 billion (USD) by the time El Chapo was arrested and had seized control of almost all the western hemispheres' cocaine trade (Aldrich, 2017). The transport and distribution network of cocaine from South America to around the world was in part, due to the business acumen of El Chapo (Gagne,

2017). The Mexican government's top-down approach of incarcerating cartel leaders with the effect of destabilizing cartel hierarchy and creating rivalry factions had been relatively successful with the AFO and other cartels across Mexico. The same outcome had been anticipated. The power struggle amongst hierarchy in the Sinaloa cartel, projected to occur due to El Chapo's arrest, never materialized and El Chapo was once again able to control the affairs of the Sinaloa cartel from prison. The U.S. Justice Department appealed to President Pena Nieto for El Chapo to be extradited to the U.S. and used as precedent that El Chapo had previously escaped prison once before and would be more secure in a prison north of the border. President Nieto's administration discarded the explicit suggestion that their penal system was not adequately capable of confining El Chapo in a Mexican maximum-security prison and the U.S. extradition request was denied (Guillermoprieto, 2015b). 16 months later, El Chapo escaped the Altiplano Federal Prison, embarrassing Mexican authorities and damaging relations between Mexico and the U.S. El Chapo is alleged to have escaped through a tunnel reaching 1.7m in height 70-80cm in width. The tunnel stretched 1.5km in length and had lighting built into the tunnel with air ducts and a motorcycle mounted on a rail system (Dudley, 2015). 46% of the Mexican public believed the official account given by the Mexican government of El Chapo escaping through a tunnel, however, 40% stated they believed he escaped via a different route and 77% believe state officials aided in his escape (Beittek, 2015). The subsequent investigations into the prison break led to many of the prison personnel being arrested as likely collaborators with a report suggesting that El Chapo would have needed support from the very highest levels of government. Ultimately the warden at the Altiplano Federal Prison was fired along with many of his managerial staff (Beittek, 2015). El Chapo continued to build his base of operations in Tijuana and have full control of the drug routes through the Baja California Peninsula. He maintained mutually beneficial peace with public officials and subsequently kept the homicide rates relatively low. This was accomplished through back-hand deals with police officers, government officials and cartel alliances.

After the third arrest of El Chapo in 2016, the Mexican government (under pressure by the U.S. government) extradited El Chapo after a year-long appeal

and legal proceedings (Powell, 2017). Neither the American law enforcement or El Chapo's lawyer had any awareness that the extradition was about to occur leading to speculation that the extradition was politically motivated. Jorge Chabat, an expert on security at CIDE said

The fact that we delivered him to Obama is a clear political message that says this is a government we have long collaborated and worked closely with. By not waiting to send him to Trump after his inauguration, it is a subtle statement saying, 'We could do this for you, too, in the future, if we have a good relationship. If not, there won't be any other powerful narco-traffickers extradited.' (quoted in Ahmed, 2017a)

The extradition also denotes the first time El Chapo will not have the capability to maintain control over the Sinaloa cartel. El Chapo's fundamental approach to accessing Sinaloa cartel members and directing the affairs of the cartel from prison is through bribery and extortion. It was by these means that he was able to influence his way out of prison in 2001 and again in 2015, however the U.S. believe that by being imprisoned in Manhattan Correctional Centre at the prisons most secure wing, the influence of El Chapo will have no effect on the Sinaloa cartel and the cartel will ultimately be leaderless for the first time in over 25 years (Powell, 2017). By the time El Chapo was extradited, no Mexican criminal organization had spread as far or been as successful at resisting government intervention as the Sinaloa cartel. Their influence is reported to be felt in 24 of Mexico's 32 states and had operations in up to 50 countries worldwide (Woody, 2017b). Up until his extradition, El Chapo felt it was in the best interest of his cartel to not draw attention to their base of operations. This was accomplished by keeping homicide rates low and building relationships. His stakeholder management with key personal in positions of power throughout the legal and penal systems was instrumental in the Sinaloa cartel using violence only as a last resort option. These relationships were often built on bribery and extortion. The activity of extortion and bribery are illegal, but these activities were the cause of homicide rates remaining on par with the national average between 2010 - 2015.

Top-down Model

The Top-Down model (also known as kingpin) has been operational by the Mexican government since El Padrino was captured in 1989. The proposed outcome of this approach is to incarcerate drug cartel leaders who are at the top of the organization, resulting in a destabilized cartel and creating chaos throughout the organization. Since El Padrino, this cycle has created a systemic power struggle amongst cartels who violently fight for trade routes, land, and power. The following case studies examine how destabilizing cartels from a top-down model by incarcerating or killing cartel leaders can have an immediate impact on violence and homicide rates. These case studies also offer a background to the rise of violence in the Baja California Peninsula with relative comparisons in behavior highlighted between cartels throughout Mexico after key cartel leadership is removed.

Case Studies

Beltran Leyva Brothers

In 2008, Operation Nuevo Leon-Tamaulipas was a joint operation headed by the Mexican government to combat the Gulf and Zetas cartels (Grillo, 2014). Little success had been accomplished with the dismantling of these cartels and the focus was quickly moved onto the Beltran Leyva cartel. The Beltran Leyva cartel was established by former high-ranking army officials known as the Beltran Leyva brothers. They acted as El Chapo's closest alliance throughout the late 1990's and early 2000's and were often known as the hitmen for the Sinaloa cartel (Grillo, 2014). The brothers helped El Chapo escape prison in 2001 and when drug cartel operations began to expand in the early 2000s, they were given a faction within the Sinaloa cartel and remained loyal to El Chapo for many years. The first break down in relations emerged as reported rumours began of an alliance between the Beltran Leyva brothers and the Zetas in 2007 (Dudley 2011). Tension increased between cartel factions when El Chapo was reportedly displeased with the extravagant lifestyle led by Alfredo (married to El Chapo's cousin) which took focus away from the business. Operation Nuevo Leon-Tamaulipas was deemed a success when Alfredo Beltran Leyva of the Beltran

Leyva cartel was arrested. This arrest was relief on the government who had been put under pressure for allocating and spending large amounts of government budget on a war on drugs that they reportedly had little to show for. The arrest of a cartel leader was the positive recognition the government was seeking (Dudley, 2011). This sparked a relationship that was developed between El Chapo and the local government. If El Chapo was to lead the local authorities to Alfredo Beltran Leyva, then El Chapo's son would be released from prison. When El Chapo's son was released from prison on a technicality, days after Alfredo's arrest, Arturo Leyva became incensed with anger that El Chapo had been working with local authorities (Woody, 2016). Arturo blamed El Chapo for the arrest of his brother and in retaliation, he planned the assassination of El Chapo's son in Sinaloa. The 22-year old was killed by 20 gunmen as he exited a shopping mall. Arturo also murdered the acting head of the federal police in Mexico City who had been a long-time ally of El Chapo and further assassinations of key security personnel on El Chapo's payroll followed. (Woody, 2016).

The repercussions of El Chapo's son's assassination and subsequent deaths of key alliances saw war break out between the two cartels across Sinaloa. The violence that followed was seemingly not anticipated as the increase in homicide rates between 2007 and 2008 was 67.73% in Sinaloa. This was 50% higher than any increase on record to date in Sinaloa (Knoema, 2009). Culiacan, the capital city of Sinaloa, saw 116 drug cartel-related homicides in one month with 24 of them police officers (Dudley, 2011). The sharp rise in homicides throughout 2008 in Sinaloa caused the federal government to initiate the militarisation strategy and deploy 2,000 military troops within the region to combat the rising tide of violence. Arturo Beltran consolidated relations with the Zetas and formed an alliance in the city that neither the Sinaloa cartel or the military could prevent from sweeping the city with violence and taking control of trade routes. When Arturo was killed in December 2009 by military personnel, the Sinaloa cartel regained control of the city and the violence slowly decreased along with homicide rates (Dudley, 2011).

By 2016, brothers Alfredo and Carlos were arrested and with Arturo killed, Hector Manuel Beltran Leyva's (serving time in prison) wife, Clara Archuleta took control of the family business and cartel operations. Clara began

reasserting the cartel operations throughout Acapulco but when she was arrested, splinter groups of the cartel such as Los Rojos and Guerrero emerged subjecting Acapulco to relentless waves of violence and extortions throughout 2016-2017 (Dudley, 2011).

Zetas

Heriberto Lazcano (El Lazca) was a long-time leader of the Zetas cartel before his death in 2012 (Grant, 2012). He was killed in a shoot-out with Mexican authorities and had been wanted by the Mexican government for over 20 years. El Lazca was a feared man who developed the reputation of being a sadistic executioner and was responsible for some of the most gruesome crimes in Mexican history (Grant, 2012). Due to factions evolving within the Zetas cartel after El Lazca's death, the organization had been struggling for leadership. Key cartel leaders had either been arrested or killed in the lead up to El Lazca's death creating a divide within the cartel. The death of El Lazca also invited the Gulf Cartel to battle for drug routes as the Gulf Cartel sought to exploit and take advantage of a leaderless Zetas. The fight spread to the town of Vallecillo where Zetas and Gulf members went head to head in a shootout. More than 600 military personal and police officers surrounded the area as rocket-propelled grenades, AK-47's and other weaponry were used by the cartels to fight the authorities. By the end of the fight, there was a total of 25 killings and 20 arrests. Less than a year later, El Lazca's brother, Miguel Angel Trevino who had taken control of the cartel was arrested, once again destabilizing the Zetas making them vulnerable to other cartels (BBC News, 2019). Between the death of El Lazca and the arrest of Miguel, there were over 20 major shootouts between the Zetas and the Gulf Cartel in northeast Mexico where the cartels, soldiers, marines, and police had been engaged in warfare, this increased homicide rates (Grillo, 2012). Marisela Morales, Mexico's attorney general in 2012 referred to the Zetas destabilization and creation of factions as "an important factor in the increase in violence in the northern states" of Mexico (quoted in Grant, 2012). Viridiana Rios of the Wilson Center believes that the style of capturing and prosecuting of top-level traffickers, as seen with the Zetas cartel, only increases violence. She argues that the destabilization of the drug cartels should not be the approach of the government to

counteract organized crime, as there are less violent options available (Rios, 2016).

Colima

The state of Colima, home to only 700,000 people, had a rise of 300% in homicides from 2015 – 2016 and a 600% increase in organized crime-related homicides for the same period (Heinle, Rodriguez Ferreira, & Shirk, 2017). In 2015, El Chapo posted on his social media accounts that he was going to cleanse Colima of the Jalisco Nuevo Generacion (CJNG) cartel as agreements had been made between neighbouring cartel Familia Michoacana and the Sinaloa Cartel to work alongside each other. The two cartels sought to strengthen alliances and protect the local population from rapists, extortionists, kidnappers and especially the CJNG. The operation caused by the alliance was called ‘Sweeper’ and they waged war on the CJNG (Salazar and Olson, 2010). However, after the arrest of El Chapo, the factions created from within the Sinaloa cartel went to war with each other battling for land, power and trade routes. The alliance between the Sinaloa cartel and Michoacana began to falter and the opportunistic CJNG began recruiting factions from the Sinaloa cartel and strengthening their grip on Colima. In December of 2016, Mexico’s new President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador Stated: “Recently, it [Colima] has come under the control of the Jalisco Nueva Generacion drug cartel” (quoted in Garcia, 2016). The key battleground was the port city of Manzanillo where methamphetamine was being shipped to and subsequently transported into North America. The local police believed that there has been a very small increase of homicides to long term citizens of Colima and that most deaths have been of incoming cartel personal fighting for their respective cartels. Eric Olson and Gina Hinojosa of the Wilson Centre for Research believe that the reason for this dramatic increase in homicides coincides with the arrest of El Chapo in January 2016 (Olson & Hinojosa, 2017). There was an increase of 87% of homicides in the first three months of his arrest. They explain that the renewal and spread of violence is most likely attributed to the United States and Mexican security forces arresting or killing key cartel leadership. They say, “in several cases the loss of leadership has led the criminal groups to splinter into smaller criminal networks that are now battling for power and territory, destabilizing Mexico’s organized crime landscape and shifting

trends in the country's violence" (Olson & Hinojosa, 2017). The director of Justice in Mexico, David Shirk, explained that it is highly likely that the reason for such an increase in homicides in Colima was due to the restructuring of the Sinaloa cartel in the region after El Chapo's third arrest (Powell, 2017). There was no restructuring of the cartel after his second arrest, however, the pending extradition of El Chapo to the U.S. in 2016 caused unrest and power shifts in the cartel as factions were created. In the case of Colima, it was the arrest of El Chapo and the destabilizing of the Sinaloa cartel which has been reported as the reason violence was initiated (Olson & Hinojosa, 2017).

