

# **Hot Lands: The Rise of Civilian Militias**

by

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*Para mi familia.*

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

- AFO** Arellano Felix Organization
- ALP** Afghan Local Police
- ATCC** Peasant Workers Association
- ATF** Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
- AUC** Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia
- BLO** Beltrán Leyva Organization
- BPP** Black Panther Party
- CDF** Civil Defense Force
- CFO** Carillo Fuentes Organization
- CJNG** Cartel Jalisco-New Generation
- CNDH** National Commission on Human Rights
- COINTELPRO** Counter Intelligence Program
- CORE** The Congress of Racial Equality
- DTOs** Drug Trafficking Organizations
- FBI** Federal Bureau of Investigation
- FSLN** Sandinista National Liberation Front
- GAFE** Grupo Aeromvil de Fuerzas Especiales
- GNC** Good Neighbor Councils
- ICC** Interstate Commerce Commission
- INEGI** Instituto Nacional de Estadística Y Geografía
- IRA** Irish Republican Army

**ISIL** Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant  
**KKK** Ku Klux Klan  
**LFM** La Familia Michoacana  
**LTTE** Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam  
**NAACP** National Association for the Advancement of Colored People  
**PIRA** Provisional Irish Republican Army  
**PRD** Party of the Democratic Revolution  
**SEGOB** Secretaría de Gobernación  
**SEDENA** Secretaria de la Defensa Nacional  
**SESNSP** Secretariado Ejecutivo del Sistema nacional de Seguridad Pública  
**SNCC** Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee  
**SPLC** Southern Poverty Law Center  
**UCDP** Uppsala Conflict Data Program  
**UKA** United Klans of America

## **ABSTRACT**

Why do civilians form militias? Militias emerge not when there is a lack of state security but instead when competing violence specialists behave as predatory actors. I argue that varying time horizons create the conditions for militias. I examine political reforms that have heterogeneous effects, lowering horizons for specialists and raising them for civilians. A high discount rate pushes violence specialists towards destructive violence. Having two options of violence — productive and destructive violence — specialists weigh the cost and benefits of each. The cost of productive violence is incurred up front while the cost of destructive violence occurs later, leading specialists to opt for destruction when they are experiencing a falling discount factor. However, discounting the future is self-defeating as it sets the conditions for militias. Some civilians will flee while others collaborate, but those with low discount factors will form protective militias. For civilian militias, political reforms lowers their discount rate and increases the extent to which they value the future relative to the present. Civilian militias with a low discount rate will have an interest in securing their future with arms. With the help of subnational and archival research, I show that militia onset is more likely in response to predatory actors. I test the theory using two case studies: the autodefensas in Mexico and the Deacons for Defense and Justice in the United States.

# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

*Tierra Caliente* (Hot Land) is a low-elevated region located within three different states: Michoacán, Guerrero, and Mexico state. It is a long and arid valley surrounded by rugged mountain ranges that provide cover for the mass production of opium, heroin, and methamphetamine (Manzo 2017). It was there in 2013 in the fertile soil of *Tierra Caliente* that armed citizens emerged against the cult-like Knights Templar cartel. Besides producing tons of US-bound meth, the organization fed off the local population through kidnapping, extorting, and expropriating from subjects. The Templars seized key parts of the legal economy, including much of the state's logging and mining industries. They expanded their reach into everyday life, adjudicating local disputes and punishing offenders publicly (Devereaux 2016).

The Templars took whatever they wanted, when they wanted. They dictated whom cattle and lumber producers could sell their stock to and insisted on a 10% cut (Manzo 2017). Lime pickers, tortilla vendors and everyone else paid a fee to the cartel. Homeowners paid 1,000 pesos, or about \$80, per square yard (Wilkinson 2013). Not only did they shake down low-wage lime pickers, who make up much of the workers in the region, they also undertook a price-fixing campaign, placing limits on how many times a week businesses could cut limes (Devereaux 2016). Farmers who could not wait for the best prices sold their fruit in secret, at considerable personal risk (Tuckman 2012). Taxi drivers paid a monthly cut to the narcos and acted as spies, as are employees at convenience stores on the outskirts of towns. Avocado growers paid a yearly fee per hectare, truck drivers fork out protection money, slot machines carry a sticker verifying that their owners are doing the same, and petrol stations are forced to buy stolen oil. Women and girls were routinely kidnapped by the organization and raped only to resurface pregnant months later (Althaus and Dudley 2014). Mayors had to pay 10% of their municipal budget to the Templarios as protection money (ibid). When that was not enough, the Knights Templar seized property and businesses such as avocado orchards and mines without to no compensation.

The autodefensas were born of bullets hitting bones. On February 24, 2013, Hipólito Mora, a lime grower in the town of La Ruana, called for a town meeting at 10am (Devereaux 2016). At the meeting he made his case for the formation of a militia. Asking the crowd what they should do in the face of Templar violence. For Mora the answer was clear: fight. He managed to convince about 250 people to join him (ibid). They set off with whatever they had to fight the Templar's: decades old home made shotguns and bird hunting rifles but also AR-15s and AK-47s (Archibold and Villegas 2014). They marched to Templar owned and stolen properties. When they arrived they found the properties abandoned; the Templars had been tipped off. They plundered their newly conquered territory, finding weapons and luxury cars for their nascent movement. Hours later in the near by town of Tepalcatepec, Jose Manuel Mireles, a doctor, called for arms.

Mexico is not the only place where predatory actors led to the emergence of civilian militias. In the United States, little changed in the Deep South after the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The Ku Klux Klan by this point was a well-organized and well-disciplined group capable of carrying out terrorist tactics in a guerrilla war to maintain white caste privilege (Fairclough 2008). The Klan, with the complicity of state and local law enforcement agencies, governed the South on all matters of race. They could mobilize supporters, carry out boycotts, intimidate local officials, bomb houses and businesses, and kill those who opposed them (Cunningham 2014). The federal government, meanwhile, failed to enforce the Civil Rights Act or basic constitutional rights and liberties. Deep South states ignored federal authority. Civil rights activists were often beaten and illegally imprisoned. It was in this time where passive resistance to white violence and intimidation would no longer hold. Some black activists had seen enough of national organizations conducting a pacifist and legal campaign founded on non-violence against a violent organization bent on maintaining white supremacy.

A militia group formed as a clandestine organization in the summer of 1964 in Jonesboro, Louisiana. Their objective was to protect civil rights activists and black communities from Klan and other racist violence. It wasn't until February 1965 that the group emerged from the shadows and formally assumed the name "Deacons for Defense and Justice" (Hill 2004). The Deacons armed with shotguns, handguns, and rifles guarded marches, patrolled their community, engaged in shoot outs, and resisted local police.

During war and crises, civilians encounter and interact with a wide range of organizations from rebel groups to state repressive agents, mafia syndicates to Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs). Civilians navigate a labyrinth of state and non-state actors where formal institutions may or may not be present. At times they are at the mercy of armed actors seeking to alter their behavior through coercive or brute violence (Kalyvas 2006,

Lyall 2009, Zhukov 2014). Yet they are not simply pawns. Rather, civilians have agency: they can provide or deny information to combatants (Condra and Shapiro 2012), shift their attitudes and perceptions (Lyall, Blair, and Imai 2013), and form non-violent community organizations during conflicts (Arjona 2016; Kaplan 2017). While scholarly attention has turned towards civilian agency over the past decade, we still know little about why and how civilians band together to form armed groups, transforming from a community of civilians into a non-state armed actor.

Why did communities in Mexico and United States form militias while other communities did not? What is the relationship between militias and the state? And more broadly, how does this relationship challenge state sovereignty? The answer may seem obvious: Militias form when there is no security. They do emerge in part to correct the lack of security in their villages, towns, or cities. Yet this answer is insufficient. Lack of state security has dominated most of the discussion on why civilians form militias (Abrahams 1998, Barter 2012, Baker 2007, Goldstein 2012, Huggins 1991). Yet not all communities living in the absence of state security take up arms. Through the very process of taking up arms, members and their communities may face higher levels of violence as hostile non-state armed groups, state repressive agents, or both, target them. For example, Clayton and Thomson (2014) find that terrorist attacks and targeting of civilians in the Al-Anbar province of Iraq increased after the Sunni Awakening and the formation of the Sons of Iraq in 2006. The short spike in violence was an attempt by insurgents to deter future defections to the militia and re-establish control over contested areas (*ibid*). Civilian militias also have unintended consequences. They have a tendency to prey on the community they were established to protect (Schubert 2015). La Familia in Michoacán, a Mexican drug cartel, illustrates this process. Established in the 1980s to protect communities from DTOs and other criminal organizations, La Familia itself evolved into a drug cartel that engaged in much of the same behavior it originally sought to prevent (Logan and Sullivan 2009).

Furthermore, state power is less related to civilians taking up arms as it first might seem. The Deacons formed in one of the most powerful countries. In 1965, the year the Deacons formed, the US had a GDP of \$700 billion, compared to the UK, the second largest economy at the time, with \$100 billion. The US at the same time was increasing its military forces in South Vietnam, expanding its bombing campaign with long range B-52 bombers, and giving military aid to the South Vietnamese government. In contrast, by the time the autodefensas had formed in 2013, Mexico was undergoing one of its most devastating conflicts since the 1910 Revolution. More than 150,000 civilians had been killed and about 230,000 people had fled their homes due to drug trafficking related violence (Breslow 2015). Since Mexico launched its campaign against the cartels in 2006,



official figures show, more than 500 troops have been killed (Fisher and McDonnell 2018). Of course, Mexico is not a failed state such as Somalia. The US has given more than \$2 billion in aid under the Merida Initiative which was designed to foster rule of law and a modern police and justice system. In addition, Mexico ranked as the 15th largest economy in the world measured by GDP. Together, these cases point to one of the core insights of this project: the formation of civilian militias points towards a different understanding of state power. Militias formed in one of the most powerful countries and also in one of the most weakened countries. If militias form in powerful and weakened states, is security then unrelated to militia onset?

It seems obvious that the answer is no, however, it raises a second aspect of this study's question: If militias form in strong and weak states than how are we to understand state power? Rather than a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence, I allow for the presence of multiple actors to exercise the use of violence within the defined boundary of a state. Moving from a market characterized by an actor that holds an exclusive right to use, threaten, or authorize physical violence to a market of multiple actors pushes the production of violence from a monopoly into a more competitive market. This brings it close to Tilly's (1978) and Trotsky's (1932) idea of a dual sovereignty and even multi-sovereignty. Rather than a state having a monopoly on violence, multi-states exist within a state without being thought of as a failed state. Scholars point towards geography (Herbst 2000), rough terrain (Fearon and Laitin 2003), poverty (Collier and Hoeffler 2004), and warfare (Besley and Persson 2011, Tilly 1975) as key factors as to why states fail to establish a monopoly on violence. However, fewer studies have examined the modern state from a competitive understanding of the production of violence. What is at stake is control over the means of violence and coercion that are central to the organization of the state itself. I propose that a "Weberian state", where subjects no longer privately exercise organized forms of coercive power, exist only in certain parts of a state's territory. State failure is often viewed as the inability of governments to secure a monopoly of violence, however, the state's unwillingness to effectively apply violence in certain areas under its de jure control is common across states. Society is militarized and has private groups, whether political groups, ethnic groups, rebel organizations, firms, or organized crime, arming and competing with states overtly or covertly.

In the United States, power varied in the South as terrorist groups, local law enforcement, and government officials enforced their own rules. The federal, state, and local government failed Black Americans. In 1965, a year after the landmark Civil Rights Act, little changed in the Deep South. Klan terror had succeeded in preventing any substantial enforcement of the act, resulting in many communities remaining segregated in all public

facilities. One Deacon stated the problem like this “The Klansmen was going around doing a lot of things, and the people weren’t doing a thing about it, they weren’t doing a thing about it. The Klansmen just get out, burn crosses, shoot at people’s house, they bomb people’s houses, and shooting at people’s car. Things like that. And when you tell the police, usually the police is a member of the Klan. They don’t do a thing about it.” (Anonymous The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) members and Deacons interview by anonymous, 1965).

This study — one of the first cross-national comparison of civilian militias outside a civil war — seeks to contribute to several rich literatures across comparative and international politics. First, it speaks to a long tradition of state building and war-making (Tilly 1985). Militias and their members often state their purpose as “bringing the state back in.” Many civilian militias are not motivated by anti-government ideals or by regime change, nor are their actions always directed at the level of the national state (Davis 2009). As one Deacon explained “FBI won’t come here unless they know who they up against, unless they know who the Klan is... and that’s what we want” (Quotation from Anonymous CORE members and Deacons interview by anonymous). However, they undermine the state by stripping it of its authority in order to reestablish state-based ideas of security, law, justice, and/or democracy which they perceive the corrupt or weak state as unable to uphold (Jones 2008). Militias undermine the public provision of security while not directly threatening the state’s political control.

The literature on civil war and civilian resistance (armed and peaceful) provides critical theoretical and methodological foundations for this project but mostly avoids the issue of civilian resistance outside civil war. I develop a theoretical argument that borrows from these approaches but adopt them to study civilian militias. Most studies specifically studying militias do not engage with the question of formation — with the exception of Osorio, Schubiger, and Weintraub (2016) and Phillips (2017) — rather scholars focus on violence (e.g., Stanton 2015), accountability (e.g., Carey, Colaresi, and Mitchell 2015), or recruitment (Forney 2015). There has been work on non-violent civilian resistance in conflict zones (e.g., Arjona 2016 and Kaplan 2017) that seek to understand why and how civilians peacefully resist. I attempt to bridge the two fields of militia and resistance studies to illuminate conflict political orders (e.g. Staniland 2012) and predatory violence (Bates 2001). I also draw on bargaining literature to understand predatory behavior (Axelrod 1984; Axelrod and Keohane 1985; Fearon 1998; Oye 1985; Russett and Lackey 1987). I expand the idea of time horizons to address why armed actors violently appropriate assets of subjects, leading to the emergence of civilian militias. Lastly, the novel quantitative and qualitative data collected for this project is used to test the theory developed here and provides

the background for future research to further understand the many actors involved in the process of state-making.

## 1.1 The Argument

Why do civilians form militias? And why do civilians decide to act as guardians rather than as another roving bandit? Some have suggested crime (Prillaman 2000; Starn 1999), institutions (Arjona 2016; Kaplan 2017; Osorio, Schubiger, and Weintraub 2016), and inequality (Godoy 2006; Phillips 2017) as possible explanations. These studies have contributed to our understanding of militia onset, yet most have not addressed why civilians would rather protect lives and livelihood rather than plunder. To explain both civilian militia onset and why they protect rather than destroy, I point to varying time horizons. Civilians form militias in response to violence specialists experiencing falling time horizons but act as guardians due to their own increasing horizons.

To explain varying horizons I point towards exogenous shocks. I argue that a shock can move a discount factor in different directions for different groups. In this project I focus on post-reform contention shocks. In the case of Mexico I look at the impact of high-value targeting and in the US I examine the effects of the civil rights campaign of 1964. While I limit myself to political reforms there are other more general examples of political and economic shocks that can have heterogeneous effects on discount factors. The key is that discount factors are raised for violence specialists and lowered for civilians. One example is the ending of the hacienda system in Peru. In 1969, General Juan Velasco Alvarado abolished haciendas. The decision increased the discount rate of former landowners and decreased it for ex-serfs. The government fostered a feeling among rural poor of entitlement to prosperity, a place in the nation, and personhood (ibid). At the same time, massive theft followed land reform in the Peruvian countryside. Theft was described as being everywhere. Horses, chickens, and crops were not safe from thieves. In 1976, after a break-in at a schoolhouse in Cuyumalca a militia, the Ronda Campesina, formed that day to patrol the dream of progress that took hold in the Peruvian Andes after land reform.

In Mexico, after democratization the strategy of choice, high value targeting, had different impacts on different drug cartels across the country. It prompted some to extract oil for sale on the blackmarket while others decided to steal from subjects under their control. Decapitation afforded citizens a broader time horizon than cartels since it served as a spark for outraged citizens. In the US, a push for democracy by civil rights activists targeted certain areas of the South more intensely than other parts. In the process, different Klan organizations adopted different tactics to maintain segregation. At the same time, com-

munities impacted by the civil rights' push for desegregation in the South updated their discount rate.

There are two options of violence: productive and destructive violence. Productive violence promotes order while destructive reduces order. When a shock increases a specialist's discount rate, their time horizon will shorten promoting them to turn to destructive violence. When there is no tomorrow, then there is no incentive to behave with restraint (Boix 2015). A specialist discounts any possible future punishment, making the immediate payoffs from destructive violence more enticing. The move away from productive violence triggers the breakdown of order. However, destructive violence is not costless. For specialists, violence used for creation or destruction has the same benefit: additional resources (only distinguished by the amount extracted at a given time). However, each strategy has a different cost attached to it.

The specialist will balance the trade-off between the payoff and cost attached to each path. The cost for productive violence is materials in the form of resources devoted to security, while the cost for destructive violence is a poorer world and more militarized society. The cost of order is incurred up front while the costs of destruction occurs later. When the time horizon is shortened, the trade-off between the cost and benefit shift in favor of accepting a lower future payoff. Working under a constrained time, specialists in violence prioritize the most important goal that can be achieved in the short term and as a result are more likely to accept the trade-off associated with violent expropriation. If time horizons fall, the immediate payoffs from destruction are more attractive and the likelihood of political disorder is higher (Bates, Greif, Singh 2002). However, this is self-defeating. The act of destruction may extend their rule in the short term, allowing them to survive and continue to fight another day, but it comes at a cost.

Predation results in an immediate benefit. However, the payoff from destruction gives way as civilians look for alternatives other than living under the rule of a predatory specialists. A forward-looking specialist would see that a less wealth more militant society outweigh the benefit of destructive violence. Not only are the potential returns smaller (Bates 2001), but they also face the possibility of resistance to their rule by armed civilians. Militias may threaten predatory actors by acting as a new challenger. To prevent destructive violence, civilians shift resources away from production and towards supplying defense against opportunistic actors. For survival and the possibility of reaching their long-term goals, violence specialists risk it all and prioritize the present. In response civilians may strike back to preserve their future.

This is still not enough to explain why militias are not another roving bandit. After all, if there is general uncertainty about the future for all actors involved, everyone should

plunder since there is little concern about present actions. Civilians can join the violence specialist or create their own predatory group. Some civilians in fact form their own predatory group in times of disorder (Baker 2007; Falco 2018; Schubert 2015). Some militias in Mexico have been accused by other militias and the government of being no better than cartels (Felbab-Brown 2016). Luis Antonio Torres Gonzalez, “El Americano”, a leader of the Buenavista autodefensas, is accused of maintaining criminal ties is not unfounded nor specific to him. In a report, citing leaked national security documents, *Exelsior* described Gonzalez’s group as part of a criminal organization seeking control of Michoacán. Gonzalez’s group, known as H3, includes known members of the Templars (Devereaux 2016). H3 took over rival autodefensa territory, manned checkpoints while drunk, and undertook a campaign of robberies, extortions, raids, and arsons. Residents have grown increasingly uneasy with autodefensas, especially with the decision to let alleged low-ranking members of criminal gangs join if they swear allegiance to the self-defense forces and if self-appointed representatives of the town decide to pardon them (ibid)

Yet, some civilians do not act as predators and instead form an armed group to protect against destructive violence. This occurs when their discount factor remains below that of the violence specialist. This points to the idea that discount factors are not constant across actors or even space. Discount factors can vary across specialists and civilians, indicating that exogenous shocks — such as economic and political reforms — that increase a specialist’s factor can at the same time decrease (or have no effect) a civilian’s factor — or at the very least maintain a lower factor than the specialist. If their discount rate did not remain below the specialist’s then civilians might prefer destruction. Civilians with a low discount rate will care about their future and have an interest in securing it. They will invest in obtaining that future with arms and use productive rather than destructive violence.

### **1.1.1 Scope of Study**

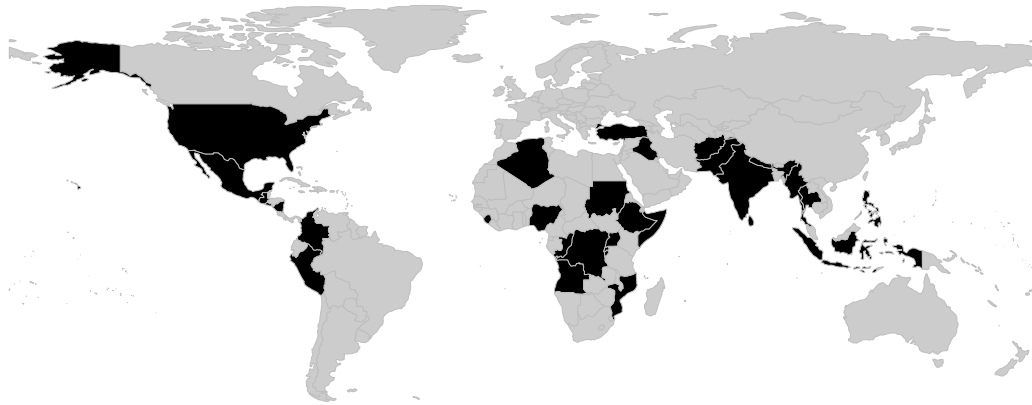
My argument is delimited by the conceptualization of civilian armed resistance and the conditions under which civilians are likely to band together to produce security. To start, I focus on organized and local forms of armed civilian resistance outside civil wars. Organized processes, rather than spontaneous forms of resistance, are the focus of this study since individuals, while having a large range of weapons available (see Scott (1985)), do not themselves keep predatory actors from visiting their community. Local processes are the focus of the study since civilian militias are hyper-localized. They rarely, if ever, advocate for a larger political issue that stretches across a region or country. Even the Deacons, while supporters and protectors of civil rights, did not have a political ideology such as

that of the Black Panthers. Thus, the Deacons in the United States are included, while extralegal lynchings, such as those committed in Guatemala or Bolivia, who share similar characteristics as civilian militias (Godoy 2006), are not. There are some similarities between lynchings and civilian militias, lynchings are spontaneous and informal. This is not to say that they can not be studied — see at Goldstein (2012) — but instead factors that influence mob action and armed policing require a different set of analytical tools.

The study also concentrates primarily on civilian militias that are active and sustained. Militias must engage in sustained activities such as patrolling or setting up road blocks to protect community members. Groups such as the Michigan Militia are not included in this study. The Michigan Militia Corps - Wolverines (MMCW) reached their peak in the mid-1990s in the US within the state of Michigan. It exceeded more than 12,000 members and was active in 70 of the state's 83 counties (Ridley 2015). MMCW and other groups such as the Hutaree, also based in Michigan, are identified by the Southern Poverty Law Center as “Patriot” groups. In 2009, there were more than 120 patriot militia groups across the United States, mostly located in Michigan and Texas (Jacobs 2010). Patriot militias generally define themselves in opposition to the “New World Order,” engage in groundless conspiracy theorizing, or advocate and adhere to extreme anti-government doctrines (Potok 2017). The MMCW and other patriot groups train in armed combat and survival skills under the cover of protecting civilian rights but are actually “heavily armed extremists with a conspiratorial and anti-government mindset looking for potential showdowns with the government” (Lenz 2013). Patriot groups in the US are a reflection of the radical right's obsessive fear that the government is about to move against the American people, seizing their guns and ending liberty (ibid). The analysis in this study cannot be extended to understand the rise of patriot groups in the US.