Corina Giacomello, an investigator at Mexico's National Institute of Penal Sciences, said that

To attack organized crime, one of the strategies that is not the most successful is to try to behead it because that could lead to reproduction [of more groups]. Instead of having one organization, they fragment into more. Internal disputes are generated, which obviously will have a repercussion in the levels of violence. (quoted in BBC Monitoring, 2018)

The violence in Baja California has typically been attributed to turf wars between competing and fragmented cartels. This trend has been observed throughout the Baja California Peninsula since the arrest and extradition of Joaquin Guzman with cartels "adopting increasingly militarized tactics such as weaponized drones" in the bid to gain territory (Garda World, 2019). Human rights activist and analyst of Tijuana's drug violence, Victor Clark, stated that "it's not the ones at the top that are killing each other... What's happening is that the one at the top cannot control the ones at the bottom" (quoted in Dibble, Gibbins, & Tamayo, 2017). He believes the inevitable change of leadership within the cartel due to the government's top-down approach creates a breakdown of control from the incoming leaders over the whole cartel (Calderon, Robles, Diaz-Cayeros, and Magaloni, 2015). The working class, low-level cartel traffickers begin exercising autonomy in a bid to gain power and ranking within the cartel. The quickest and most reputable approach to gaining such power and ranking is to kill rival drug cartel traffickers. There is universal acceptance that the top-down method initiated throughout Mexico has not been successful and curbing the increase in homicide

rates. Instead, it creates a destabilized power shift resulting in violence. As with Colima, the arrest of El Chapo had similar effects with violence and homicides on the Baja California Peninsula. CJNG saw an opportunity to emerge and challenge the Sinaloa Cartel for control of key drug trafficking routes.

The Emergence of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel

The Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) started as a faction of the Milenio Cartel. Another faction, La Resistencia, accused CJNG of providing information to the government for the arrest of Oscar Valencia resulting in violence between the factions. CJNG took control of the La Resistencia faction and with it the smuggling networks of the Milenio Cartel. A vast expansion of their operational networks within six months saw CJNG become one of Mexico's largest operating cartels. The Sinaloa Cartel contracted CJNG as its armed support in their fight against Los Zetos in Nuevo Laredo and Veracruz (Clavel, 2017). The CJNG is headquartered in Guadalajara, Jalisco and headed by Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes (El Mencho). By 2015, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) officially recognized the CJNG as a threat to the U.S. due to the exponential growth of the cartel (Clavel, 2017). Their rapid rise caused them to become rivals with the Sinaloa Cartel in Asia, Europe, and Oceania adding to the growing tension between the cartels in Mexico. El Chapo's arrest in 2016 and extradition in 2017 fuelled El Mencho's desire for expansion and increased the plausibility of conquering some of the Sinaloa Cartel's major plazas on the Baja California Peninsula, in Ensenada, La Paz, and Tijuana (Calderon, 2018).

The extradition of El Chapo to the U.S. in January 2017 significantly debilitated the Sinaloa Cartel. Two factions of the organization were formed. Jesus Alfredo Guzman Salazar and Ivan Archivaldo Guzman Salazar, the sons of El Chapo, attempted to control cartel operations with the support of one of El Chapo's oldest collaborators, Ismael Zambada (Calderon, 2018). Damasco Lopez Serrano, the son El Chapo's financial operator and who is considered by many in the organization to be El Chapo's most trusted man, formed the other faction (Calderon, 2018). The two factions began an intense and violent battle for leadership over the cartel and territory. A meeting to discuss a proposed truce was arranged by the father of Damasco Serrano in which the Guzman Salazar brothers

attended (Woody, 2017c). However, this was a failed plot to kill the brothers with both Guzman Salazar brothers and Zambada escaping. The idea of any truce or alliance to re-establish the Sinaloa Cartel was destroyed. During this time, the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) strategically formed ties with former Sinaloa Cartel alliances across the Baja California Peninsula. These alliances were remnants of the Arellano Felix organization as well as key groups El Chan, El Jorquera and El Kieto who all sided with CJNG in asserting a power shift across the peninsula. With the Sinaloa Cartel broken into two factions and at war with each other, the CJNG saw this as an opportunity to capitalize on a Sinaloa cartel weakened due to El Chapo's arrest (Woody, 2017c).

The former chief of international operations for the US Drug Enforcement Administration, Mike Vigil, explained that the Sinaloa Cartel was much like McDonalds, or Walmart in size and movement, but when El Chapo was apprehended, the fast growing cartel CJNG rose to prominence, quickly usurping power and punctuated expansion through violence. Vigil stated

They have not only extended their reach from the Pacific side of Mexico to the Caribbean side but are now operating in at least 17 of the Mexican states, if not more... And they have taken over some of the primary routes, drug routes into the United States, and I'm talking the Tijuana-San Diego corridor, which is the most important one along the 2,000-mile border. They now have the most diversified portfolio and ... the most profit-generating portfolio of any cartel probably ever in Mexico in that they conduct extortion. They conduct kidnappings [and] theft of mineral resources, to include minerals and petroleum. In addition to that, the CJNG has expanded into human trafficking, working with coyotes, or people smugglers, to prey on migrants traversing Mexico from Central America, holding them for ransom or selling them into the sex trade. (quoted in Woody, 2017c)

Vigil believed that with the arrest of El Chapo, and the inability of the Sinaloa Cartel to continue expanding, it was only a matter of time before the CJNG, with its propensity for violence, would start a war with the Sinaloa Cartel and surpass them as the most powerful drug cartel ever (Woody, 2017c).

Turf Wars and Opportunistic Behavior (January – December 2017)

One month after Mike Vigil made his comments about CJNG challenging the Sinaloa Cartel on the Baja California Peninsula, the CJNG officially broke all ties with cartels on the peninsula and warned them to “leave the state [Baja California] in a maximum of 72 hours” (quoted in Borderland Beat, 2017a). This warning was primarily targeted toward the Sinaloa Cartel as the CJNG attempted to take control of the key Tijuana plaza dominated by Sinaloa (Borderland Beat, 2017a). It coincides with the timing of the Mexican government’s announcement of El Chapo’s extradition. A police officer talking to El Universal in 2016 said that the CJNG “is wanting to enter La Paz, Ensenada, and Tijuana... All this derives from after they arrested El Chapo. [Nemesio Osguera] El Mencho is returning to attack the plazas” (quoted in Woody, 2017d). To enter such plazas, CJNG initiated a turf war against the Sinaloa cartel and sparked violence never seen on the BCP before. Below are examples of reported homicides relating to the feud between Sinaloa and CJNG.

Crossing into Baja California from California in January 2017, a couple was arrested for the murder, torture, and assault on a young two-year-old child. They were also charged with human trafficking to commit pimping or pandering in connection with the girl’s mother. The reports state that such a killing is normally attributed to cartel feuds. As U.S. citizens, the couple was extradited and face charges in Los Angeles (NBC News, 2019).

The increasing homicide rate continued through the month of February in Tijuana as a human head was found on Avenida Internacional (a well-known road that runs parallel to the U.S. border), which shut down traffic and generated a large mobilization of police. On the same day, a bag was uncovered on the steps of the Institutional Revolutionary Party’s (PRI) building in Tijuana containing a severed head. A Tijuana reporter who had chosen to use the pseudonym J spoke out about the effect of the Sinaloa - CJNG cartel violence in his city. He said,

Violence has flowed through the city, blood and rain-soaked streets, on the heels of a storm, over the last week. There were 4 attacks just tonight [February 22nd, 2017]. A man shot in Zona Rio days ago. Another killed

in a bar, La Cueva De Peludo. A man found entambado, stuffed in a grey trash can, on Calle Coahuila. A severed human leg tossed onto the street in Zona Centro, Cinco De Mayo. A man's body dropped off, in Colonia Matamoros, a rope around his neck, his body barely recognizable, burnt black all over, charred skin flicking off the corpse. (quoted in Borderland Beat, 2017b)

On the 12th March, five homicide victims, three women, and 2 men were found on the north end of Tijuana in a house belonging to one of the drug cartels. One female victim took 22 bullets to the neck whilst the other victims either took one or two shots to the head (Borderland Beat, 2017c). The police were unwilling to identify the victims but did state they had previous criminal charges of deprivation against liberty and fighting. There was another victim of the attack, lying in front of the house who had been wounded by the shooting. The police stated that the drug cartel house had been attacked by a rival gang (Dibble, 2017). Two weeks later, ice coolers were discovered containing dismembered parts of the body. The contents of the coolers were found in the heart of the tourist area on Cabo San Lucas. They are the remains of two males and one female who are unidentified. Three days after, three male bodies were found in a desolate area near the airport in San Jose del Cabo. The bodies were shrouded in plastic and covered by tarp. The bodies showed signs of drug cartel style torture. The next day, another two bodies, a male and female were again found close to the airport. These bodies had been shot and dumped on the side of the road. All the homicides are attributed to the increased tension between drug cartels (Borderland Beat, 2017d). In Rosarito, Uber driver Jose Humber Felix Mendez was shot six times whilst transporting two San Diego State University (SDSU) students who were visiting for spring break. Latin American Studies Professor at SDSU, Victor Clark-Afredo said that violence in Mexico “is among those who sell drugs on the streets... not against students” (quoted in Fritz, 2017). The killing of Jose was not a direct attack on tourism otherwise the students would have been at risk, it was a drug cartel-related killing (Fritz, 2017).

During the weekend of March 26th, communication started from the mafia known as ‘mantras’ and were erected on placards, wrapped on the bodies of those killed or hung from bridges. The homicides in relation to these mantras are known

as the mantra killings. The local mafia consists of smaller factions and gangs affiliated to either Sinaloa or CJNG cartels. The first piece of communication was a mantra tied around the neck of a man who had been tortured by the CJNG and read “Here no more are the CTNG, don’t suck fuckers” (quoted in Borderland Beat, 2017e). The Tijuana Cartel (CTNG) had ties with Sinaloa and worked in collaboration with them in Tijuana, The threats continued throughout the Saturday with another six cartel-related homicides. On the Sunday, whilst cycling in the El Florido subdivision in Tijuana, a man was shot dead and wrapped in a sheet with the following message “This is going to happen to all those Cabos of Piolina in skirts... and this will happen to those who work with Las Chompas and Los Aquiles, Atte CTNG” (quoted in Borderland Beat, 2017e). The following statement highlights that the authority’s normalization of the mantra killings “The authorities do not consider these 6 homicides as a notable increase due to a new fight between criminal groups, because the output of those killed is constant” (quoted in Borderland Beat, 2017e). On Wednesday 29th March, there was only a single homicide relating to the mantra killings. The mantra removed from the body read,

We of the CTNG are not strangers and we fight for Tijuana to bring tranquillity to our countrymen of Tijuana. You are dirty and pay you people that’s why they switch. You have left the job of Patron to your people and they laugh behind your back because you say you are the Plaza boss of Tijuana, but you are not. The people of Tijuana are not stupid, and you know this motherfucker is a carbon, and a dirty carbon does not sit well with people. With metal and iron, we give it to you in the ass, and you words are drowned out, hahaha Here the CTNG is stronger than ever Atte: your worst nightmares. (quoted in Borderland Beat, 2017e)

During Tijuana’s Calle Sexta street party in April 2017, narco-violence turned an annual celebration into mass hysteria. Cartel gunmen came into the street party and shot two men and one woman at Chip’s Bar. All three were transported to Tijuana’s general hospital with one victim dying later that night. This was the second shooting in the space of seven days at Chip’s Bar (Suarez, 2017).