I focus primarily on violent civilian strategies to deal with armed groups. Much has been written on rebellion (e.g., Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Gurr 1970; Wimmer, Cederman, and Min 2009), but relatively little attention has been paid to civilian resistance that is not a form of rebellion. Yet civilian violent strategies in the form of militias merit attention. First, they are more common than previously conceived. Figure 1.1 shows a map of cross-national civilian militias that emerged inside and outside of conflicts since the year 1965. Instances of civilians engaging in protective organizations can be found in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, North America, and Latin America. Examples include the Rondas Campesinas in Peru, Iraq's Anbar awakening of Sunni tribes, and Civilian Defense Forces in Sierra Leone. In some cases, there are only one or two isolated communities that take up arms, such as the Bakassi Boys in Nigeria who formed in 1998 as a vigilante group, protecting traders in the central market of Aba (Smith 2004).

**Figure 1.1:** Global Map of Civilian Militias, 1965-2015



*Source: The data for the map is from Clayton and Thomas (2016) as well as media sources.*

In other cases, they expand to include large swaths of a country. Starn (1999) documents the Rondas Campesinas of Peru. The group forced the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) rebel group from their communities and were later co-opted by the government. Rondas Campesinas grew to encompass 4,000 localities in the Ayacucho region of Peru (ibid).

I mainly study militias outside the context of civil war. This is not to say that I am studying militias absent any type of conflict. The drug war in Mexico has been one of the most deadly conflicts of the 21st century. In 2017, the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) reported that Mexico was the second deadliest country only trailing behind Syria and surpassing Iraq, Afghanistan, and Yemen, all active war zones (Persio 2017). Even more surprising is that conflict deaths are nearly all attributable to small arms rather than artillery, tanks, or airplanes (ibid).<sup>1</sup> To a much lesser extent, the Klans campaign against integration in 1960s America was a low level guerrilla style war. More than 40 people were killed in the civil rights movement in the South and untold others were assaulted, threatened, and tortured (Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) 2014). Some caution is required when transporting findings from one type of conflict to another. As Lessing (2018) points out, it is misleading to label the drug war in Mexico as a “criminal insurgency” since it leaves unexamined crucial differences in battle aims and function of violence. However,

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<sup>1</sup>The Mexican government disputes this, pointing out that the country has a lower homicide rate than other Latin American countries such as Brazil, Venezuela, and Honduras (Agren 2017).

the theory developed here may be able to speak to conflict zones such as civil wars when violence specialists turn to predatory tactics. This is common in civil war such as in Peru. There, Shining Path mistreated civilians in the Upper Huallaga Valley, stealing, raping, and killing almost at will (Weinstein 2006). During this time the Rondas Campesinas formed to protect villagers.

Lastly, the main interest is understanding why civilians form militias to protect themselves. Civilians, however, both inside and outside civil wars can engage in non-violent forms of resistance. This can include civilian councils set up to protect and bargain with armed groups, such as the Peasant Workers Association (ATCC) that formed in Colombia to defend and advocate for the rights of villagers (Kalpan 2017). It can also include activities that are not tied to any forms of resistance. Community participation can include attempts to improve governance, economic development, empowerment within the community, and increase sense of identity and belonging. It can even include individual forms of everyday resistance such as foot dragging, taking a longer than expected break at work, or laziness (Scott 1985). Non-violent resistance, given the right conditions and preferences of the armed group, can lead to a reduction of violence (Arjona 2016) yet it remains an open question if non-violent community participation can obtain peace. The theory developed here is not meant to explain why civilians engage in non-violent forms of resistance, though they may coincide.

## **1.2 Case Selection**

The scope of this project addressed above shows that it is not a rare phenomenon but it is also not a common one either. Most of the time, civilians do not resist armed actors. Of those that violently resist, why select the autodefensas in Mexico and the Deacons in the United States? I outline reasons for selecting both cases below as well as potential issues.

Mexico is a leading regional power in Latin America, democratic, and has a large open economy, making the rise of civilian militias in Mexico important in its own right. In addition, Mexico highlights in sharp contrast the challenges facing state in the 21st century. The Western ideal of a nation-state is increasingly under attack from the proliferation of non-state actors. Private actors undermine the public provision of security while not directly threatening the state's political control (Davis 2009). Mexico provides an opportunity to view this phenomenon as it emerged and progressed. Second, autodefensas can be thought of as a typical case. Analyzing typical cases enables researchers to explore the causal mechanisms at work in a general, cross-case relationship (Seawright and Gerring 2008). Validating the stipulated causal mechanisms within the Mexican case through pat-



tern matching investigation will generalize to a larger population of civilian militias. Third, autodefensas have been extensively covered both in American and Mexican media sources. The extensive coverage makes it easier to access information about the causal mechanisms of militia formation.<sup>2</sup>

This study continues scholarship studying the US from a conflict process perspective (Bueno De Mesquita 2005; Davenport 2010; Olzak 1992; Morrow 2014) while pulling it towards a growing body of subnational work. As discussed above, the Southern region of the US in the 1960s was in a state of low level guerrilla war and as been defined as a subnational authoritarian state (Mickey 2015). It certainly does not meet the death threshold of 25 battle-related deaths per year according to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program/International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (UCDP/PRIO) definition of a civil war (Gleditsch et al. 2002). However, scholars that have studied the South during the civil rights era characterize this time as an insurgency (Nelson 2016). It is not inaccurate. The Klan used many of the same tactics of an insurgency: blending into the population, carrying hit and run attacks, administering punishment for perceived “wrongs”, and killing opponents, all for the achievement of ideological goals. This is a rich period of American history that can benefit from theories and tools developed by conflict scholars over the past few decades. As intriguing as considering the Klan as a form of insurgency is, the organization at the center of this study are the Deacons for Defense and Justice. The Deacons were not the first Black Americans to resist racism— there is a long history of such resistance from slavery to the present day— but they were one of the first in the civil rights era to organize a sustain effort to resist the Klan. The group was a precursor to the well known and reported Black Panther Party. The Deacons’ role and achievements in the civil rights movement have mostly been forgotten (there are a few academic articles and one book that focuses on the Deacons such as Umoja (2013) and Hill (2004). I aim to bring attention to the Deacons and the Klan’s violence but more importantly consider why they formed.

I also want to situate the US and Mexico at the time the Deacons and autodefensas formed. I do this in greater detail in their respective chapters, however, I would like to draw out general similarities and differences between the US and Mexico. It is difficult to know where to start comparing the two countries. They share one of the longest borders in the world, about 2,000 miles and a history of conflict and cooperation. Yet they are also of

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<sup>2</sup>There are possible limitations from relying on media outlets. Newspapers are more likely to cover events that are larger, deadlier, and closer to news agencies (Davenport and Ball 2002). This results in less deadly events such as imprisonment and other forms of non-violent repression receiving less coverage. This limitation can be alleviated in part through the use of different sources, both in terms of location and type, since newspapers, depending on their proximity to the event and political orientation, differ in the use of language (Davenport 2009). Expanding to include newspapers, NGOs, and governments can help triangulate events and the depiction of those events.

different experiences, a separate colonial history and development path. I start nationally and then proceed to compare subnational regions that experienced militias.

In 1965, the US had the largest GDP per capita in the world while in 2013 Mexico had the 84th largest economy (World Bank). In terms of military spending, the US ranked number one in 1965 with \$3,272 per capita of GNP. Mexico in 2013 was spending \$6.6 billion, or 0.5% of its GDP, compared to \$649 billion, or 3.2% of GDP for the US.

Sub-nationally the areas I study are similar. I make a case that the Tierra Caliente region and the rural areas of Louisiana and Mississippi share many qualities: regions of beauty, poverty, and fiercely independent people (Reza 2014). It is these subnational regions I compare.

A culture of self-reliance based on gun ownership characterizes both areas. In the South many rural black Americans owned guns (Hill 2004) while in rural Guerrero and Michoacán citizens maintain arms even though it is illegal in Mexico to carry arms (Manzo 2017). In Guerrero, there is a history of rebellion. It was the setting for some of the first uprisings of the Mexican revolution and home to the country's rural guerrillas of the 1970s (Tuckman 2015). The US Deep South was the site of numerous slave rebellions and civil rights protests attempting to force the US to live up to its own constitution.

Both regions in the US and Mexico have a long history of poverty. In 1960, Mississippi and Louisiana were two of the poorest states, along with much of the South. Mississippi reached a poverty rate of 55% in 1960, one of the highest in the nation (BBC 2012). Guerrero shares a similar story. Guerrero has a poverty rate of 69.7%, the second-highest in Mexico, and Michoacán's poverty rate stands at 54%, the sixth-highest poverty rate in the country (OECD 2013).

Perhaps the most relevant shared quality is limited state reach. Tierra Caliente apart from being isolated is almost inaccessible: in the north it is blocked by the enormous hill of Tanctaro and mountain ranges and ravines that surround it; by the South, the mountains of Coalcomán, Aguililla and Arteaga; by the east the mountain range of Inguarán and by the west the foothills. The inaccessible and remoteness of Tierra Caliente has for centuries pushed it to the periphery of state rule. Well into the twentieth century, the region was characterized as a refuge for all kinds of outlaws evading the state (Manzo 2017). State weakness is not only related to geography but also government policy. The Mexican government decided not to provide the necessary resources to boost state presence in indigenous and rural community. Whether by design or by lack of capacity, those areas have been relegated to socio-economic marginalization and underdevelopment (Felbab-Brown 2016). Laws are not enforced nor internalized and socio-economic survival and advancement are often dependent on participation in illegal economies (ibid). Political caciques,

powerful businessmen, or organized crime enforce their own rules.

The rural US South was also out of the reach of the federal government. For southern whites, “the North” represented an important market for their goods but it also signified a power center that was often outside the control of the region’s politician (Jansson 2014). For Southern African Americans it is a story of abandonment. From the start the US Constitution defined their ancestors as less than fully human. After the civil war, the story of Reconstruction is one of missed opportunity and betrayal. In the twentieth century, their mobilization for basic civil rights and calls for assistance from Washington was answered with ambivalence. Blacks were not the only group with a conflictual/ambivalent relationship with the national government. Native Americans experienced betrayal and repression too, as one treaty after another with the federal government was unilaterally broken. The phantom government was filled in by a combination of authoritarian local governments, vigilante violence, racist institutions, and self-help.

Having laid out the justification for comparing these two cases, I now turn to potential issues of case selection that merit discussion. First, the cases selected, Mexico and the United States, constitute positive cases selected on the dependent variable. A serious challenge. However, while the aggregated country level is a positive case, the disaggregate county level have crucial variation. I have about 6,000 cases, the approximate number of total counties (or municipalities as they are known in Mexico) for both countries. I have even more cases when I conduct a time-series cross-sectional analysis. This across county variation, some positive others negative, are used to support my claims about the effect of predatory violence on civilian resistance. It is possible to include country cases in which civilian militias might have emerged but did not, like those communities under the control of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), but that is a potential extension of the project. For now, the selected cases are a first step in understanding the processes that lead to the formation of civilian militias.<sup>3</sup>

Another issue is that of comparing different periods of time across cases. Conflict studies frequently compare across time periods (e.g., Fearon and Laitin 2003; Reiter and Stam 1998; Lyall and Wilson 2009). This large precedent provides justification for comparing across time. Yet, there are historical differences that should be highlighted. First, it is important to note the difference in technological communication, especially social media. At the time the autodefensas formed in 2013, there were numerous ways for communities to communicate. In addition to the many social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, there were messaging apps like Whatsapp and Signal available to coordinate

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<sup>3</sup>This research strategy, using quantitative analysis to establish internal validity of the argument, builds off the work of Putnam (1993), Wilkinson (2004), and Tsai (2007).

and cooperate. In 2013, 57% of the Mexican population owned a mobile phone (GSMA 2015). Cell phone ownership and coverage is undoubtedly lower in the rural areas of Michoacán and Guerrero but even there autodefensa groups used Twitter to announce their plans to take over towns (McCrummen 2013). This is in contrast with the Deacon's access to communication devices. In the mid-1960s, radios and telephones were the main forms of communication. In FBI reports, agents were extremely interested in learning how the Deacons not only obtain weapons but also radios. Communication is important since it is key to a social movement's expansion (Tilly and Wood 2015). However, much of the planning was done in the same way in both cases, face to face in churches or town squares (Dev-ereaux 2016; Hill 2004). Improved communication is important but it is not the deciding factor of whether militias form.

Second, the drug war created a largely unseen phenomenon: cartel-state conflict (Lessing 2017). This created a unique environment in which the autodefensas took root: high levels of violence and low state authority. Yet, the Deacons' setting, even though not a violent drug war, contained similar elements to a much lesser degree. The Klan set off car bombs, killed civil rights workers and police officers, beat children, women, and men.(Cobb 2015; Cunningham 2016; Hill 2004; Umoja 2013)

There is also the question of comparing cartels and Klans. There are clear differences between Klan organizations and Mexican drug trafficking organizations (DTOs). First, DTOs are primarily an economic organization in the business of selling contraband. They are a global business with forward and backward linkages for managing supply and distribution in many countries (Beittel 2017). DTOs are concerned with bringing their product to market in the most cost effective way to maximize profit. This is in contrast to the Klan, which is a hate group dedicated to white supremacy. The Klan itself does not sell or traffic in any products, however, this should not obscure the fact that there are economic related aspects to the Klan's terror. The level of violence they inflict differs too. Mexican DTOs are responsible for thousands of deaths since 2006 (Breslow 2015). It is estimated that the Klan and other white supremacists killed over 100 individuals (Southern Poverty Law Center 2014). While it is difficult to know how many murders are attributable to the Klan, it is certainly less than the DTOs. Their methods of corruption is also different. Klan's corruption of state institutions resulted more from ideology than the threat of violence, unlike cartels that use bribes and violence. Klan members managed to hold local and state offices, as well as police and sheriff positions. In addition, non-member candidates, at times, endorsed and won under the Klan's goal of white supremacy. Mexican DTOs, obtained political power through "plata o plomo", using violence to lower the price of bribes and forcing political and military actors to choose between a bribe or death (Lessing 2017).

The Klan and cartel differ in terms of motivation, violence action, and corruption. Yet, they are similar in that the Klan and cartel act as “shadow states”. Both organizations control territory, however, they are not attempting to overthrow the government. Instead of controlling the government, like traditional insurgent groups, the Klan and cartel weaken the government through corruption and violence to gain power. None of the organizations are in the business of building schools or maintaining infrastructure but they do place pressure on the government to achieve desired goals. In addition, both organizations replace government power and authority in their areas of influence. In parts of Mexico, cartels established check points at roads leading in and out of towns. Upon entering, cartel members stop and question passengers, particularly young men, looking for rivals and other potential threats. Supplanting the government’s power promotes their control while creating their own type of power. The Klan, like cartels, are not interested in writing laws, but they believe they could make the law (Kryt 2017).

The similarities between the Klan and cartel are even more striking when comparing individual organizations. Regional cartels, such as the Knights Templar, have limited control over drug smuggling routes that pass through their territory, playing a secondary role in the drug trafficking business. High-value targeting prompted the Templars to turn to destructive violence such as kidnapping, extorting, and expropriating from subjects. This is in contrast to national or toll cartels which tend to have a light footprint in the communities in which they operate in terms of regulating daily life.

Similarly, the Klan, especially the White and Original Knights, used destructive violence when needed to survive the civil rights movement. While there is little to no known cases of the Klan extorting or kidnapping for ransom, the Klan did use destructive violence just like the Knights Templars. The Klan used physical violence to deter challenges to the white caste system of the South. It targeted those they perceived as challenging segregation. Violence was meant to eliminate the person challenging their hold on the South but it was also meant as a signal to others as a warning not to oppose segregation. At the time the Klan’s hysteria over the growing momentum of the civil rights movement and potential federal legislation was reaching a panic. All Klan groups aimed to establish white supremacy but it was the White and Original Klans that turned to a sustained campaign of violence, beatings, kidnappings, and bombings after the civil rights movement’s freedom summer of 1964. The Knights Templar and the White Knights are more similar than a first glance would suggest.

Lastly, there is the question of whether the Deacons can be compared to the autodefensas. Mainly, the Deacons formed along racial lines while the autodefensas did not. I argue that they can be compared for the following reasons. First, both militias formed without

state support. The Deacons did not receive any material or financial support from the local, state, or federal government. In fact they were put under surveillance by the FBI under Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) like other black nationalist groups in the 60s. The autodefensas, at first, did not receive any support from the Mexican government. Though there are unconfirmed reports that they received support and arms from drug cartels as a plot to weaken rivals (Devereaux 2016). It is not difficult to see why certain individuals believe that autodefensas are funded by cartels since many have automatic weaponry such as AR-15s and AK-47s, however, they maintain that they seized these weapons from drug cartels. Second, both were inter-county and inter-state organizations. The Deacons operated in three states and about 30 counties at the peak of their power. The autodefensas were in 14 states, of 32 federal entities, and 133 municipalities, of 2,438. Third, none had a strong ideological program. Despite, their name, the Deacons were not a religious organization. The men who joined—all members of the Deacons were men—attended church but their organization had no religious ideology (Hill 2004). The autodefensas also lacked any noticeable ideology, political or religious. The Deacons and autodefensas are different in one aspect: some of the autodefensa groups were co-opted by the state. Under the Mexican government, they were organized into the Rural Defense Corps under the control of the military. However, this does not negate the fact that some autodefensas formed without the help of the state. It was only a year later that the state aided the organization.

### **1.3 Research Design and Methods**

I test the theory developed here, as well as competing theories, with individual, county, and armed group data from Mexico and the United States. Both countries display variation in the factors that, according to the theory, shape whether civilians form militias such as multiple armed organizations that vary in their propensity to act as predatory actors, which allows for the testing of the main argument of this study. In addition, there is wide variation in institutions, historical resistance, crime, ethnicity, geography, economic inequality, and state presence, which allows for the testing of competing theories that scholars have raised over the years.

The research design consists of tests of observable implications of the theory regarding civilian militia formation. I rely on original data that I collected from different sources using different methods, including in-depth case studies, news sources, government databases, human rights reports, and archival research. This project uses both English and Spanish sources. Spanish news sources include *El Universal*, *Milenio*, *Animal Político*, and *Excésior*, while English newspapers include *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Ebony*,

and *Los Angeles Times*. I gather data from various government agencies such as the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), congressional hearing and reports, Instituto Nacional de Estadística Y Geografía (INEGI), Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional (SEDENA), Secretariado Ejecutivo del Sistema nacional de Seguridad Pública (SESNSP), and Secretaría de Gobernación (SEGOB). Human rights organizations include the National Commission on Human Rights (CNDH), CORE, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Lastly, I conducted archival research at the Amistad Research Center in New Orleans. It houses a rich collection of materials related to the Deacons, Klan, and civil rights movement, including recordings of interviews with Deacon and civil rights activists, newspaper articles, government files, and photographs. I also undertook archival research at the Archivo General de la Nación de México (Mexican General Archives) located in Mexico City. The national archives houses a rich source of history on previous forms of civilian resistance, state repression, and the security apparatus. There are also human rights reports undertaken by independent organizations within key states of the autodefensa movement.

The analysis relies on a mix of methodologies, including statistical analysis, causal inference techniques, and content analysis. The main statistical analysis is a cross sectional test, however, I also carry out a time series cross sectional analysis to examine how well the theory developed here explains the expansion of civilian militias. The cross sectional test looks at county level data on state capacity, crime, institutions, inequality, and predatory specialists. The large-N dataset tests the prediction that predatory violence specialists increase the risk of militia onset. Lastly, I use statistical matching techniques to conduct further analysis on a selected group of counties. These cases embody a quasi-experiment since they contain variation in the level of predatory actors but otherwise share similar characteristics. I apply a matching technique to each of the cases enabling a comparison across the county level.

## **1.4 Looking Ahead**

This study is organized as follows. Chapter 2 and 3 present the theory. Chapter 2 introduces the rarely considered concept of civilian militias, defining what it is and what it is not and providing a typology. It anchors the definition of civilian militias within the larger discussion of state-making and competing forms of powers within states, placing militias firmly as an actor within the process of state-building despite its ephemeral nature. Chapter 3 presents the theory of civilian militia formation, focusing on the determinants of variation.

It also discusses current accounts of civilian resistance, identifying how this project builds on them but also how it shifts away.

Chapter 4 and 5 present the results of the statistical tests on the determinants of civilian militias. In addition, both chapters give a brief history of each of the conflicts and key actors. In chapter 4, a broad sketch of the Mexican drug war is provided. It outlines the magnitude of the conflict, different drug cartels, and the autodefensas. Similarly, chapter 5 provides the context of the civil rights era, especially in the Southern United States, discusses the different Klan groups of the period, and gives a sketch of the Deacons. Each chapter analyzes the data with a rare event logit model on both cross sectional and time series cross sectional datasets and runs a robustness test by using matching to preprocess the data into comparable sets.

Chapter 6 concludes by summarizing the argument, findings, and limitations. It also ends by exploring state-making, focusing on competition within the state and the role of militias in this process as one of many actors competing for power. I also consider possible additional cases for future research to expand the theoretical insight of a multi-sovereign state.

Overall, I find that militia onset is a product of the interaction between civilians and violence specialists. Specialists have a choice of how to use violence, either wealth creation or wealth destruction. How specialists decide is based on the extent to which they value the future relative to the present. A specialist with a higher discount rate cares little about the future. Seeking to maintain their rule in the face of uncertainty, they switch to predation. The cost of destructive violence — diminished current and future output as well as unregulated violence — prompts civilians to alter their utility for remaining under their rule. Under predation, civilians view subjection as suboptimal relative to other available alternatives such as collaboration, migration, or resistance. Some civilians will flee while others collaborate, but those with lower discount rates will form protective militias. This logic plays out in the Mexican and US cases studied here.

After 2009, the Mexican government increasingly adopted the strategy of high-value targeting, prompting drug cartels to select other revenue generating actions to sustain their fight against one another and the state. Regional cartels, lacking control over drug trafficking routes, diversified into extorting, kidnapping, and expropriating from subjects to survive. Civilians in turn responded with arms. Decapitation afforded citizens a broader time horizon than cartels since it may have served as a spark for outraged citizens.

The Deacons followed a similar path. After increasing pressure from civil rights groups, Klan groups in Louisiana and Mississippi engaged in more violent acts to uphold the white caste system of the South. Some black Americans did not turn the other cheek. The re-



newed energy of the civil rights movement of 1964 prompted blacks to fight rather than migrate to the North. They picked up whatever arms they had to protect their community.

## CHAPTER 2

# What is a Civilian Militia?

The following chapter investigates why civilians take up arms and form militias. A first step to address this puzzle involves suggesting answers to the following questions. How do we define “civilian militias”, a term that invokes contradictions. What distinguishes militias from other types of non-state armed actors? How do we know we are examining a civilian militia rather than another type of militia? In this chapter, I define the concept of civilian militias.

Given the many different, and at times contradicting, definitions of militias, I proceed carefully to develop a definition by beginning from the top layer (state(-like) order) and moving to the core of my objective (militias). Like an archaeologist in the field, I remove layers that obscure the artifact but like an archaeology, those obscuring layers can reveal information about how militias relate to state-like actors and order. In what follows I layout a framework for understanding militias in the broader discussion of state-building. Next I discuss the different types of violence specialists in order to distinguish militias from other armed actors. After, I move on to defining and setting apart different types of militias. Lastly, I define civilian militias and end with a discussion of the usefulness of the concept and term. The overall framework is one grounded in a multi-state territory in which militias are just one of many.