On the outskirts of San Jose del Cabo in early May, a shootout between gang members and navy forces left eight dead, one soldier and seven gang

members. Of the seven gang members killed, two were women and five were men. The security forces later recovered drugs that were being transported as well as military-grade weapons and communication equipment (The Telegraph, 2017).

In early June, a mass grave of six bodies were found in Los Cabos. The bodies of four men and two women were found in a grave with beliefs that drug cartels had tortured and deposited the bodies. A day later, deputy prison warden was killed driving through a residential development in Costa Derada. A group of armed men opened fire killing the man who the deputy Public Security secretary of the state described as “a young lawyer, dedicated to improving the penitentiary system” (quoted in Mexico News Daily, 2017a). Two weeks later, the state prosecutor for Baja California Sur announced that after several days of excavation of hidden graves, 18 bodies, five females and thirteen males had been uncovered. These bodies are found to be the result of battles between drug gangs, including internal factions of the Sinaloa cartel (Associated Press, 2017). Only three days later, four dismembered bodies were found in the space of two days in Cabo San Lucas. Two heads were also found to be left in coolers close by the dismembered bodies. A retired U.S. citizen living in Los Cabos said of the events

That was more of a message that the narco-traffickers wanted to deliver, sort of to say, ‘We can come right up into your Beverly Hills and dump dismembered bodies on your doorstep’ ... I’m from Detroit. We’re used to seeing crime. But heads being left in coolers — that’s a little extreme. (quoted in Stevenson, 2017).

At the end of June, on a pedestrian bridge in Sanchez Taboada, a narco-banner read “Let it be clear you sissy dolls from Jalisco, the plaza is ours” (quoted in Suarez, 2017). It was signed by the Sinaloa Cartel with its well-known Spanish initials CDS. Two days later, a response came from a banner nearby which stated, “Here are your filthy people, we don’t fuck around,” signed by the Tijuana New Generation Cartel (CTNG) (quoted in Suarez, 2017). The message included a decapitated head. Tijuana alone experienced a 158% increase in homicides during the month of June. The sharp increase is again being attributed to the turf war between the Sinaloa and Jalisco New Generation cartels.

By the end of the first six months of 2017, Baja California Sur experienced a spike of homicides of 342% compared to the first six months of 2016. It is believed to result from the weakness within the Sinaloa cartel and the fighting between factions. Christopher Woody (2017e) of Business Insider stated, “While much of the violence is related to the drug trade — particularly competition over the heroin and synthetic-drug trade in western Mexico — other factors appear to have allowed it to fester. The fragmentation of criminal groups, wrought in part by the government’s “kingpin strategy” targeting cartel leadership, has led to more groups fighting over the same territory and products (Woody, 2017e).

In the first week of July, 26 people were murdered in Tijuana which took the total of the state to 1,023 for the year. During the first weekend of July, a surge in homicides occurred in Baja California Sur. A suitcase filled with decapitated human remains was found in Los Cabos. On July 9th, Commander Antonio Garcia was assassinated in Ensenada by drug traffickers who were unloading drugs in the San Quintin valley for the CJNG. Commander Garcia’s body was found riddled with bullets (Borderland Beat, 2017f).

During early August at Playa Palmilla beach in San Jose del Cabo, a group of armed cartel men arrived carrying automatic weapons and fired at point-blank range killing three men who were resting under a palm tree. The barrage of bullets also hit a man and woman who were close in proximity causing severe injuries. Tourists fled the beach which had previously been a haven from cartel activity. Fox News reported this incident as being a result of “clashes between the two most powerful cartels – the Sinaloa drug cartel and the rival Jalisco New Generation cartel” (quoted in Anurada, 2017). A few days before the Playa Palmilla attack, eleven men and three women were found in a mass grave near the San Jose del Cabo tourist resort. The belief by the state prosecutor’s office is that there are more bodies in the area yet to be found. The mass grave has been accredited to the increasing violence between rival drug cartels (Romero, 2019). In Los Cabos during the week of August 21-27, cartel killings took the lives of 9 people in a single day. Vista Hermosa and a young boy were found dead in the same municipality as both were killed by gunfire. On the same day, two men were found dead having been killed by gunfire in a neighbouring municipality. Moments after those men were found a 32-year-old man died in Las Garzas with a

youth, wounded in the confrontation dying later that day. Ten minutes after the 32-year-old man was found gunfire was heard in Ayuntamienton where two more men were shot dead, one of whom was an employee of the State Security Secretariat. The last murder of the day was in Arcoiris where police found a body of a guard who worked at the state prison. During the same week, a former assistant state prosecutor was assassinated along with three other men during a gun battle in Los Cabos. The state attorney General, Erasmo Palemon Alamilla Villeda said that

all the killings showed signs of being connected with the dispute between drug gangs for control of the plaza... Just two of the dead had criminal records, which indicated that many of the victims were caught in the crossfire and had nothing to do with trafficking drugs. (quoted in Mexico News Daily, 2017b)

By September, 100 days had passed in Tijuana since governor Fanciso Vega De Lamadrid launched the Crusade of Security initiative with the intention to reduce the rising homicide rate (Calderon, Rodriguez Ferreira and Shirk 2018). However, within 15 days in September, 105 reported homicides were committed, with September 11th the most violent day of the year with 13 homicides (Borderland Beat, 2017g). On this day, in a crowded apartment complex known as Torres del Lago, a man was shot in his living room with emergency services unable to reach him to save his life. A few days later, Romelia Lucero Quionez was killed in Valle Verde whilst playing pinball games outside a small grocery store (Borderland Beat, 2017g). Neither of these people were known to be part of the drug trade, but their family members were. These murders were revenge killings for the murders their family members participated in before being arrested. Two days later, another woman was murdered in the same neighbourhood whilst visiting the markets. She had witnessed the killing of Romelia days earlier and was gunned down by drug traffickers (Dibble, Gibbins, & Tamayo, 2017). Two others were shot in the process but survived. Several hours later in Infonavit Capistrano, Edgar Cerantes, a father to a one-year-old daughter, was killed outside a stadium as he waited to enter. As gunfire broke out, Edgar was shot dead with his father believing the police mistook him for one of

the cartel-suspects they were chasing. An accusation the police deny (Dibble, Gibbins, & Tamayo, 2017).

October saw Tijuana accrue 181 homicides during the month with an average of six deaths a day. Three were killed in a shooting which left Larry Macy, a well-known activist in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Queer (LGBTQ) community, dead in a restaurant. Two others were killed in the crossfire between rival drug gangs (Sklar, 2017). The homicides continued in Tijuana with the bodies of two women found wrapped in a blanket, three killed in a gunfight in Los Mariscos Paisa (including a retired US citizen) and another two people found dead, one on the side of the road in a mattress stabbed and the other wrapped in a blanket having been strangled to death (Borderland Beat, 2017h). Two days later, a man's body was found in plastic bags with another five bodies across the city found and a woman's body discovered in a trash container in Ensenada. All the deaths have been attributed to drug traffickers (Borderland Beat, 2017h).

November began with an overflow from the violent month of October. On November 1st, a man was found behind the wheel of a free taxi shot to death in Camino Verde whilst a man and a woman were found killed in a river canal near Avenue Campos del Parejes del Valle (The Baja Post, 2017). In the town of La Playita near San Jose del Cabo, three people were killed after a shooting in a seafood restaurant. The reports from those in the restaurant said that three gunmen entered the restaurant and repeatedly shot at three individuals who used to be employees of the restaurant (The Baja Post, 2017). The third weekend in November saw 35 homicides in Baja California Sur alone, most notably in Lap Paz and Los Cabos. The state commissioner was assassinated along with his son (Garda World, 2017).

Toward the end of December, six murders were investigated, four of whom were hung from bridges over major highway passes with two of those hung near major airports in La Paz and Los Cabos. Hanging bodies from highways has been a common way for organized crime to send violent messages to the government and citizens of a local area in other states across Mexico (Mexico News Daily, 2017c). Narcomantas or narco signs had been found with bodies that hung from bridges which indicated that these murders were the work of the

Guzmanes and Tegoripenos gangs. Their message to the government and citizens of the state was “You assholes didn’t believe it. This is what will happen to anyone who does not fall into line with us. It has been made more than clear that we hold all the power and that Baja north and south are ours. Hahahaha” (quoted in Mexico News Daily, 2017c). These gangs both affiliate with the Sinaloa and CJNG cartels and has therefore been attributed to the on-going territorial battle between the Sinaloa and the Jalisco New Generation cartels (Mexico News Daily, 2017c).

Summary

The Sinaloa Cartel seized control of the lucrative Baja California Peninsula drug routes in the mid-2000s. With El Chapo, the most infamous drug cartel leader in Mexico’s history, the Sinaloa Cartel forged strong ties with competing cartels and gangs in the region and solidified the drug trade. It meant very little violence between competing cartels or gangs. Extortion and bribery were used to silence government officials and security forces resulting in relative peace for the region from 2010 – 2015. This platform caused the Sinaloa Cartel to become Mexico’s most affluent and influential drug cartel as their trade of cocaine and heroin was world-wide (Woody, 2017b). The top-down model or kingpin strategy ensured El Chapo was arrested in 2016 and extradited to the U.S. in January 2017. The case studies show that the top-down model produced the capture and assignation of the Beltran Leyva brothers, the killing of El Lazca of the Zeta Cartel in north-east Mexico, and the arrest of El Chapo of the Sinaloa Cartel, triggering an increase of violence and homicide rates. This strategy creates a destabilized cartel that often splits into factions as individuals seeking cartel leadership attract loyal segments of the cartel to join their cause. These factions create feuds and violent repercussions with cartels imploding and going to war from within. This weakens a cartel's position to hold on to its drug trafficking routes and creates opportunities for rival cartels to stake claim to these routes. Warring factions cause a divide within a cartel with factions often aligning with rival cartels with the purpose to remove their rival faction from the area. This is accomplished through war which inevitably causes the homicide rates to increase in that region. This was identified in each case study with Colima in 2016 a

precursor for what was to come for the BCP in 2017. With El Chapo extradited to the U.S. and the Sinaloa Cartel officially leaderless for the first time in 25 years, warring factions emerged within the Sinaloa Cartel causing violence and the homicide rate to increase. It further escalated when the feud from within the Sinaloa Cartel reverberated eternally and the CJNG witnessed a weakened BCP and opted to challenge the Sinaloa Cartel's power by forging relationships with former Sinaloa Cartel alliances across the region. These relationships gave CJNG the foothold on the peninsula they needed to threaten the Sinaloa Cartels drug trafficking routes and claim them as CJNG's. The war between cartels escalated the homicide rates as the turf wars became never-ending through 2017. Cartel and gang members were those predominantly being killed, however, family members of those in cartels, those who had witnessed murders, other forms of revenge killings and people caught in the crossfire were also the result of turf wars. The research available indicates that the turf wars on the BCP considerably contributed to answering the question 'why was there a spike in homicides on the Baja California Peninsula in 2017'.