## 2.1 Definition of a Violence Specialist

Throughout this project I use the term violence specialist to refer to a collective actor that has a comparative advantage in applying force. That is, their cost for applying violence is lower than other actors. There are other specialists in society such as those in production that have a lower cost for their activity.

In addition to having a lower cost for using force, they also are defined by their use or threatened use of force to generate returns. The specialist in violence earns their living from

the use of force, either seizing the wealth of others or collecting taxes from subjects that receive their protection. Unlike specialists in production, violence specialists can employ violence at a lower cost to secure returns in a manner that still makes it profitable to do so. Other scholars such as North, Wallis, Weingast (2012) and Bates (2001) employ the term in a similar manner. The combination of a low cost for applying violence and possible stable returns — at times — leads violence specialist to forgo predation in exchanged for a portion of the income generated by other specialist, an income that is higher than raiding alone (Olson 1993). This is most clearly embodied in the form of a state, yet other violence specialists do the same (Arjona 2016; Kaplan 2017).

There is nothing inherent about an actor having a comparative advantage in using violence, the cost for becoming a violence specialist is not insurmountable. Mexican drug cartels were once smugglers that crossed the border with little coercive capability. Even after organizing into large national enterprises, they mostly were dependent on the Mexican state to act as their enforcers (Grillo 2012). It wasn't until they entered the cocaine market that they were able to compete with the Mexican state as a local and at times national violence specialists, employing their own soldiers and/or contracting with Mexican security forces to act as their personal army (ibid).

Violence specialists can live in close geographical proximity to each other. They can be local, regional, and even national actors. For example, the Klan was an organization that spanned across the country at the height of its power in the 1920s. Yet, they shared their territory with local, state, and federal government security forces.

There are many types of armed groups but not all are violence specialists. The above definition separates armed actors into those that are considered violence specialists and those that are not. The state, in all its repressive forms, is the most obvious and dominant violence specialist, meeting the two criteria of comparative advantage and generation of returns from using their advantage. However, it also includes other armed actors such as rebel groups, organized crime, organized gangs (street and prison), and private security firms. All these groups share the quality of having a comparative advantage relative to other societal actors and benefitting from having that quality. I exclude those groups that use violence but do not have a comparative advantage. These can include groups such as mobs, street crime rings, taggers, and youth gangs.

## **2.2 Multi-sovereignty: A Framework for the Study of Militias**

The study of militias is a recent development. Militias of all kinds have been largely overshadowed by the study of rebel groups. There has been a burst of activity surrounding rebels that pushed away from a unitary actor understanding and towards a more fluid concept of rebelling organizations. The same can not be said for studies of militias. There is a theoretical and conceptional dearth that has resulted in some scholars conflating types of militias under a single monolithic banner. I aim to address the similarities, differences, and possible links between militia types. This lines up the theoretical discussion that takes place in Chapter 3 and tests in Chapter 4 and 5. In the process, placing civilian militias in the broader discussion of conflict studies.

In seeking to explain the emergence of civilian militias, I approach militias as suppliers of protection. Militias exist along side other specialists, including the state, in a competitive multi-sovereign space. They represent a transition by civilians from consumers to producers of security, thereby becoming competitors to both the state and other specialists.

I depart from previous research by moving the level of aggregation from the national to the subnational level, bring it closer to Tilly's (1978) and Trotsky's (1932) idea of a dual sovereignty and even multi-sovereignty. According to Tilly, dual sovereignty is a condition marked by "the appearance of contenders or coalitions of contenders, advancing exclusive alternative claims to the control over the government... commitment to those claims by a significant segment of the subject population... the incapacity or unwillingness of the government or its agents to suppress the challenger coalition" (p.74). Multi-sovereignty captures the conditions for a revolution, coup, or civil war, a condition that starts with the splintering of a single polity and ends when a single sovereign reigns control over the government. Yet, multi-sovereignty when moved from the revolutionary context to the state-building process captures modern statehood. The pivot towards multi-sovereignty moves the definition of a state away from Weber's conceptualization and more towards Mann's (1986) idea of multiple overlapping networks of power.

Weber's definition of a monopoly on the use of force within its territory has been key in understanding statehood. Yet, the idea of a state acting as a unitary or intentional actor has been questioned through the research of scholar such as Snyder and Diesing (1977), Jervis (1976), and Milner (1997). Many states are still undergoing a process of formation characterized by multiple actors and increasingly international actors, who are staking out claims to public authority (Grzymala-Busse and Luong 2002). Modern states, especially those in Africa, Latin America, and post-communist countries in Eastern Europe, are characterized

as having multiple centers of authority-building, each with different capabilities and degrees of influence. The centers of power extend beyond the political world and includes economically significant sectors, such as resource extraction and manufacturing companies, which wield considerable influence in the ongoing state building process (ibid). The process of state creation occurs over hundreds of years and is filled with incomplete internal conquest and partial exposure to state institutions (Pierskalla, De Juan, and Montgomery 2017).

In such an incomplete process of state formation, a monopoly on the use of force is difficult to achieve, even in developed countries like the United States. The starting point that states have the power to apply violence equally in all parts of its territory “cannot safely be taken for granted in many states, neither historically nor in the developing world of today” (Besley and Persson 2009, p.1219). Instead a state’s application of violence is highly uneven across its many territories, physical and non-physical. Scholars studying Africa have provided some of the most comprehensive accounts of state weakness (Acemoglu 2005; Boone 2000; Herbst 2000).

The legitimate application of force is another critical element of a state’s claim of authority over territory. Citizens obey the state in part because governments claim and have established their power as legitimate. The state is the only actor to have legitimacy in the application of violence and exists when people believe power to be just (Weber 1965). Yet, legitimacy only exists when power holders recognize one another as Tilly argued: “legitimacy is the probability that other authorities will act to confirm the decisions of a given authority” (1985, p. 171). It matters little the acceptance of the governed. It is the powerful elite that places legitimacy upon the head of the state. If it is not a contract among the governed and the governing then it is possible for other producers of violence to be seen as legitimate within the governed.

Legitimacy, in the sense that others accept the decisions of a specialist other than the state, is observable in certain spaces. Venkatesh (1997) documents the social context in which gangs operate in housing developments in the United States. Housing developments are characterized by several profound social transformations that adversely affected communities in the 1960s such as outmigration of industries which led to high unemployment, flight of economically and politically important constituencies to suburban areas, and the weak public institutions resulting in fewer federal and state funding (Caraley 1992). In the post-1960s era, residents of housing developments protested the failure of management to maintain working elevators, reluctance of city police to patrol their buildings, and law enforcement entering apartments without procuring search warrants. The state rather than a legitimate protector represented an occupying entity (Venkatesh 1997). With the state as an

illegitimate force, gangs in the early 1990s filled the void by channeling illicitly obtained revenues from the drug economy to the general residential population (ibid). Gangs in certain housing developments implemented “indigenous policing” and raised funds for social events. Through monetary donations and provision of order, gangs attempted to become a more legitimate social actor. Donations were, in part, a tactic to create tacit support for their illicit drug economy but also a desire to be apart of the community (ibid). The example of gangs as legitimate protectors for a small portion of the US population hints at the possibility that there are multiple legitimate violence specialists beyond the state.

Multi-sovereignty not only expresses the idea of numerous specialists but it inherently pushes towards an understanding of overlapping areas of control. This is most evident in insurgent conflicts. A key feature of a guerrilla conflict is divided sovereignty, where the government and insurgents may each dominate certain regions but in others they compete for control. The government’s army may rule by day, but at night insurgents seep back in through porous state security (Downes 2007; Kalyvas 1999).

Multiple/overlapping sovereignties that characterize guerrilla insurgencies can be expanded to the modern state. Some regions are in the dominant hands of the state but in other areas violence specialists compete for control. There are few starker examples of multi/overlapping sovereignty than in modern cities.<sup>1</sup> Stable and functioning areas of cities can frequently co-exist alongside fragile spaces (Muggah 2014). Fragility can be distributed within and between neighborhoods with some parts of cities coping and others failing. Fragile cities are defined by the loss of the ability to regulate and monopolize the use of violence. At time the state cedes control altogether to other specialists like militias, gangs, or local leaders.

As a result, cities can exhibit mixed layers of authority with rules set by a hybrid of armed groups. Formal systems of authority and service delivery may cease due to the challenging landscape (Bunker and Sullivan 2013). This may result from the division of the population into “valid” and “invalid” groups (Foucault 1991). Foucault’s concept of “governmentality”, or the notice of government and notice of rationality, moves the defining quality of states from the right “to take life or let live” to the “the right to make live and to let die”. Through the identification of categories of “valid” and “invalid” persons, those in the former are managed and “made to live” in particular ways, while the latter are neglected and “left to die”. Building upon Foucault, Agamben (1998) views the validity of citizens

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<sup>1</sup>This is sometimes more obvious in cities outside the US. In Mexico city in the neighborhood of Roma, an upper middle class area, federal and auxiliary police as well as private security firms patrol by car, motorcycle, bicycle, and foot. This is in contrast to other areas of the city. In Los Reyes Acaquilpan, the childhood neighborhood of my father, the observable presence of the state is lacking. There are no regular car patrols flashing their lights.

as constantly being affirmed through the creation and re-creation of a fundamental distinction between what Agamben terms “political life”- that which is imbued with sense- and “bare life”- that which is nothing more than mere existence. Exclusion from “political life” marks the limits of the social order and must be maintained and continuously reinforced (ibid).

However, the state is not absent in cities. It is still present as an intermittent, selective, and contradictory agent (Auyero, Burbano de Lara, and Berti 2014). For example, in Managua, Nicaragua elites live in state-sanctioned zones while the poor survive in state-abandoned zones. The Nicaraguan state, however, is not absent from the poor zones, they are still present through unpredictable and violent police patrols in urban slums and neighborhoods (Rodgers 2006). Studying the barrios of Cochabamba in Bolivia, Goldstein (2012) terms this “the phantom state... that is simultaneously there and not there, a shadow presence that haunts daily encounters, menacing but prosaic, erecting obstacles that seem to perpetuate injustice rather than preventing it” (p. 81). The state is neither absent nor a failure, it is present through the law and bureaucracy that citizens must manage and navigate. At the same time, it is nonpresent. It does not consistently enforce the law, protect citizens’ rights, defend them against threats and harm, and at times is the violator of those rights. The state is “a spectral entity, both there and not there; people feel at once burdened and abandoned by the state, simultaneously oppressed and ignored” (Goldstein 2012, p. 83).

### **2.2.1 Actors**

Space is contested by multiple violence specialists in the multi-sovereignty. While much attention has been centered on weak states, multiple centers of overlapping violence are not limited to non-democratic or weak states. For example in the US, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) during the civil rights era carried out bombings in its fight against integration and attacked Black Americans as well as Jews, immigrants, gays and lesbians, and other imagined enemies of the nation (Southern Poverty Law Center 2014). In the United Kingdom, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) patrolled Catholic neighborhoods and forced the British government to designate large areas of cities as “no-go” zones during the early 1970s (Dewar 1996).

Central to most definitions of the state is the element of territoriality. The multi-sovereign state is an acknowledgment that there is a territory under a state’s jurisdiction but is effectively controlled by other violence specialists. Capacity is often the determining factor of territorial control, with changes producing shifts over time. At the height of

his power as a rebel in 1992, Charles Taylor controlled an area that crossed borders to include most of Liberia, parts of Guinea, and one quarter of Sierra Leone (Reno 1995). In contrast, the Interim Government of National Unity was mostly restricted to the capital of Monrovia. Governments can also willingly cede territory as in the case of Colombia. In 1989 the administration of President Andrés Pastrana ceded four counties to the FARC and another region to the National Liberation Army (ELN). A de facto acknowledgement that the government of Bogotá did not exercise full control over its territory.

The contested space is not limited to territory but can include economic spaces. Correctional facilities are a clear example of ungoverned economic spaces creating an opening for a violence specialist. Prisons are one of the most heavily patrolled areas by the state. In Pelican Bay Prison, the only supermax prison in California, inmates eat, sleep and spend 22 and half hours a day in their cells (Sullivan 2006). The other one and half hours are spend alone in a small concrete yard. Inmates live in a small cement prison cell where everything is concrete. They rarely have contact with other inmates and are closely monitored to control and isolate them. Yet even here gangs run the prison (ibid). In Pelican Bay, one of the most powerful gangs, La Eme or the Mexican Mafia, passes on instructions to thousands of members. Orders can include instructions to kill members, directions on how to collect street taxes from freely released members who are dealing drugs, and demands for retribution against rival gangs (Ferranti 2017).

The California Department of Corrections (CDC), the biggest prison system in the US, is the birth place of some of the most notorious prison gangs — Aryan Brotherhood, Black Guerrilla Family, and La Eme. The Mexican Mafia formed not due to a lack of state capacity but as a result of little protection against other gangs and an ungoverned economic space (Skarbek 2011). The illicit demand for drugs, both inside and outside prison, afforded gangs like La Eme an economic opening to operate within. Due to their illicit status, drug dealers cannot rely on the police to secure their property or depend on courts to resolve disputes. The state by designating certain drugs as illegal open an economic space for an entrepreneurial specialist to fill in the ungoverned space. They fill the void left unoccupied, abandoned, forgotten, ceded, or forced out.

From this space other violence specialists can challenge the state when necessary, making fixed territory less central to the “warlordism” or to its operation (Duffield 2000). This does not make territory unnecessary. Prison gangs in fact hold large portions of territory under its sway. However, it is an overlapping type of control. Gangs operate in the same space as other gangs and the state. Former Associate Warden Larry Williams of Pelican Bay admits that the prison only runs with the consent of the inmates (Sullivan 2006). The administration and the officers do have control of the prisons but acknowledge there are times



when control is lost. Overlapping multiple points of control within prisons is a heightened snapshot of control on the outside.

What unites all state-like actors in the multi-sovereignty is the pursuit of revenue. Multi-sovereignty is a competition to supply security and its product of protection in return for gaining as much revenue as possible (Bates and Lien 1981; Levi 1988). Revenue generation remains an essential aspect for the survival of violence specialists. In Europe, raising sufficient revenue was essential if nascent states were to avoid military defeat (Tilly 1975). Michael Mann suggests that between 1688 and 1815, England experienced six large increases in state revenue and all six corresponded with the start of a war (1986). War and the means to carry it out formed early states as new states increased efforts to extract resources from the subject population (Tilly 1975).

Other violence specialists follow a similar path of generating revenue in their preparation for war. The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in Ethiopia financed itself through taxation of liberated areas, voluntary contributions from local businesses, expatriates, and companies created by the TPLF. Other state-like actors derive their income from foreign sources, local crime, or coercing subjects. For example, Colombian rebels have taxed coca-producing fields and imposed a "peace tax" on the wealthy operating in their zones. Kidnapping is another source of funds in Colombia, though it might serve more of an economic rather than a political purpose.

Violence specialists can also create a threat and tax to protect against it (Tilly 1985). They can force a sale of protection against an imaginary threat, including itself. Just as states can manufacture external and internal threats, sub-national specialists do the same. Florencia 13 (F13), a gang located in Los Angeles, as part of its allegiance to the Mexican Mafia tax those that live within their community (Quinones 2017). F13 members tax Mexican drug dealers, sex workers, and vendors of fraudulent ID cards. They also tax those outside the illicit market including fruit, flower, and ice cream pushcart vendors. Each clique of F13 turns 40% of their proceeds over to the Mexican Mafia (ibid). Each gang would answer to the Mexican Mafia or risk their wrath, in the street or in prison. F13 in turn threatened those who resisted, in one incident shooting two vendors who refused to pay (ibid).

Specialists can be numerous within a delimited territory of a country. They can include the state, organized crime, rebel groups, and militias.<sup>2</sup> The state is usually the dominant violence specialist. It is backed by the largest army, international actors, and legitimacy. While they are usually the most important specialist within a country I do not prioritize

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<sup>2</sup>This is not an exhaustive list. There are other violent and non-violent organizations attempting to exert power such as private military contractors or neighborhood watch groups.

them as the only source of security nor as the most relevant to civilians. Instead there are many violence specialists with overlapping areas of control. The type of violence specialists, predatory or guardian, and how they interact with civilians will determine whether militias form and is addressed in the next chapter.

### **2.2.1.1 Non-state cooperation**

Humans have existed for most of our history without any type of state. Most of human history was defined by a hunter-gather society that was characterized by equality and non-hierarchical relations (Mann 1986). Political order, and its many types and subtypes, has been discussed since the start of political discourse from Plato, to Hobbes, to Locke, Weber, and Tilly. Yet, disorder when discussed is often monolithic and only introduced as a subtext for the main discussion of order. Disorder is more than the state of nature famously immortalized by Hobbes as “nasty, brutish and short” or Rousseau’s vision of “solitary, idle and always near danger”. Contrary to Hobbes’ and Rousseau’s claim, social cooperation under anarchy is possible (Boix 2015; Bates 2008).

Even without a centralized mechanism of coercion, it is possible for individuals to avoid conflict and engage in productive activities. Examples of stateless cooperation can be seen in societies such as the Inuit and !Kung people. However, the price of peace is poverty and private coercion (Bates, Greif, and Singh 2002). Cooperation is possible in a stateless society if their level of inequality is bounded (Scott 1976). Stateless societies spend their limited resources monitoring, judging, and sanctioning everyone to prevent anyone from getting ahead socially or economically (ibid). Any individual obtaining greater resource or status is a threat to the state of equality that maintains self-enforced cooperation.

Self-enforced cooperation does not mean the absence of violence. In fact, violence in a stateless society is high. About 25% of adult males die a violent death in foraging societies (Boix 2015). This violence, however, is between individuals and rarely spirals into a general conflict. Violence is infrequent and random in its causes. If it does threaten the group, the confrontational members split and form a new group.

Individuals can maintain peace without a third party enforcer. However, this holds only if there is equality of income among individuals (Boix 2015).<sup>3</sup> Without equality, individuals adopt a looting strategy and cooperation falters. In addition to equality, cooperation depends on the discount factor, technology of predation, and the exit option (Bates, Greif, and Singh 2002). If there is an increasing value of future payoffs, similar looting tech-

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<sup>3</sup>There may be some groups that are able to enforce order among themselves. However, Boix may argue that they are not a form of non-state cooperation but rather a type of state. Civilian Militias are a type of order that resembles a proto-state.

nology, and low exit costs, stateless cooperation is maintained. In this world, the state is unnecessary since individuals are defined by equality and low predation. The value of the state is in providing protection and deterring violence and predation.<sup>4</sup> Without the threat of violence and predation, individuals will continue to exist in a world defined by a lack of centralized mechanisms of coercion to prevent looting.

### **2.2.1.2 The State**

The conditions for non-state cooperation do not always hold. Equality turns into inequality as technology improves and individuals are better able to use new advances (Boix 2015). Innovation sorts individuals into those that are better able to take advantage of production technology and those who seek to plunder the wealth of those more advantaged individuals. Looting by the least advantaged individuals, could lead to the creation of a state able to structure incentives and a capacity to enforce order among farmers and bandits. Technology of predation is as important as inequality (Grossman 2002; Usher 1987; Konrad and Skaperdas 2012). Producers, in a world of predators, must agree to hand over to the state the power to tax and spend. However, the state, once it has these powers, can exploit the producers by taxing for its own purposes. A state even as a profit-maximizing actor is better for both producers and bandits than without one but only if there is effective technology of predation (Grossman 2002).

States solve the inadequate allocation of resources to alleviate appropriative conflict (Grossman 2001). States enforce a collective choice about resource allocation and income distribution to guard against predators. They secure a producers' claim to their product through building of walls, surveilling, and organizing a police force. In order to protect and enforce collective choices about resource allocation it must have the power to tax and spend (ibid). Such a power ensures the stability of the social order but it also can be exploited by the state for the benefit of its supporters (North, Wallis, and Weingast 2009). Violent forms of repression are techniques "against citizens that cause injury as well as pain to the body and/or mind" (Davenport 2007, p. 38). The objective of violent repression is to eliminate the will of those deemed as unacceptable challengers to state authority and to break the will of those remaining (ibid).

How the state emerges has been as equally studied as why it emerged (Boix 2015; Driscoll 2015; Moore 1966; Olson 1993; Spruyt 1994; Tilly 1990). Tilly (1985) argues

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<sup>4</sup>Tilly (1985) argues that states, in addition to providing protection for a fee, create the very threats they offer protection from. However, while individuals in this world of stateless cooperation can threaten others to accept their protection they may not succeed since threatened individuals may simply move. More importantly, the threatening actor does not have an advantage in looting technology to pose an effective threat.

that the formation of national states was unintended by power holders. Instead, war making, extracting, and accumulating capital interacted to form European states. This interaction is best summed up in the adage “states make war and war makes states”. States fought with one another to expand territory and in the process needed and gained access to capital. They obtained capital either through seizing or establishing credit with capitalists, eventually developing an interest in capital accumulation. Scholars have since attempted to test the external validity of Tilly’s argument in other regions and times (Centeno 2002; Lessning 2017; Slater 2010; Thies 2005).

Others have argued that the state is a result of a contract between two specialized parties: producers, who invest in economic activities to produce goods, and warriors, who specialize in fighting (Levi 1989; North 1981; North and Thomas 1973). Producers exchange material support for protection against external threats. As a result of the exchange, both parties are better off due to economies of specialization in which they both become more effective than if they had to do everything themselves. Each obtains a surplus and trades with the other.

The contractual account implies a pact among free individuals in which they voluntarily negotiate the tax rate in exchange for protection. However, as early as 1770, Hume challenged this and wrote that “almost all governments... have been founded either originally on usurpation or conquest, or both, without any pretense of a fair consent, or voluntary subjection of the people.” (2003, 189-90). A contractual agreement cannot be consent based since the warrior has an advantage in military power prior to forming a state.

Still others have sidestepped the question of legitimacy and focused on the benefit of states. Bates, Greif, and Singh (2002) explore how violence specialists transform from a predatory actor into a government who punishes those who plunder or fail to pay. Olson (1993) comes to a similar conclusion, finding that stationary bandits and subjects benefit more from regular taxation than uncoordinated plunder if there is a sufficient time horizon. The warrior, or violence specialist, stops raiding and provides protection to capture public revenues. In order for public revenues to entice the specialist, the payoff for the state must be sufficiently attractive relative to the possible reward from predation. The specialist continues to act as the state as long as their discount factor does not fall, develop favorable prospects under anarchy, or gains no military advantage. Subjects forgo raiding under the government’s threat to revert to predation but the government is also placed under constraints by the subjects’ ability to avoid taxation by choosing to be predators rather than producers (Grossman 2002).

### **2.2.1.3 The Rebels**

States attempt to consolidate a monopoly over the provision of violence. However, their monopoly is consistently challenged in the form of open confrontation and through the shadows. One of the most visible, and most studied, actors are rebel groups. Rebel groups openly challenge the state's building process. This can take the form of a separatist movement, e.g. Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka, or a national challenge to its whole territory, e.g. Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) in Nicaragua. The occurrence of civil war is one of the most observable instances of multiple sources of violence since it is a sharp break down of the perceived monopoly. Even more dramatic, rebel groups at times provide social services and maintain public order (Arjona 2016, Lidow 2016, Walter 2015). Preservation of public order is a key concern for rebels who at times set rules that forbid certain acts like stealing, killing, and raping (Arjona 2016). Citizens turn to rebels for the provision of services such as courts, law enforcement, and welfare. Internally, certain rebel groups have functions that copy those of governments. For example, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) had a detailed structure that encompasses many functions and jurisdictions (Hubbard and Schmitt 2014). As Kalyvas makes clear, civil war is an opportunity for local actors to graft onto the dominant narrative their personal grievances and feuds, making local violence a form of score settings for current or past perceived wrongs.