Chapter 4: The Impact of Government Initiatives

Chapter 4 discusses insights into the hypothesis ‘International, Federal and Local Government initiatives to decrease homicide rates have instead further escalated homicide rates’. The purpose of researching international, federal and local initiatives in relation to the Baja California Peninsula is to investigate and explore if these initiatives are contributed to the homicide spike on the BCP.

The militarisation theory and the adoption of military models are discussed with the purpose of researching federal initiatives implemented to curb the violence on the BCP. The peninsula experienced high homicide rates for the first four months of 2017 with the federal government deploying 1000 soldiers into the region (Asmann, 2018). Their purpose was to reduce the homicide rate and bring peace to the region. Their support system was the police force, a local initiative that was undertrained and resourced to combat the drug cartels and needed contracted security firms to try and decrease homicide rates. Internationally, Donald Trump as the new President of the U.S. made belligerent comments about Mexicans in the lead up to his inauguration and then criticizes BCP’s state enforcement by stating the power and control is with the drug trafficking organizations.

Theory of Militarisation Strategy

Violence caused by turf wars between cartels and the federal government's offensive launch against them has become distressingly familiar to the Mexican people (Asmann, 2018). Government officials have claimed that drug-related violence has primarily been concentrated in only several states, however, security forces are indicating that the violence is spreading and affecting the population at large. The fear of drug trafficking violence spreading nationally sparked the debate within the federal government on how to best approach this security challenge (Yasher, 2018). The conclusion the Mexican government arrived at was to increase military and conventional security strategies with the preferred means of militarisation in extreme circumstances. Militarisation strategy is a government approach to public security and law enforcement by the use of military means. Arturo Sotomayor defines militarization as an “adoption and use of military

models, methods, concepts, doctrines, procedures, and personnel in police activities, thus giving a military character to public safety (and public space)” (Sotomayor, 2012, p. 43). The strategy is not limited to policing but may also include; judiciary matters, public health scares, natural disaster missions and all law enforcement processes (Sotomayor, 2012). The Mexican military has been used for decades to eradicate drug plantations and cartels across Mexico. The visibility of the armed forces for these specific missions was low and kept discreet but when President Felipe Calderon took office, the use of militarisation increased for challenging the structural roots of drug trafficking such as social issues, economics, and demand (Sotomayor, 2012).

In 2017, President Pena Nieto signed a law passed by Congress allowing the legal framework for soldiers to be deployed in regions controlled by drug cartels by presidential declaration (Yashar, 2018). The law allows the expansion of military authority with limited checks and balances and has no strategy for the military to cede control to the local police force in the campaign to combat drugs. Alejandro Madrazo Lajous, a constitutional expert at Mexico University said of the law “This bill effectively displaces the constitution... It allows the president to unilaterally militarise any part of the country for any time period he considers necessary or adequate without any control either by congress or the judiciary” (quoted in Malkin, 2017). Santiago Aguirre, deputy director of the Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Center for Human Rights in Mexico City, stated that in relation to the new bill the armed forces “don’t have to be accountable to anybody” and “This will generate a parallel intelligence structure... That breaks their (military) subordination to civilian power” (quoted in Malkin, 2017).

The United Nations warned Mexico that its approach to strengthen militarised fighting to combat organized crime could lead to an abuse of power and a higher homicide rate (Linthicum, 2017). A militarisation strategy was theorized for the Baja California Peninsula to lower the increasing homicide rate from 2016 – 2017 and eradicate the area of cartel violence. To tackle the security issues the peninsula was experiencing, the federal government granted authority for militarisation of the peninsula to occur. The purpose of the military being deployed to the Baja California Peninsula was to curb the violence and homicide rates from increasing any further. The military had received instruction to

combine forces with local police and security forces to show a unified approach and intimidating front to organized crime in the region, specifically, the feud between the Sinaloa and CJNG cartels.

State of Emergency: The deployment of soldiers

In December 2006, Mexico's new president Felipe Calderon announced the deployment of federal troops to combat organized crime in the state of Michoacán. Under Calderon, militarisation was the preferred means to deter and dissuade organized crime (Corcoran, 2018). The army became President Calderon's preference for law enforcement in counteracting narcotics and crime. The Mexican military is viewed by its citizens as an effective crime-fighting organization because of their "overwhelming size and physical presence, results are usually immediate, albeit unsustainable" (quoted in LaSusa, 2016a). It is seen as less corruptible than local enforcement authorities and has favourable trust ratings according to Vanderbilt's Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP). The Marines have particularly high ratings due to their roles in capturing and killing many drug cartel leaders (LaSusa, 2016a). President Pena Nieto was not as forthright as President Calderon in militarizing law enforcement, however, the spike of homicides in 2017 stirred the United States to pressure President Nieto and his government into a reaction. As a result, in April 2017, the government strategy to counteract the increasing homicide rate across the peninsula was to "flood the area with soldiers and marines" (Corcoran, 2018). The government sent 1000 military personnel into Baja California Sur whilst announcing plans to build new barracks in La Paz which will be a permanent deployment for 600 combat troops during 2018. Patrick Corcoran, analyst, and writer for InSight Crime believes that the government approach to militarise the Baja California Peninsula would not stem the tide of violence throughout 2017 and is not a viable option due to its dubious track record elsewhere (Corcoran, 2018).

Between 2007 and 2014, there were 3907 homicides across Mexico due to confrontations with the Mexican military (Malkin, 2017). The official national and regional statistics have not been provided since 2014, however, those killed during this period of time by the military have been labelled as "civilian

aggressors” (quoted in Malkin, 2017). The relatively small number of those reported wounded by the military during the same time period was 494, attesting to the likelihood that the outcome once the military opens fire is death. Paul Chevigny, a retired New York Professor who pioneered the study of lethality among armed forces said

In many forms of combat between armed groups, about four people are injured for each person killed... But the body count in Mexico is reversed. The Mexican Army kills eight enemies for every one wounded... They are summary executions. (quoted in Malkin, 2017)

Professor Chevigny continues by stating that Mexico’s marine forces are even more lethal than the army, they kill roughly 30 combatants for each one they injure (Malkin, 2017). No official data is provided for homicides relating to militarisation for the Baja California Peninsula in 2017, however, there are enough reports on military warfare across the peninsula since their introduction to the region in April 2017 to consider the military as a potential contributor for the spike in homicides and violence. During the first four months on the BCP, the average homicide rate was 65.15 per 100,000, however, after the deployment of 1000 soldiers, there was an increase for the final eight months of the year to 81.75 per 100,000 (Asmann, 2018). The average homicide rate for the Peninsula during April was at a relatively low of 38.8 when the soldiers were deployed and only took several months for the average to reach a year high of 139.6 per 100,000 in October. The relationship between the increase of homicides on the peninsula and the militarisation order is not substantiated with data but supported through several reported cases of the military increasing the homicide rate through interactions with drug cartels. A U.S. State Department issued warnings for all Americans traveling to Mexico and the BCP as throughout 2017 and since the deployment of military personnel “criminal organizations have erected their own unauthorized checkpoints, at times wearing police and military uniforms, and have killed or abducted motorists who have failed to stop at them” (quoted in WHTN News). Before the military was deployed on the BCP, there had been no reported encounters of unauthorized checkpoints with organized crime syndicates dressed as the military resulting in death. This has only occurred in the Baja California region post the militarization of the area and indicates that the

unconfirmed amount of deaths resulting from these checkpoints only transpired by virtue of militarisation.

Los Cabos is one of the most popular tourist destinations in western Baja California Sur and is a growing base for ex-patriates to settle and retire (Calderon, 2018). In May, the month after the area was militarized, a shootout between gang members, police and the armed forces occurred resulting in eight deaths, one of which was a soldier (Garcia, 2017). The incident was on the outskirts of San Jose del Cabo, roughly 20 miles from the main tourist areas. The security forces were able to recover drugs, communication equipment, vehicles, uniforms, and military-issued weapons (Garcia, 2017). The recovery of the military-issued weapons sparked great concerns for the military hierarchy in the region as it indicates that cartels were able to acquire high-level weaponry through either seizing military supplies or the corruption of military personnel. What is evident is that pre-April 2017 and the militarization of the peninsula, drug cartels were not in possession of military-grade firearms which in most cases is a much higher-grade weapon than the average weapon a drug trafficker would possess.

Justice in Mexico's Laura Calderon has said that although an attempt to lower homicides by deploying 1000 soldiers to the region occurred midway through 2017, this strategy failed (Calderon, 2018). The attempt was to show a commanding force of military personal and presence in key hotspots of La Paz and Los Cabos, however, the collaboration of municipal, state and federal forces has not been able to curb the violence and homicide rates (Calderon, 2018). Analyst for security policy in Mexico, Mike LaSusa believes that the record of militarisation in other parts of Mexico is conclusive evidence that continuing a militarized approach in the Baja California Peninsula will only yield similar lacklustre results. He states

making the politically difficult decision to reform and strengthen civilian institutions may be Mexico's best hope for making long-term progress in the fight against organized crime. But until politicians make that leap, Mexico seems destined to maintain the gruesome status quo between security forces and organized crime (LaSusa, 2016a).

With no official data on the number of homicides in the Baja California Peninsula, it is problematic to empirically and conclusively state that the militarisation strategy has been a definitive factor in the region's homicide spike in 2017. With the government suppressing data post-2014 of military homicides there are inadequate resources to acquire such information. However, the research conducted on the militarisation of other regions in Mexico pre-2017 has resulted in these regions having an increase of homicides due to both military personal and cartel traffickers being killed. This is highlighted by Professor Chevigny's analysis that the average Mexican soldier kills eight combatants for everyone that is injured and the navy who kill thirty combatants to everyone that is injured (Ahmed and Schmitt, 2016). This is the average across Mexico which is a summary of executions rather than a tactical approach. Using these statistical averages as a precedent, the BCP would have had an immediate increase after militarisation in April 2017. The immediate increase was observed as the homicide rate jumped from 65.15 per 100,000 for the first four months of the year to 81.75 for the remainder (Pasquali, 2019). The increase was greater as the homicide rate in April was 38.8 per 100,000 and several months later it reached 139.6 per 100,000. The examples of military warfare during militarisation combined with military issued weapons within cartel ranks and driving checkpoints organized by cartels dressed in military uniform, all materialized post militarisation. Theoretic research indicates that the history of militarisation of any region in Mexico has resulted in an increase in the homicide rate and would, therefore, be no different for the BCP. The research provided in this chapter also indicates that the BCP is no different from any other region in Mexico and the Homicide rate has also increased because of militarisation. Managing Director of Human's Right Watch, Daniel Wilkinson said regarding the potential for militarisation to have increased homicide rates

The militarization of public security has had predictably disastrous results. Mexico's armed forces, like those in any other country, are made for warfare, not law enforcement, and have a history of grave violations against civilians. Deploying them to contain criminal violence was like throwing fuel on a fire. Under Calderón, it produced widespread abuses—including executions, enforced disappearances, and torture. It failed to reduce the violence. Indeed, it may have been a factor contributing to the dramatic increase in homicides over these years. (Wilkinson, 2018)

Senator Roberto Gil, a member of the conservative National Action Party, opposed the bill that allowed the Mexican president to militarise a specific region with “no law, no procedure and no tracks” to guide military deployment and operations (quoted in Malkin, 2017). He believes that the bill is being used by national and local government officials to evade responsibility for addressing the increasing cartel presence and homicide/violence rates. He states, “Governors have used the military intervention as a crutch rather than set up their own police forces” (quoted in Malkin, 2017).

State Enforcement Authorities

The most widely held view in Mexico regarding militarization of the Baja California Peninsula is that the government had no alternative but to sanction it (Yasher, 2018). The Pena Nieto administration was confronted with security crises that left politicians with few viable options in how to approach the spiking homicide rates across the peninsula. The federal government believed that state law enforcement institutions had all suffered from internal or institutional corruption with a lack of accountability. The regional and local police forces were lacking in investigative skills, resources and intelligence to adequately cope with the challenges drug cartels posed (Calderon, 2018). Civil society had been skeptical toward law enforcement agencies as a growing culture of mistrust prevailed between citizens and the police force. These fragilities of Mexico’s public security services provided the incentive the federal government needed to militarise the security on the BCP. The early increase of homicides on the Peninsula caused the government to react and move for the military to be deployed in the region, which highlights the government’s view that the local police force is ineffective and unreliable in ensuring the security of the public (Calderon, 2018).

The relationship between state police and the spike in homicide rates on the Baja California Peninsula are two-fold; on the one hand there is a high proportion of state police officers who are underprepared and not adequately resourced to manage cartel warfare and then there are the police officers who are

actively working for the cartels, counteracting law enforcement and jeopardizing public security. This section explores if the police who are underprepared and not adequately resourced to manage cartel warfare have contributed to the spike in homicide levels on the BCP.

In 2016, a report by Causa en Comun (Common Cause) found that one in ten police officers was unfit for service highlighting that the continuing flaws in local security forces are contributing to the crime and homicide (Duran-Martinez, 2018). The report stated that nationwide over 28,000 Mexican police officers failed polygraph exams, drug screens, or performance tests used for street competence (LaSusa, 2016b). The report also declared that Baja California had large amounts of police that were declared unfit for service (LaSusa, 2016b). The governor of Baja California Sur state capital La Paz said there is a purging of the police ranks underway that will allot more resources to effective police officers (Duran-Martinez, 2018). However, he has also indicated that although the state is working to improve salaries and benefits for police officers, those who have failed the vetting tests have not been dismissed due to the state unable to cover the severance pay (Woody, 2017d). Later in 2017, the governor once again addressed the violence and homicide across La Paz by saying that it was not just an issue within his region but nationwide. He followed on by stating “We’re doing our part responsibly: purging our [police] corporation and purchasing uniforms and equipment for them. We currently have the country’s highest-paid police, second to only Tijuana” (quoted in Rodriguez Navarro, 2017). He confirmed that the new equipment provided to police in the state was 53 new patrol vehicles in 2017. The mayor was arguing against previous accusations made in various reports regarding the state of police affairs in La Paz and the lack of equipment and training they had received (Rodriguez Navarro, 2017). A security official from La Paz who spoke to *El Universal* on condition of anonymity said that the state’s police remain both “ineffective and unresponsive to violent crime” (quoted in Rodriguez Navarro, 2018). He added

Our police don’t know how to handle a confrontation. Police from La Paz don’t know what to shoot at, how to hide, how to protect people or how to cordon off an area to provide support. If there is a clash . . . the police are simply not going to arrive, they’ll leave them, because they don’t know [what to do], they haven’t had any ongoing training program in [crime]

response, prevention and investigation. (quoted in Rodriguez Navarro, 2018)

Analyst Laura Calderon stated

Arguably, the most urgent and prominent problem faced in the region is the lack of qualified police forces. With less than 2,000 police officers, who often have not received adequate training nor have the necessary equipment to counteract the level of violence they are now facing, local law enforcement is becoming increasingly surpassed in terms of resources by organized crime groups. (Calderon, 2018)

In the city of Tijuana, over 90% of homicides in 2017 were unsolved, with the police overwhelmed with the amount of on-going investigations. With such a high rate of unsolved homicides by the state police, criminals are aware they are likely to never face charges due to crimes committed. This results in an attitude for those committing homicide that they can continue increasing the homicide rate because there is a good chance they will never be found or prosecuted due to such a poor rate of unsolved homicides.

It is reported that the underprepared officers are not only risking their own lives due to the lack of training and resources but also the lives of the public they serve. During 2017, underprepared police officers throughout the Baja California Peninsula lead to dangerous and challenging encounters with drug cartels who were often better equipped and trained in warfare. This view is shared by security analysts, civil society and both state and federal authorities as they recognized the security shortcomings for the region (Yashar, 2018). The security shortcomings are predominantly in relation to the greater threat posed by criminal gangs as their presence in the region continued to grow through 2017. Causa en Comun, a non-government organization provided a study on the police across Mexico and stated that the police on the BCP lag-behind the forces in every other state in the country in terms of training and professionalism. The study went on further to say that the regions police academy included the absence of a shooting range, facilities to carry out tactical training and there were no driving facilities. Police officers who graduated from the region's academy were expected to purchase their own uniforms, buy equipment needed for police work out of their own pay and

complete menial errands for superior officers. The report highlights that the region, especially the state of Baja California Sur, has a shortage of crime scene investigators to solve cases with no anti-kidnapping agency or facilities train current sworn police officers (Rodriguez Navarro, 2018).

In April 2017, a law enforcement agent and coordinator for the Public Ministry of Malicious Homicides for the Procurandia General de Justicia del Estado de Baja Calidofornia was shot in an ambush-style attack suffering multiple gunshot wounds to the throat and stomach in Tijuana (Borderland Beat, 2017i). On December 1st, 2017 an attack against police forces in La Paz by cartels resulted in one police officer being killed and another severely injured. Their car was damaged as the cartels fled the scene with civilians in the local area reporting over 15 detonations of gunfire was heard (Borderland Beat, 2017i). A day later, three police officers were killed after a cartel hit-squad targeted them in the resort city, La Paz. The police officers were members of a special force team that patrols the tourist areas. The police officers were under-equipped and lacked the training to counteract the drug cartels in the region (Calderon, 2018). This came after a threat was made by a local cartel that they would be “cleaning the plaza” (quoted in EFE, 2017). This narco-mantra was written around the township the week before the police officers were killed with no extra equipment or training provided to counteract the reality of the threat (EFE, 2017).

In August 2017, Jose Luis Nunez Lopez was shot to death in broad daylight as he left his house only two blocks away from the police station in Jardines del Rubi. The officer had a good record and was known for working hard in the job. He had no known alliance with drug traffickers (Dibble, Gibbins & Tamayo, 2017). Jose’s death came straight after the death and injury of the five police officers and other sector employees, including the assassination of the police chief in Los Cabos (Durden, 2017). During the first 5 days of December, Armando Martinez Vega, President of the Municipality of La Paz, made a statement saying

These are times for prayer, as one more citizen of the La Paz it pains me greatly what is going on in my city, my municipality, my state, I have children, grandchildren, family; these are times of crises and I ask all our citizens to join with me in prayer and ask God to help us through these

terrible time together; may the ones who perpetrate this upon us retire... we have been exposed to such insecurity and we also hope that He will help the Authorities and the three levels of government resolve this theme of violence. (quoted in EFE, 2017)

This statement is an indication that the President of La Paz is aware that the police force is unable to counteract the drug cartels and is asking the citizens of his municipality to pray to God in an attempt to give the police the support against the cartels that they need, because they are not receiving the training and resources which would otherwise be required. The accounts of the police being targeted by cartels and becoming victims of the increasing homicide rates align with the report by Causa en Comun that the police do not have the facilities to train or the expertise coming out of the police academy to oppose the increase cartel presence.

Law enforcement in Baja California has been challenged with drug cartels for over ten years, constantly expanding its array of methods and technological equipment. Throughout this constant battle with the cartels, it is reported that the police have become exhausted with the demanding and taxing requirements needed to oppose the cartels. Some police, fuelled by the constant threat to their lives and the ever onslaught of violence, have independently decided to engage the threat posed by the cartels in an unconventional manner. These police officers have adopted ancient and mysterious weapons to undertake the assault on the cartels. These ancient and mysterious weapons are understood to be dark rituals born from Haitian voodoo, Cuban Santeria and Mexican witchcraft. The Tijuana police officers who practice such techniques would gather together on beaches during full moons while a voodoo priest would kill a chicken and present blood to the officers to be smeared on their body whilst they chanted protective prayers for the purpose of inviting spirits to give power. Many of the officers who are using such techniques often derive from rural areas in the outskirts of Tijuana where religion and superstition are strong and where these practices are commonly used with social acceptance. The rituals taken place were kept secretive and remained unknown for over a year until chicken carcasses were found washed up on beaches and police officers came forward to take responsibility. These officers stated that they were not devil worshipers but were officers of the law on a

desperate mission to battle against the overwhelming power of the drug cartels and partook in these rituals to gain the means needed to fight against the drug cartels (Swancer, 2017). Another alternative approach used by police officers in Tijuana to oppose the drug cartels is to receive especially blessed charms and spirit tattoos that are understood to have been imbued with a special spiritual energy giving the police officers who have the extra guidance, increased physical prowess and even be able to deflect bullets. Such tattoos would cost an average front line officer over half their month's wage indicating those who receive these tattoos strongly believe they work. A former police officer from Tijuana said of these supernatural weapons

Sometimes a man needs another type of faith. I was saved when they killed two of my mates. I know why I didn't die. We all know that guns and body armor are useless against the cartels because they are well-armed and can attack any time. But this is something we can believe in, that really works. (quoted in Swancer, 2017)

The unconventional supernatural approach has given a group of police officers a sense of relief and hope in the battle against drug cartels and offers a mental fortitude in continuing their police work. This approach is unconventional, especially for police officers and it is unclear whether it is used as a tactic out of true belief or desperation. It is also unclear if this method is giving the police the means needed to fight against the drug cartels mentally, however, these officers are aware that the training and resources they are supplied with from the municipal police department are not adequate to combat the threat posed by the drug cartels. Because of this seeming reality, these police officers have gone searching elsewhere for a solution and have fallen back on these archaic rituals with the desire or expectation that it will compensate for the current lack of training and resources.

Independent security services have been contracted by the local government to protect and serve the community (Mexico News Daily, 2017d). Fernando Rojas was a 24-year veteran of the local police force, working for a C4 (integrated command, control, communications, and computer) security force. His bullet-riddled body was found in a security marked vehicle in Los Cabos after he was on duty performing his security procedures. These security services work in a

cohesive nature with local ministerial police and are often at the forefront of seizing weapons, ammunition, and drugs. Due to their success rates, the security forces contracted to support the police are often used as the first port of call against cartel activity for the police. It is reported that due to the police being underprepared and not adequately resourced to manage cartel warfare on the Baja California Peninsula, the contracted security services are tasked with the challenge to launch the local assault against the cartels. The consequence, as seen with Fernando Rojas, is that this approach places the contracted security services as the first hurdle the cartels need to tackle, which has subsequently led to violence (Mexico News Daily, 2017d).

It is argued that because the police have not received the appropriate resources and training to counteract drug cartels across the Baja California Peninsula the homicide rate increased throughout 2017. The examples of four police officers who were under-equipped and received a lack of training, who died in early December 2017, are four of multiple examples across the region where police died at the hands of cartels because of their poor resources and training.

The head of the Citizens Council for Public Safety, Hernandez said that the current approach for lowering homicide rates and increasing safety measures has not yet been met. It is his belief that “police officers must have better working conditions – with pensions, and guarantees that their families will be cared for if they are killed in the line of duty” (quoted in Dibble, Gibbins & Tamayo, 2017). Hernandez believes that the issue of professionalization of law enforcement agencies across the region needs to be addressed. As the agencies transition from a traditional Mexican approach to a thorough U.S. operational style, learning opportunities will arise where correct training protocols should be implemented in current on-going policing procedures (Dibble, Gibbins & Tamayo, 2017). Whereas Guerrero, the head of homicides at Baja California municipal police, has called for a much broader response to address the issues, he stated in 2017

This is not just a problem for the homicide unit, it’s a problem for all of society... This is not a problem that is going to be solved with weapons, with police, putting people in jail. That is not the solution. (quoted in Dibble, Gibbins & Tamayo, 2017)

For Guerrero, the challenges faced by the police force on the Baja California Peninsula should be addressed by more than the security services but also by civil society and local/national governments. He also believed that effective policy decisions would support the services to shift the tide of violence and not the continual training of police, increasing the homicide unit and upgrading equipment (Dibble, Gibbins & Tamayo, 2017).