### **2.2.1.4 The Criminals**

A more opaque actor is organized crime.<sup>5</sup> Organized crime, unlike rebels, operate mostly through the shadows. The Sicilian Mafia, defined by Blok (1974) as the private use of unlicensed violence as a means of control in the public arena, conducts itself in the shadows where there is abundance of fuzziness and uncertainty that is perpetuated by a code of silence. Within the Mafia, no one directly reveals their membership or even acknowledges that the organization exists, at least in theory. The Mafia challenges the state's monopoly both through its provision of private protection and use of violence to enforce contracts. It supplies protection services to guard against fraud and acts as guarantor for actors conducting exchanges in black markets where there are no recourses to legal protection (Gambetta 1993). It uses violence to reassure clients that it can credibly supply protection and administer justice in the black market (ibid).

Street gangs also use violence to deter and extract resources. For example, the Columbia

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<sup>5</sup>I include street gangs, prison gangs, drug trafficking organizations, and the Mafia under organized crime. For a review of these organizations see: Akerlof and Yellen 1994; Blok 1974; Calderón et al. 2015; Chambliss 1973; Duran-Martinez 2015; Lessing 2017; Schelling 1971; Venkatesh 1997.

Lil Cycos (CLCS), a clique of the 18th Street gang, battles other gangs and the police over MacArthur Park in Los Angeles. The clique offered protection from rival gangs and itself in exchange for kickbacks from illegal street sales on narcotics, fake green cards, passports or driver's licenses (Romero 2017). CLCS also taxes legal vendors, taking a cut from people who sell food, goods, or anything legal. There are consequences for dealers and vendors who refuse to pay taxes.<sup>6</sup> CLCS fights to control its territory. It competes against Mara Salvatrucha, the Crazy Riders, and the Rockwood Street gang, to sell their product and tax the population (Simpson 2013). The state, especially in the late 1990s, operated no different from the gangs. The Los Angeles Police Department's Rampart Division, patrolled the MacArthur Park area and was involved in unprovoked shootings and beatings, planted false evidence, robbed banks, perjury, and covered up investigation (Boyer 2001). It was called the biggest gang.

### **2.2.1.5 The Militias**

Militias constitute another potential specialist. However, unlike rebels, their impact on the state's monopoly is less clear. They undermine the state by stripping it of its authority in order to reestablish state-based ideas of security, law, justice, and/or democracy which they perceive the corrupt or weak state as unable to uphold (Jones 2008). Militias undermine the public provision of security while not directly threatening the state's political control. Many militias are not motivated by anti-government ideals or by regime change (Davis 2009). Militias in Mexico engage in some form of violence and create environments similar to civil wars, yet political turmoil is not their main objective (ibid). These groups aim to provide security as a private good to a limited membership rather than as a public good. Security as a "club good" challenges notions of statehood.

The search for security can occur in urban and rural areas as well as during conflict and peacetime (Muggah 2014). However, vigilantism based on values of compensatory, immediate, and capital justice contradicts state justice (Baker 2007). Militias assert the right of individuals to band together to protect themselves but it often involves repression of individual rights of due process (Abrahams 1998). Crime as defined by militias may fall outside behavior that is regulated by state law such as health, sexuality, and witchcraft (Baker 2007). Justice is dispensed on the spot and often the punishment is brutal to make an example for others. For example, a report in 1998 described a mob killing a woman for degrading their neighborhood in KwaMancinza near Durban, South Africa with stones and sticks for disclosing that she was HIV positive (ibid).

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<sup>6</sup> A DVD vendor stood up to the gang and was shot and in the process a 23-day-old baby was killed (Del Barco 2008).

One contribution of my approach is to disentangle militias from state and rebel actors, which are often conflated as either state agents or rebels themselves. ISIL highlights the haphazard usage of the term militant. ISIL members are often characterized as “militants” rather than rebels yet their organization is closely related to other rebel groups. They seek to establish an independent state with a new political system, have a name, organize themselves, plan campaigns, and use armed force. They meet the operationalized definition of an opposition organization according to Gleditsch et al. (2002). Having highlighted different competing specialists in violence that constitute the multi-sovereignty I move on to the next layer: distinguishing types of militias.

## **2.3 Varieties of Militias**

One of the difficulties of studying civilian militias is differentiating them from similar but distinguishable types. Related, there is also a wide variety of terms used to describe a similar phenomenon. These terms include vigilantes, irregular forces, home guard, civil defense forces, civil militia, community police, ethnic militias, and death squads. Given the numerous terms, it is important to establish a clear definition of civilian militias in order to set them apart from other related groups before discussing the theoretical model and empirical strategy. To do so I first take a conceptual step back and examine the general concept of militias from which I develop a typology. After discussing militias I define civilian militias.

### **2.3.1 Defining Militias**

In general, all types of militias share the quality of using violence to advance a political, security, and/or social goal. The issue with such a broad conceptualization is that it includes other non-state actors such as rebel organizations that also use violence. Yet militias differ from rebel groups as discussed above. Unlike rebels, militias do not directly challenge the state’s right to govern, instead they seek to hold the state accountable for administering justice and providing security (Huggins 1991). It is not so much a revolution as a recall on the government’s inability or unwillingness to provide security (Humphreys and Weinstein 2008). Tilly makes a further distinction by focusing on authority over means of violence (2003). Locating militias among other violent actors such as pirates, mercenaries, mafiosi, and bodyguards, Tilly places these actors in a “middle ground between (on one side) the full authorization of a national army and (on the other) the private employment of violence,” (p.19).

**Table 2.1:** Typology of Militant Activity

		Principal Agent	
		State Agent	Free Agent
Capability	High	Paramilitary	Civilian Militias
	Low	Home Guard	Vigilante

A definition must be broad enough to include militias inside and outside civil wars but narrow enough to exclude rebels. It must also leave open the possibility of militias not only targeting rebels but engaging the state and criminal organizations. I therefore define militias as an armed organization that operates outside the formal security structure of the state and challenges armed actors through the use or threaten use of violence.

Based on this definition, I develop a conceptual typology. I propose a typology based on behavior in order to distinguish militia types and to limit the scope of this study to the subset civilian militias. I argue that militias can be differentiated based on two factors: (1) the principal-agent relationship with the state and (2) the organizational capability of the group (see Table 2.1). Here I am only interested in distinguishing types of militias based on behavior not onset (which I address in the next chapter) or possible subsequent drift.<sup>7</sup> I discuss both factors below and their impact on organizations.

The first factor I consider is the principal agent relationship. Whether the group is an agent of the state characterizes the group’s objective and purpose. In general, militias that are defined as an agent of the state are established to further a political project while militias that lack such a relationship are more concerned with guaranteeing security and protecting property. State agents are paid primarily for maintaining or re-establishing the incumbent’s political project and power over a region. The incumbent regime pursues an ideological project, this refers to the “boundaries of the polity and its relationship to the state that the regime wants to construct and defend,” (Staniland 2015, p.7). Institutions, laws, norms, and the use of force seek to strengthen the incumbent’s ideological project whether that is a commitment to communism, nationalism, or fascism (ibid). Militias are a means to propagate the political project through the suppression and at times elimination of challengers deemed illegitimate. Repression of targeted groups allow for the return of institutions to contested areas and signal to citizens the consequences of continued support for the challenger’s ideological project. Free agents, rather than seeking to further a political ideology

<sup>7</sup>Militias may change sponsorship during the course of their organizational life, shifting from community to state control and back. For example, US Special Forces selected Afghan Local Police (ALP) units based on four criteria, one of which included that locals had already resisted insurgents (Goodhand and Hakimi 2014). The villages that had resisted and were subsequently selected were supplied with arms, training, and uniforms, thus moving from community control to semi-state control.



are instead committed to re-establishing security and order within a defined space. They emerge to address security concerns, arbitrate over power disputes, and provide security based on a defined membership (Raleigh 2016). They may or may not adhere to the state's ideology. However, like any free agent, they can be selected and sign on to a state's ideological project.

While the principal-agent relationship determines the militia's objective, operational capability shapes the type of tactical operations carried out. Highly capable militias are more likely to counter threats in a proactive manner such as gathering intelligence. Through proactive operations the organization aims to dominate the area and deny the enemy freedom of movement and to accumulate intimate knowledge of an area and its inhabitants (Dewar 1996). The state is able to take advantage of the militia's ability to access local networks and target insurgents with minimal collateral damage (Lyll 2009). Less capable groups are more reactive in their operation. They respond to events rather than preventing. They are characterized by their part-time status and lack of training.

The operational capability of an organization is also related to the group's defined purpose. Highly capable militias are geared towards the elimination of threats to either the political project of a state or the security of a village. Resources are invested to meet the goal of eliminating a challenger. Militias with low capability instead seek to maintain an acceptable level of violence or crime. They are the hedge trimmer rather than the shovel. This does not mean that they cannot do more but instead that their defined operating space does not allow for a greater role.<sup>8</sup>

The preceding two dimensions create the following typology. First, state agents with high operational capability are called paramilitaries. The term paramilitary emphasizes their high organizational capability similar to that of formal state repressive forces. Paramilitaries are established to help isolate insurgents from their support base and aid the military with intelligence and logistical support. An example is the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC). Second, state agents with low operational capability are called home guards to reflect their reactionary nature. They often take the form of auxiliary units. The *patrullas de autodefensa civil* (Civil Patrol) during the civil war in Guatemala fits the state agent, low capability feature of home guards. The Civil Patrol was organized in 1981 by army planners at the village level to fight insurgents (Stoll 1993). While the patrols were under the direction of the Guatemala army, they often undertook missions with outdated weapons and little support from the Guatemalan army's artillery or air power (*ibid*). Third, free agents

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<sup>8</sup>Militias do at times move from low to high capability. The Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) in Northern Ireland prior to 1976 illustrates this. Mostly employed to secure company centers at its inception, after 1977, the UDR increased their operational capability by establishing a permanent cadre, allowing battalions to recruit one or more full-time platoons, and emphasizing the role of training (Dewar 1996).

with low operational capability are called vigilantes since such groups are not part of the state.<sup>9</sup> Vigilantism includes such actions as Brazilian citizens detaining a shoplifter after a shopkeeper denounced the suspect but also a crowd of middle class villagers marching on a police station after the police failed to investigate a mother's request for locating her missing daughter who was later found murdered (Huggins 1991). Lastly, free agents with high operational capacity are called civilian militias. Examples of civilian militias include Autodefensas in Mexico and Ronda Campesinas in Peru.<sup>10</sup>

There is also a temporal dynamic contained within the typology itself. Types of militias can move, over time, across the agent and/or capability line and transform, e.g. vigilante to civilian militia, civilian militia to paramilitary. Crossing from a free agent into a state agent is essentially collusion between the state and the militia group. For a government, collusion offers the opportunity to bring an ideological and operationally valuable organization under its security umbrella (Staniland 2015). For the militia, collusion brings a reduction in repression and a possible increase in capability through the provision of weapons and training. State sanction moves a civilian militia to a paramilitary and a vigilante to home guard. Examples include some autodefensas in Mexico moving from a civilian militia into a paramilitary role after the government pressured groups to accept an offer as a state sanctioned community police force. Moving from low to high capability is tied to resources, whether that is natural resource extraction, extortion, or patron provided supplies. Obtaining resources boosts a group's operational capability as more funds enable organizations to recruit and obtain equipment such as transportation vehicles. All of which should enable militias to act in a more proactive manner. One example is the Bakassi Boys. The Bakassi Boys in Nigeria emerged in 1998 as a vigilante group, protecting traders in the central market of Aba (Smith 2004). They targeted alleged criminals with machete blows, dismembering their bodies and then burning them at the site of execution. By 1999 they quickly grew into a regional civilian militia after receiving contributions from the traders' association (ibid). In addition, the group crossed from a free to a state agent after receiving financial support from Orji Kalu, the governor of Abia State, following his election in 1999 (Harnischfeger 2003). The group soon became political thugs in service to their patrons (Smith 2004). The Bakassi Boys demonstrate one possible dynamic transformation, starting as a vigilante group, moving into a civilian militia, and crossing over to a state agent paramilitary group.