International

The research for international initiatives solely focuses on the role of Donald Trump and the effects his comments had as the President of the United States of America. His comments were not operational initiatives but Trump's reported aggressive anti-immigration slurs regarding Mexicans has been reported as a potential cause for an increase in homicides on the border (Edwards & Rushin, 2018). With Baja California a U.S.-bordering Mexican state, there is reason to believe that President Trump has unintentionally been a contributing factor to the spike in homicide rates.

President Donald Trump was inaugurated at a public ceremony on January 20th, 2017. Within days of the inauguration, Mexican analysts predicted that Trump's belligerence toward Mexico would encourage political resistance (Ahmed, 2017c). Officials in Pena Nieto's government warned their counterparts at the White House that "Trump's offensive behavior heightened the prospect of a hostile new government – a national security threat just across the border" (Anderson, 2018). The Mexican government warned Trump that if he continued to degrade the Mexican people and did not modulate his behavior, the next presidential election (2018), would see a referendum on which candidate was most anti-American. In April 2017, U.S. Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly and U.S. Senator John McCain said that if Mexico had voted for a president in 2017, it would have been an anti-Trump candidate which would benefit neither nation (Anderson, 2018). These remarks improved Lopez Obrador's (AMLO) standing, as "every time an American politician opens their mouth to express a negative view about a Mexican candidate, it helps him [AMLO]" (Anderson,

2018). AMLO published a best-selling book soon after Trump's inauguration called "Oye, Trump" (Listen Up, Trump) which contained snippets from speeches. One snippet that caught the Mexican interest read "Trump and his advisers speak of Mexicans the way Hitler and the Nazis referred to the Jews, just before undertaking the infamous persecution and abominable extermination" (quoted in Anderson, 2018).

When the president of the United States of America makes comments that are portrayed as racism, it legitimises fear and hatred (BBC News, 2019). Donald Trump has referred to the Mexican–U.S. border as very dangerous on at least three separate occasions on Twitter. His first post read "We must have Security at our VERY DANGEROUS SOUTHERN BORDER, and we must have a great WALL to help protect us, and to help stop the massive inflow of drugs pouring into our country!", with his other two posts very similar in wording (quoted in Horton, 2018). These statements made by Trump as well statements such as "drug cartels are in total control of the Mexico side of the southern border" legitimizes organized crime and enables drug cartels to believe they have the rule of law (quoted in Horton, 2018). This, in turn, aids the violence as an acceptable form of control because the legitimacy of organized crime has been acknowledged by the U.S. president (Horton, 2018). In discussions with Mexico regarding U.S. military assignments to Baja California to help aid the war on drugs, Trump said that the Mexican military was "afraid" of drug traffickers and that U.S. military would "knock them out" (quoted in Horton, 2018). This was another statement highlighting the power that drug cartels have across the region and legitimizing their bandit authority in the eyes of Mexican civilians.

Trump's initial voter support came via proposed initiatives that would strengthen the rule of law, fortify state institutions and repair communities damaged by crime (Semple, 2016). However, as Trump's campaign evolved, his approach towards the violent over-spill from the northern Mexican territories into the U.S. changed from a proactive military support to a containment approach. This led to Trump's promise of building a wall between Mexico and the United States of America (Acmoody, 2019). He also promised to upend decades-old trade agreements and deport millions of Mexican immigrants back to Mexico. U.S. analysts believed that this approach would increase violence on the Mexican side

of the border as it would destabilize the region and hand power to organized crime. Trump also stated that it would be beneficial for the U.S. to leave the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and decrease foreign aid to Mexico and neighbouring countries. Both statements led to widespread disapproval across Baja California. If the U.S. pulled out of NAFTA causing the maquiladoras to close, the employment rates in Baja California would dramatically decrease causing at best, a local recession. Schneider, Harknett and McLanahan teach that during recessions and times leading up to a recession, domestic violence increases (Schneider, Harknett and McLanahan, 2016).

Large caravans of migrants travel through Central America moving toward the U.S. border seeking a better life. They travel through Mexico and stay in large groups, largely for protection from kidnappers, muggers, and rapists who stalk the camp (Semple, 2018). Trump reduced the number of migrants allowed in the U.S. by preventing any Central or South American migrant caravans from crossing the Mexican border into the United States of America. Trump claimed that the caravans were a national threat and announced plans to send the National Guard to protect the U.S. border. Many of the caravans arrive in Tijuana seeking refuge and transport across the border through freight vehicles (Agren, 2018). With the border closed to migrant caravans, the hundreds, sometimes thousands of migrants were forced to stay and camp in Tijuana in 2017 (Semple, 2018). The citizens of Tijuana had become upset with the growing camps of migrants, especially when the migrants leave the camps and enter the local townships. Confrontations and protests occurred resulting in violence. Migrant caravans are reportedly easy pickings for organized crime with no repercussions if any migrant goes missing or chooses to join a cartel. It is suggested that due to Trump closing the border to migrant caravans and sending Mexicans and Central Americans back to Mexico whilst their asylum is decided, the number of migrants and asylum seekers in major cities on the Mexican–U.S. border has increased dramatically. This increase has led to migrant restlessness and violence. However, Cesar Palenica, director of migrant affairs for the Tijuana municipality, has stated the opposite by saying “I wouldn’t go as far as saying migrants face danger in the city” and highlighting that migrants are completely safe in Tijuana, posing no threat to anyone (quoted in Sheridan and Seiff, 2018).

Summary

The theory of militarisation adopts the military model and gives license for military personal to act as law enforcement. To combat organized crime, the federal government have militarised regions across Mexico since the early 2000s with each region experiencing an increase of homicide rates directly related to military killings during the time of militarisation. The purpose of implementing militarisation on the Baja California Peninsula in April 2017, was to curb the increase of violence experienced in the first four months of the year. With the military trained to kill, research suggests the military tactics and approach to law enforcement is likely to have caused an increase of homicides for the region, contributing to the overall spike experienced during 2017. The empirical data suggests that the militarisation of the BCP helped cause the rate of homicides to increase at a much faster rate than pre-militarisation.

The regional law enforcement officers are under-resourced, lack training and have poor facilities to combat organized crime. Research suggests that because a large proportion of the regional police force was not competent in 2017, they put at risk the lives of the public, colleagues and themselves. They feared the cartels to the point where they participated and put their trust in superstitious rituals. These rituals only highlighted that the police force knew they were under-trained and resourced to combat the threat of the cartels. Due to the state of the police force, independent security firms were contracted as law enforcement. With similar approaches to the military, the security firms had a high kill rate and low incarceration rate, further escalating the homicide rate on the Baja California Peninsula.

Trump's statements in 2017 that the actions of organized crime in Baja California has little or no consequences, was harmful for the relationship between Mexico and the U.S. and demeans the Mexican security forces. However, there is no empirical affiliation standardizing the relationship between an increase in homicides on the Baja California Peninsula and Trump's unorthodox statements. The gathering of migrant travellers in the northern Baja California city Tijuana is causing challenges for the city. Many of the locals are unhappy with the growing populations of migrants and express their feelings through protests which have led

to violence in the past. Although there have been several murders of migrants throughout 2017 on the peninsula, there is little evidence to suggest that migrants are responsible for the spike or even an increase in homicides for 2017.

Chapter 5: Increase in Group Homicides

There has been a reported increase in group targeted homicides on the Baja California Peninsula. The term ‘group’ in relation to this theory refers to freedom of speech workers and women. This chapter will explore whether there is substantial empirical evidence that deaths among either of these groups contributed to the overall spike in homicides for the BCP. An investigation into the death of a freedom of speech workers worldwide indicates that violence and homicide rates increase following the death of a freedom of speech worker (Gohdes & Carey, 2017). This research identifies three homicides and their effect on general homicide rates. Femicides were reported to have increased for 2017, however, with little media coverage and poor reporting, femicides are often overlooked by government agencies.

Violence against Freedom of Speech Workers

The Baja California Peninsula’s homicide rate for 2017 was reportedly affected by the assassinations of freedom of speech workers in the region (Brambila, 2017). Freedom of speech workers include journalists, radio and television presenters, union representatives, civil rights activists, and ombudsmen. The murder rate on the BCP categorizes this region of Mexico as a war zone (Flannery, 2017). In a war zone, when freedom of speech workers are violently targeted, human rights conditions are unlikely to improve, and standard models of human rights diminish. Gohdes and Carey's research in journalism repression has indicated that the murder of a freedom of speech worker is often a precursor to future repression and violence. If the area where a freedom of speech worker is killed is currently experiencing a high level of violence, then this may result in a further escalation of violence in that region. Their research also highlights that the lack of incarceration for the murder of a freedom of speech worker instills the belief that there is no punishment attached to this specific homicide and therefore it is more likely to occur more than once (Gohdes & Carey, 2017). Theoretically, according to Gohdes and Carey’s research, soon after freedom of speech workers have been killed, there should follow a rise in homicide rates. Jose Brambila (2017) explored the social variables in relation to the murders of Mexican journalists. His article suggests that Mexico’s journalists are more likely to be

killed in “subnational polities with high levels of violence, internal conflict and severe violations of human rights” (Brambila, 2017). The Baja California Peninsula certainly qualifies as a subnational polity with high levels of violence and internal conflict. For this reason, in accordance with Brambila, it is intelligible to rationalize that journalists or freedom of speech workers on the BCP could become victims of violence and therefore if this happens, homicide rates may increase.

Case Studies

Maximino Rodriguez Palacios

Laura Calderon’s research found that Mexican journalists are three times more likely to be killed than ordinary citizens (Calderon, Rodriguez Ferreira, & Shirk 2018). The Mexican government does not have state-owned media outlets and theoretically does not control the media content. However, the government does reward outlets that provide favourable coverage with large lucrative advertising contracts and uses similar means to punish or intimidate outlets who do not write favourable content about the government (Ribando Seelke, 2018). It took until the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Irina Bokova condemned the killing of Maximino Rodriguez Palacios in La Paz for the media to bring the attention of the assassination to the public (Guillermoprieto, 2017). Bokova said of the situation

We cannot allow criminals to attack the media for bringing information to the public. I call on the authorities to ensure that this crime is investigated and that its perpetrators are brought to justice in order to protect freedom of expression and freedom of information. (quoted in Coudray, 2017a)

Maximino was a crime reporter for Colectivo Pericu and chased murder stories across the state. He had been warned with threatening comments leading up to his death for his part in investigating homicides across the state throughout the first quarter of 2017. On April 14th, his body was found outside a shopping center after being shot several times (Linthicum, 2017). There had been several attacks on journalists in the state leading up to this homicide however these attacks have

reportedly been by state, municipal and federal police. Reporters present at a fuel price protest said that officials moved aggressively against journalists with other journalists being threatened and detained by police. The CPJ said of the incidents

The Mexican government must ensure that journalists are able to cover protests and other events of significant public interest without fear of being beaten or harassed by police. Authorities should investigate the attacks against reporters and bring those responsible to justice (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2017).

On the same day as Maximino's death, a journalist and blog writer for the police was assassinated. Very little is reported of his death, but it is implied that he was killed by drug cartels (Borderland Beat, 2017j).

Luciano Rivera (CNR TV)

Four months after denouncing the killing of Maximino, Bokova again denounced the murder of another freedom of speech worker. Luciano Rivera Salgado was a journalist and television presenter for CNR TV (Courdray, 2017b). He was shot and killed in Playas de Rosarito whilst celebrating his birthday. The President of the Associations of Journalists of Tijuana, Bibi Butierrez, expressed her condolences and said of the situation

We demand justice and for the criminality that suffocates Baja California to be stopped. On behalf of the Association of Journalists of Tijuana that I preside, I call on Governor Francisco Vega, Secretary of State Security, Daniel De la Rosa, and the prosecutor, Perla Ibarra, to clarify this cowardly murder and arrest those responsible. (quoted in Telesur, 2017)

Silvestre de la Toba Camacho

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) condemned the killing of Silvestre de la Toba Camacho who, at the time of his assassination was the president of the State Human Rights Commission of Baja California Sur (IACHR, 2017). IACHR called for the Mexican government to act with due diligence to ensure a thorough investigation was implemented so those responsible were punished. At the time of the murder, the president of IACHR, Francisco Eguiguren said

This situation is extremely troubling to the IACHR. Human right defenders play an essential role in the promotion, respect, and protection of human rights and States have an obligation to prevent any attempt on their lives and their physical integrity and to ensure that the appropriate conditions are in place so that they can carry out their legitimate activities in defense of human rights without fear of reprisals, and free from any restriction. Considering this situation, it is urgent for the Mexican State to adopt all measures within its power so that this killing does not go unpunished. (quoted in IACHR, 2017)

In November 2017, Silvestre had been traveling in a car with his wife and two children when gunmen fired at the car killing him and his son, with his wife and daughter left seriously injured (BBC News, 2017). A human rights ombudsman is a post that was created in 1992 in a bid to improve safeguards and rights for Mexican Citizens. This was the first documented assassination of a human rights ombudsman in Mexican history (BBC News, 2017).

In accordance with Gohdes and Carey's research, the homicide rate should have increased after the murder of a freedom of speech worker courtesy of an increase of repression and violence. To calculate if there was an increase in violence and repression relating to homicide rates post the death of a freedom of speech worker in 2017, the homicide rate for the month the freedom of speech worker was killed has been compared to the subsequent month. There was a 51.3% increase of homicides from April (when Maximino died) to May. The time frame of Maximino's death coincides with the militarisation of the state which is also considered a potential contributor for the spike in homicide rates and violence. However, the militarisation of the Baja California Peninsula does not dismiss the possibility of Maximino's death generating a degree of repression and violence to cause an increase in homicide rates. It does give premise that there may be other contributing factors other than the death of one freedom of speech worker to such a high increase of homicides as seen post-April 2017.

Alternatively, there is also room for argument that having these two events coincide at roughly the same time the year, there may have been a casual route for such a high spike in homicide rates post April 2017. The death of Luciano was in August, with September showing a 28.2% increase of homicides in August which again aligns with Gohdes and Carey's theory however from November (when

Silvestre died) to December, there was a 20% decrease in homicide rates. Neither the increase or decrease gives substantial evidence that the theory is correct or incorrect, nor does this writing attempt to prove so, however it does indicate that an increase in homicide rates may have occurred on the Baja California Peninsula due to the deaths of these freedom of speech workers. However, without adequate evidence, it would be difficult to substantiate the claim that the deaths of freedom of speech workers have resulted in a spike of homicide rates.

Femicides

An increase to group homicides on the Baja California Peninsula directly relating to a spike in homicides stems from whether the investigation into femicides can support such theory. This section of the theory will explore whether femicides empirically contributed to the spike in homicides on the BCP. Reports released from San Diego University, Justice in Mexico and the Wilson Center all highlight the increase in femicides nationwide and on the BCP, initiating the discussion and research into the possible relationship between femicides and the spike in homicide rates.

The term femicide is understood to be the intentional killing of a woman or girl because of their gender (Garcia-Moreno, Guedes, & Knerr, 2012). The UN Secretary-General has called it “the most violent manifestation of discrimination against women and the inequality” (quoted in Advocates for Human Rights, 2019). Typically, femicides worldwide are perpetrated by men who are committed partners or ex-partners and involve ongoing abuse in the home with constant threats, intimidation, and sexual violence (Garcia-Moreno, Guedes, & Knerr, 2012). The Mexican Federal Criminal Code considers femicide as

any sign of sexual violence; degrading injuries or mutilations; acts of necrophilia; a history of family, work or school violence; if there were threats, harassment or injury prior to the murder; if the victim was held incommunicado before the deprivation of life; and if the body of the victim is exposed or displayed in a public place. (quoted in Paez, 2017)

Analysis deficiency

In accordance with the Federal Criminal Code's definition of femicide, in 2013, the state of Baja California ranked last with the fewest number of femicides in a state comparative review across Mexico (Paez, 2017). By 2017, Baja California was ranked second only to Puebla for femicides in a state. This remarkable rise in femicides in Baja California is reportedly due to the increase of women being killed throughout 2017 in Tijuana (Paez, 2017). However, during 2017, Mexico experienced a 15.68% increase on 2016 and a 72% increase on 2015 for femicides nationwide which may contribute to the rise of femicides in Baja California (Woody, 2018b). Research conducted by Dr. Lettieri (2017) of the University of San Diego found that an upward trend through 2017 of femicides on the Baja California Peninsula was largely driven by criminal violence, specifically in Tijuana (Lettieri, 2017). The highest rate of femicides in Baja California's history was recorded from August - October 2017 with 118 cases during this time period. The reported reasons for these 118 cases are defined as 35% unclear, 13.5% execution, and roughly 10% for each of the categories of kidnapping, narco, assassination, domestic violence and other (Lettieri, 2017). Under these categorizations of femicides, almost all of them fit under the category of organized crime, with the exception of domestic violence (Lettieri, 2017). The disappearing and killing of women on the BCP have been notably reported since 2012. In 2013, authorities in Baja California repeatedly responded in similar fashion regarding the disappearances and murders of women in the state. The officials always attested that the homicide cases related to prostitution, runaways and drug-trafficking (Mennem, 2013). By 2017, officials had begun reporting femicides with more accuracy, however, the statistics relating to femicides are unreliable as vague descriptions of defining a femicide and local authority impunity have provided inaccurate recordings of femicides in the region (Sim, 2018). Collecting data on femicides has been difficult, largely due to police and medical data-collection systems used to document homicides not containing the necessary information to report the victim-perpetrator relationship or motives. However, data on the nature and prevalence of femicides on the peninsula is increasing (Garcia-Moreno, Guedes, & Knerr, 2012). The lack of accurate data

before 2017 on femicides on the Baja California Peninsula means it is not possible to make an exact comparison to femicides in previous years. 2017 marked the 10-year anniversary of the General Law on Women's Access to Life of Violence (LGAMVLV) being enacted and it was the five-year anniversary of the Federal Penal Code incorporating the crime of femicide (CNPEVCM, 2017). Both regulations were introduced to modify public policy aimed at guaranteeing a life free from injustice and violence for women and girls. Feminist Sandra De Los Santos writes that law enforcement agencies through the BCP have not adopted the procedures for declaring femicides nor conducting responsible investigations into the disappearing and killing of women. The change in the federal penal code and the LGAMVLV has systemically created an uneven representation of data for femicides across states as training to introduce the changes with municipality police forces yet to be implemented in all the regions. Therefore, some municipalities may be more reliable in statistical record keeping than others regarding femicides (CNPEVCM, 2017). The director of data analysis at Data Civica, Torreblanca said regarding official femicide data

What is considered a femicide differs between states and has changed over time. What authorities considered a femicide in 2015 may not be the same as what they consider a femicide in 2018. This makes it hard to measure how much the phenomenon has evolved using official data. (quoted in Sim, 2018)

The Mexican Commission for Defence and Promotion of Human Rights is a civil, secular and autonomous organization that conducted research into the growing level of femicides in Mexico. Their findings align with Sandra De Los Santos in that

The lack of statistical data and reliable systems of information impede an adequate assessment on the severity of the problem, as the institutions do not generate sufficient data and statistical information. In many cases, data is not disaggregated by sex or type of crime, and there is no existing information over the number of murders, cause of death or progress in the investigations. Moreover, in many cases, the authorities are reluctant to provide their information, even when requested by the mechanisms of transparency and access to information. (quoted in OCNF, 2012)

After undertaking an extensive effort to research femicides on the Baja California Peninsula during 2017, it has become apparent that there is little reported on femicides during this time period. Research from Dr. Lettieri, Mexico's Interior Department and the United Nations Women's Agency draw attention to the increase of femicides for 2017 in Mexico and particularly on the BCP. However, there seems to be few reported cases by the media highlighting this evidence. Maria Rodriguez-Dominguez from the Council of Hemispheric Affairs believes that this is due to a variety of structural aspects that include high levels of impunity and the rationalization and normalization of violence against women (Rodriguez-Dominguez, 2017)). When women have acted in defiance to the current regime and revolted through protests and vandalism (throwing pink glitter onto government buildings and spray-painting monuments) the media has decided to focus on the negative aspects of vandalism rather than on the message of the protest (Tembe, 2019). Mainstream media that covered the protests routinely silenced the demands of the women whilst vilifying the feminist movement as well as holding women responsible for all physical attacks against journalists (NACLA, 2019). A newly formed collective, Mujeres+Mujeres, write extensively regarding the media crisis surrounding femicides and the lack of coverage of sexual assault. They state that the "media have a clear responsibility to help break the normalization and silence that surrounds conditions of violence women face in our country" and believe this is not currently happening (Mujeres+Mujeres, 2019). A spokesperson from the organization addressed the systemic issues of patriarchy by saying "What's important is that there is systematic abuse of women in this country from economic to physical as well as many other types of violence, and these don't get coverage, they don't get a voice" (quoted in NACLA, 2019). This sparked a response The World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) who built on Mujeres+Mujeres' comments by saying

Media reporting on violence against women carries an extra responsibility [...] anything short of breaking through the silence that often surrounds the criminal acts of rape, assault and femicide supports a status quo that minimises and excuses the impact of violence, and endangers women everywhere. (quoted in WACC, 2016)

One of the solutions provided to the government by these organizations is to investigate and cover the issue of femicides by having the media report on all types of violence against women (Mujeres+Mujeres, 2019). With few examples of femicides across the Baja California Peninsula in the media, yet the official data stating there were breaking records for femicides from the months of September – December, it would indicate that the media are not reporting on the incidents relating to femicides that are occurring. A research librarian at New Mexico State University argues that the coverage of femicides and the push for media to cover them is simply a ploy to distract the public from the real problems across Mexico (Driver, 2015). Another possibility is that the official data is incorrect for the BCP and the media are covering the femicides but there are simply not many femicides rather women being killed due to narco relations (Olsson, 2017).

Deaths of Women and Girls

A report in December 2017, from Mexico’s Interior Department, National Women’s Institute, and the United Nations Women’s Agency, stated that “violence against women and girls... is perpetrated, in most cases, to conserve and reproduce the submission and subordination of them derived from relationships of power” (quoted in Orsi, 2017). The study noted that in Baja California, there had been an increase over several years of women being killed outside of the home “which probably is related to the increase in organized crime activities” (quoted in Orsi, 2017). The report also highlights that the increase of femicides in public areas constitutes an extremely important finding and explains a good part of the recent total growth of femicides. This finding indicates that organized crime-related femicides are increasing and sexual violence involving partners and x-partners are not represented as prominently as in previous years. The report recommends the strengthening of public policies to achieve greater empowerment and economic autonomy for women, eventuating in a reduction of violence and femicides (Orsi, 2017). The report fails to stipulate the empirical data behind the findings of increased homicides or give examples of femicides on the Baja California Peninsula.

The two femicide incidents most covered by the media on the Baja California Peninsula for 2017 was that of two women who were mutilated and

found near the U.S. border and the death of Alma Gonzalez. In mid-January, two women were found on in Real Del Mar, Tijuana Borderland Beat, 2017k). Their bodies were mutilated and left in the cold frosty morning. They were reportedly beaten and executed before being left on the side of the road. The brutality of these killing has led those writing for Zeta and Frontera to state that it must be the work of the notoriously violent drug cartels who are swarming the streets with new traffickers and subsequent increased violence (Borderland Beat, 2017k).

In July 2017, Doctor Alma Angelica Ciani Gonzalez was working in her office when a male subject walked into her office and shot her three times in the chest (El Debate, 2017). The murder of Gonzalez was a case of mistaken identity. She was killed because she was a woman and the intended target, Maria Isabel Gonzalez, a psychologist on one floor below, had little in common with Alma other than they both worked in the same building and shared the same gender. Maria had received a phone call earlier in the day of the shooting from a man posing as a patient who asked for an appointment. The man did not arrive for his appointment but instead went to the office of Alma, a floor upstairs and killed her (NBC, 2017).

The drug cartels have reportedly been the perpetrators for the increase in femicides and missing women (Menjivar and Walsh, 2017). However, there have been hundreds of cases in 2017 where the military and local police have been accused of disappearing individuals across the Baja California Peninsula. In 2017, 95 cases of local authorities kidnapping and killing women were documented and delivered to the International Criminal Court. The victim's families in Baja California provided the evidence and made a plea to the court for an investigation to be carried out. Rarely are these cases taken seriously by Mexican authorities unless the media or politicians become heavily involved (Ahmed, 2017b).

Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is the number one cause for femicides in Mexico (Olsson, 2017). Fighting impunity and patriarchal violence is the task facing women on the Baja California Peninsula. Sexual violence without killing the victim is not classed as femicide, however, women fall victim to sexual violence which leads to femicides. The inability to speak out against such violence often results in death

(Olsson, 2017). Many of these women disappear through trafficking, rape, kidnapping and are often never found with the authorities attributing this to the drug cartels. The drug war offers the local government with an explanation for rising acts of sexual violence and why policy initiatives fail to reduce the number of femicides. However, with only 8% of femicides punished, the judicial system is also seen as responsible for the rising femicide rate (Lettieri, 2017). The Gender Violence Alert Mechanism (AVGM) allows local citizens in high violence constituencies to declare a 'gender alert' which obliges local officials to end violence and increase awareness regarding femicides. This process has been politicized yet found wanting in Tijuana as the femicide rate continued to increase throughout 2017, despite the increase of gender alert declarations made to the local officials by concerned constituents (Lettieri, 2017). The inability of the local authorities to offer mobilized efforts against sexual violence has resulted in more women being killed at the hand of their perpetrators with no recompense for their actions.

For families still waiting to hear about disappeared loved ones 10,500 fragments, weighing 100 kilograms was found in Baja California on the site where El Pozolero dissolved 300 bodies in acid in 2011 (Ayala, 2017). A large portion of the people missing are women and with the genetic samples taken from the fragments, the Baja California and federal authorities will attempt to identify the remains and correctly inform family members of the outcome. The news may provide families with a sense of closure (Ayala, 2017).

Summary

Group homicides include freedom of speech workers and femicides. Both groups were researched for empirical evidence to investigate if group homicides had been significant in the spike in homicides on the Baja California Peninsula. With neither group providing substantial empirical evidence to confirm the theory as correct, the group theory cannot be validated. However, there is enough information from both groups to justify that the deaths of freedom of speech workers and femicides have contributed to an increase of homicides, but not necessarily the spike of homicides on the Baja California Peninsula.

Freedom of Speech workers are a target on the Baja California Peninsula and those from the case studies provided, were killed because of their work. Reports indicate worldwide that after the murder of a freedom of speech worker, violence and homicide rates increase. For two of the three case studies, this was true, however, with other events unfolding at the same time (such as militarisation), it is reasonable to conclude that the homicide rates were not unilaterally affected by just the death of freedom of speech workers. The two cases of femicides on the peninsula were the most covered femicide stories available from the media yet the information about each incident was minimal. They reveal that femicides exist and are poorly covered by the media. Although there is enough evidence to suggest that there was an increase in femicides and sexual violence on the BCP, there is not sufficient data to state that the increase in femicides was directly responsible for the spike in homicides.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This thesis has examined why there was a spike in homicide rates for the Baja California Peninsula in 2017 in relation to three hypotheses. According to the first hypothesis

H₁: Violence initiated by organized crime syndicates on the Baja California Peninsula significantly contributed to the increased homicide rate.

El Chapo and the Sinaloa Cartel had complete control of the Baja California Peninsula's drug trade routes until El Chapo's arrest in 2016. His extradition in 2017 broke down key relationships between cartels and state officials whilst creating an unstable Sinaloa Cartel. The top-down or kingpin method has always led to an increase in homicide rates when implemented throughout Mexico. This method created an internal battle within the Sinaloa cartel creating two major factions who went to war with each other. The two factions killed many of their rival gang members, further adding to the increase of homicide rates. The CJNG witnessed a weakened Sinaloa Cartel and took their opportunity to seize cartel routes through violent means. The war between the two cartels throughout 2017 primarily involved the killing of only cartel members, however, revenge killings of family members of those working for cartels, witnesses of crimes and people caught in cross-fire also contributed to an increase in homicide rates. There is enough evidence to support this hypothesis that violence initiated by organized crime syndicates on the BCP did cause the homicide rate to increase in 2017. The case studies highlight this with some researchers believing that they are the sole cause for the spike.

The top-down model or kingpin approach has been a strategy used by the Mexican government for over 20 years. There has been limited academic research conducted on the effects of the top-down model on homicide rates across Mexico. The research conducted in this thesis is significant as it indicates that the top-down model, currently in use across Mexico, is contributing to the increased homicide rate on the Baja California Peninsula and across Mexico. After the extradition of El Chapo, the Mexican government sought ways to reduce the increasing homicide rate across the BCP. The findings presented here on the top-

down model give reason that the kingpin approach that was used to capture El Chapo had significant adverse effects in increasing the homicide rates and a policy change or a different approach to the war on drugs may be needed for a reduction of violence between DTO's resulting in lower homicide rates. During AMLO's campaign, his party suggested that a potential solution to the kingpin strategy was to give amnesty to non-violent offenders of drug-crimes and began discussing this option with religious groups, human rights officers and the United Nations. His plans were vague and infuriated those impacted by drug cartel violence (McMichael, 2018). As a potential policy change this seems unlikely due its negative reception. However, with future research on how the top-down model effects homicide rates could rationalise a prospective change in the approach to the war on drugs.

H₂: International, federal, local Government initiatives to decrease homicide rates have instead significantly contributed to the increased homicide rate on the Baja California Peninsula.

The national government responded to the rising homicide rates on the Baja California Peninsula by implementing the militarisation strategy and deploying 1000 soldiers on the peninsula. This strategy had previously been successful in reducing cartel presence across Mexico, but always at the expense of an increase in homicide rates. The military is trained to kill and not enforce law, leading to interactions with cartels as homicide statistics. There was an escalation of homicide rates immediately after the soldiers were deployed and throughout the remainder of 2017, indicating that this initiative further escalated homicide rates. The state law enforcement had received inadequate training and resources to combat organized crime causing police unable to protect civilian life as well as their own. The inability of the police to curb violence resulted in the local government contracting security forces. Like the military, security forces are trained to establish peace through killing rather than incarceration. It is reported that security forces and the poor state enforcement agencies have increased homicide rates giving reason to the hypothesis that local government initiatives escalated homicide rates on the Baja California Peninsula.

The international initiatives by Donald Trump and the U.S. to prevent South and Central American migrants to cross the border into the U.S caused much of Mexico and Baja California's unrest. His insults and negative statements helped legitimize cartel behavior and undermined the efforts by Mexican state and federal security personal. However, there is no official report or evidence indicating that this international initiative further escalated homicide rates on the Baja California Peninsula.

This hypothesis had three elements of research; federal, local, and international government initiatives. Federal and local government initiatives proved to further escalate homicide rates on the Baja California Peninsula in 2017, whereas international initiatives did not. A wider significance found within the literature researched for this thesis is the commonality that the application of the theory of militarisation only increases homicide rates. The accepted stance on militarisation is unanimous in theory but holds little credibility as the analytical analysis that has been conducted in areas of militarisation is scarce, especially in Mexico. This research contains only a small amount of insight into the effects of militarisation on the BCP, but can act as a platform for future research into the effects of militarisation on different states. A recommendation on research for this area of study is to compare the effects on homicide rates that militarisation has had on regions across Mexico. This research could analyse if militarisation has contributed to an increase of homicides comparable to the Baja California. To reduce the need for militarisation, a recommendation, which in-part is being implemented across the Baja California, is the recruitment of more police officers and the necessary up-skill training of current police officers. With greater personal, training, equipment and facilities, there may be little need for militarisation as police officers would have the ability to combat drug trafficking organisations.

H₃: A reported increase in group-targeted homicides significantly contributed to the increased homicide rate on the Baja California Peninsula.

Research into the deaths of freedom of speech workers has identified that when a freedom of speech worker is killed, especially in a volatile area of the world, then more violence and killing follows. The three case studies highlight

that there is an issue for Mexico and the Baja California Peninsula with violence against freedom of speech workers, but it does not provide any clear data suggesting that there was an increase of homicides directly related to these killings. There is plausible reasoning that the deaths of these workers did contribute to the increase in homicides but no evidence there was subsequent violence or homicides on the peninsula because of their deaths. Femicides across the region were believed to have experienced an all-time high in 2017 but few case studies have been provided as the media reported on limited femicides in 2017. With poor data collection by the state police, local government agencies, and hospitals, a comparative analysis was unable to occur. The research on femicides indicated that there is a need for the federal government to create a universal definition and tracking requirement for femicides across the country. The official definition and recording of femicides differs between states causing unreliable data collection. A nationwide movement to educate the responsible agencies for tracking femicides would increase the capacity for effective research on femicides. In turn this could help shape policy and focus initiatives in areas where femicides are of greatest concern. The literature and research on femicides in Mexico is limited which is perhaps due to the poor analytical analysis available. The literature speaks little about the missing women of the maquiladoras over the past five years, which is a current gap in the literature. Future research could investigate the disappearances of these women and examine if these disappearances are contributing to the increased homicide rate, or if the disappearances are ever recorded for data collection purposes. This thesis will hopefully contribute to the literature on femicides in Mexico by encouraging others to investigate, analyse and present their findings on femicides in Mexico in the near future.

There was no clear data that related the deaths of freedom of speech workers to an increase in homicide rates on the Baja California Peninsula. There was also no comparative analysis presented on femicides due to limited data collection and availability. Therefore, the research has indicated that group-targeted homicides has not significantly contributed to the spike in homicides on the Baja California Peninsula.

This thesis concludes that the rise in homicide rates by 85.6% in 2017, an increase on national homicide rate averages by 179% and a total of 325% difference from the national average rate may largely have been attributed to organized crime. The spike of homicides was driven by organized crime, the top-down model approach, federal and state initiatives, the increase in femicides and the deaths of freedom of speech workers. Organized crime and cartel warfare are constant through each hypothesis and the spike in homicides is often attributed to solely the cartels. The research presented here suggests that there is no single reason for the spike in homicides, but a culmination of the above areas all contributing to an increase. If further research was to be undertaken on this topic in the future, then conducting interviews with current or former government officials, police officers, or the military in the Baja California Peninsula might provide a valuable additional source of data.

International initiatives may have contributed to the spike, but with no clear empirical data or reasoning to support this theory then it is difficult to sustain. This research hopes to have contributed to the analysis of the spike of homicide rates on the Baja California Peninsula in 2017 and presents the findings and analysis of three hypotheses as a contribution to the literature on this topic. There may be other reasons behind the spike in homicides on the Baja California Peninsula in 2017, however, after conducting an extensive investigation, these are the findings of this thesis. Although violence has been a notable feature in the history of Mexico, for a long time the Baja California Peninsula was an exception which remained relatively calm and quiet. Hopefully, the recent dramatic surge in violence will soon subside so that Baja can return to its former, more peaceful status.

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