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<sup>9</sup>For a discussion on the concept of vigilantism see Alvarez and Bachman 2007; Dumsday 2009; Hine 1998; Johnston 1996; Little and Sheffield 1983

<sup>10</sup>Militias with little to no relationship with the state are often co-opted and in the process transform into a state agent. For example the Civil Defense Force (CDF) in Sierra Leone was originally an umbrella organization of local protection groups which then shifted towards state control (Hoffman 2007).

### 2.3.2 Definition of a Civilian Militia

Civilian militias have not been extensively studied, however, they have been examined under a wide range of disciplines including political science (Carey and Mitchell 2011, Raleigh 2016, Reno 2007), urbanism (Davis 2009), criminology (Johnston 1996), and anthropology (McGee 2014). While Carey, Mitchell, and Lowe (2012) and Raleigh's (2016) broad definition of militias can include civilian militias, I specifically focus on civilian militias and define such groups using five criteria.<sup>11</sup> The first criterion is that participants must be private citizens. This excludes organizations whose membership consists of off-duty police officers or military personnel such as the death squads during the Guatemalan civil war. Second, the group must have some level of organizational capacity.<sup>12</sup> Third, the group must be armed and use or threaten the use of force. Fourth, the organization must aim to control criminal and/or social infractions in the pursuit of re-establishing security. Lastly, the organization must be a community initiated project, meaning there is minimal state intervention in its inception. Broadly defined, a civilian militia is a private armed organization initiated by local actors for the purpose of re-establishing security through the use of violence.

Before proceeding to questioning the usefulness of the term I further distinguish between civilian militias and paramilitary groups. Both types share many characteristics such as operating outside the regular security force and use or threaten use of violence to re-establish security. To distinguish civilian militias from paramilitary groups, the origins of the organization must be examined. Civilian militias are not created by the state, but form and evolve independently. They are community-initiated organizations that provide security to a defined membership and are embedded within the community in which they emerge (Jentzsch 2014). Boundaries of the community can be defined by territory (urban neighborhood or village), blood ties (clan), or by a shared identity (ethnic group). Civilian militias fill in for the state while paramilitaries represent the state in its pursuit of the principal's ideological project. Paramilitary groups are a consequence of national elites' strategic considerations (Godoy 2006). They are part of the official or unofficial counterinsurgency and state building policy (Kalyvas and Arjona 2005). Compared to civilian militias, paramilitary groups are defined by their relationship with the state. They act on behalf of a political actor and are characterized by a principal-agent relationship. The agent is supported by their political patrons in establishing and cultivating support for the principal (Schuberth 2015). Paramilitary groups, especially death squads, are extralegal means by

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<sup>11</sup>The criteria are modeled on a modified version of Johnston's (1996) definition of vigilantism.

<sup>12</sup>Organizational capacity ensures that mobs and ephemeral vigilantes are not included within the study. While interesting, they are beyond the scope of this project.

which the state furthers a political goal (Godoy 2006). While civilian militias and paramilitary groups are distinguishable by state links and objectives this does not mean there are no overlap of associations (Scheye 2009). The distinction between paramilitary and civilian militias has important consequences for the government's strategy towards the group, relationship with civilians, and evolution of the organization (Schuberth 2015; Staniland 2015).

This definition shares similarities with those of Carey, Mitchell, and Lowe (2013) and Raleigh (2016), however, it is specifically tailored towards a subset of militias. It also supports the characterization of militias as anti-rebel (Jentzsch, Kalyvas, and Schubiger 2015). Unlike Carey, Mitchell, and Lowe (2013) it does not limit non-state actors to the domain of pro-government forces. Instead, this definition allows for the consideration of civilian militias that support, oppose, or are neutral towards the interest of the government. This is particularly important in the study of civilian militias since many oppose the government's inability or unwillingness to provide security as much as predatory non-state armed actors. Lastly, it considers the political nature of civilian militias. While civilian militias form in the context of state absence, their attempt to provide security challenges the state's authority to administer its rule of law. The provision of security is a definitional feature of the state, making civilian militia generated security a political action (Sanin and Jaramillo 2004). They are state-like in that they provide security, arbitrate disputes, and control territory.

### **2.3.3 Useful term?**

I am not the first to use the term civilian militias but I am one of the few to center the definition away from state sponsorship. But is the term civilian militia useful? The term itself is a contradiction. Is a civilian still a civilian after they form or join an armed organization?

Civilians are defined by their neutrality or submission. They are persons who are not members of armed forces (International Committee of the Red Cross). However, defining a civilian quickly becomes problematic. Take for example insurgencies. In contrast to interstate war, with its clear conceptual and legal separation between military forces and the civilian populations, an insurgency deliberately blurs the distinctions. Insurgents survive by not being seen and by fighting in shadowy groups that only show themselves momentarily, and then blend back into their surroundings. In urban spaces they hide virtually in plain sight in populated areas. They succeed by operating in the urban shadows, dispersing cells, drawing protection through the support, acquiescing, intimidating the population, and directing violence at civil and military targets. Blending into the population is not only a tactic but a strategy to recruit since an overreaction by the government may push previously

uncommitted civilians into joining (Kalyvas 2006). This raises the question of whether insurgents are only insurgents when they are operating in their capacity as insurgents (i.e. planning, obtaining supplies for the conflict, making bombs, etc).

Participants in civilian militias are similar in their ambiguity towards their status as civilians. Like insurgents, membership in a civilian militia is not a full time-job. Members keep their jobs while still apart of the organization. In Bogalusa, Louisiana, site of the second chapter of the Deacons for Defense and Justice, members kept their jobs at the Great Southern Lumber Company sawmill. Deacons would show up to work in the morning and patrol their neighborhoods at night and during civil rights protests (Hill 2004). In fact, individuals joined the Deacons to improve their prospects at the sawmill. They believed that by protecting civil rights workers they would help gain an equal opportunity to advance into management positions that had been prevented by work place discrimination (ibid).

Does it make sense to describe a militia as civilian? I argue that the term “civilian militia” is accurate and represents the inherent contradiction of the phenomenon itself. It portrays the duality of an organization with each of its feet in different cross-sections of the public. It is both a civilian and an armed group. While the term conveys this duality it also distinguishes itself from other types of militias, such as paramilitaries, which are aligned with the state. Civilian militias lack this relationship, at least at the start. “Civilian” is meant to depict not only members of the organization but also those that are served by the organization.

The term may be an accurate description of a phenomenon but is it useful? Gerring (1999) defines goodness of a concept using eight criteria: familiarity, resonance, parsimony, coherence, differentiation, depth, theoretical utility, and field utility. Familiarity of a term is mostly achieved by using words within the existing lexicon that most accurately describes the phenomenon. The term “civilian militia” is familiar to both lay and academic audience conveying a sense of armed civilians. Resonance is the search for a catchy label, a term with a ring. I do not argue that civilian militia has a “cognitive click” to it but it also does not sound horrible. The term itself is short and parsimonious. Coherence is one of the most important attributes. It considers whether the term or concept is internally coherent. Civilian militia, as discussed above, can be a contradiction but is meant to invoke the duality of the organization. Differentiation refers to boundedness, or how differentiated are the instances and the attribute. The term itself is bounded from other most-similar concepts such as paramilitaries or home guards by clearly linking it to a non-state entity. It conveys that it is not part of the state, i.e. paramilitary groups, and not a spontaneous mob, i.e. vigilantes. Depth refers to the number of properties shared by the phenomena. Civilian militias bundles together instances and characteristics to create an efficient concept label. It

is deep since it includes all militias that are not part of the state but are organized at a level above that of a mob. This includes a wide range of organizations such as autodefensas in Mexico, Deacons in the United States, or the Bakassi Boys in Nigeria. Theoretical utility deals with how helpful a term is in the formulation of theories. Civilian militias as a concept explains an ill-defined and under investigated phenomenon, acting as a building-block for the theoretical structure that follows in Chapter 3. Lastly, field utility refers to the usefulness within a field of related instances and attributes. Defining a civilian militia and delimiting it from other similar concepts changes the meaning of those other related concepts. Paramilitary is changed since it no longer includes non-state organizations. This is useful since it separates two similar but distinct types of militias. Overall the concept and term is useful even if there are trade-offs.

## **2.4 Summary**

This chapter has defined civilian militias and placed them within the context of multi-sovereignty. Militias, like rebel groups, organized crime, and the state itself, are considered actors competing with others to supply violence. Competition between specialists in different spaces is possible since a state's monopoly varies across territory and economic spheres. Militias rather than attempting to capture the state, like rebels, are bringing the state back with local violence often takes the private form of social and criminal control.

The definition of civilian militias emphasizes the characteristics of autonomy and organizational capacity to distinguish it from other related types of militias. I specified the defining characteristics of a civilian militia as private citizens, a level of organizational capacity, use or threaten use of force, a goal of reestablish security, and community initiated. Each of the criteria distinguishes civilian militias from other types of militias such as paramilitary groups which are organizationally capable but not private citizens, home guards which are private citizens but not community initiated, and vigilantes which are private citizens, use force, and community initiated but spontaneous.

Civilian militias show that they can provide security to subjects that lack access to state protection. Why civilians form militias is an empirical question that I begin to address in the next chapter. I develop a theory that builds upon state-building, civil war, and bargaining literature to explain the emergence of civilian militias outside civil wars. The theory proposes that the type of violence specialists civilians confront influences whether they will take up arms. In the process of developing the theory, I address related topics such as the role of the state, when it fails, and the resulting chaos it brings.

## CHAPTER 3

# A Theory of Militia Emergence

- *Let's make bamboo spears! Let's kill all the bandits!*
- *You can't.*
- *That's impossible.*

Three farmers (Seven Samurai)

According to the typology of militant behavior presented in the last chapter there are four possible militia types: *paramilitary*, *home guard*, *vigilante*, and *civilian militia*. I focus on developing a theory to explain civilian militias onset. I link them to a broader discussion of political order by arguing that the process of militia formation is itself a type of state.

The emergence of civilian militias, like state formation, is conditioned by the type of violence specialist. More specifically, civilian militias are a response to predatory specialists. I argue that democratization exogenous shocks have heterogeneous effects on specialists' and civilians' discount factor. Specialists turn towards violent expropriation due to high discount factors resulting from a shock, such as democratization, that shortens their time horizon. Time horizons matter for specialists since it determines their benefit and cost of violence. Having two options of violence — wealth creation and wealth destruction — specialists weigh the cost and benefit of each. The cost of wealth creation is incurred up front while the costs of wealth destruction occurs later. This leads specialist with short horizons to opt for destruction and trade off larger future returns for short term gains.

For desperate groups who are working under shortened time horizons, violence specialists will be more likely to make the trade-off. However, discounting the future is self-defeating since militias move to counter predation and may terminate the rule of the specialist. Predation shifts civilian incentives towards an alternative other than the current specialist since the cost from looting exceeds the cost of defense.

A shock may have a different impact on civilians. The same shock — in this case democratization — that increases the discount factor for specialists, lowers it for civilian

militias. The democratization shock lowers their discount factor and increases the extent to which they value the future relative to the present. Valuing the future more than the specialist incentivizes them to undertake the cost of providing security. Militias act as protective actors rather than predators.

Below I provide a review of relevant literature on civilian resistance. Following that, I outline my theory for militia onset. In chapters four and five, I test the micro-foundations of the theory using the case studies of autodefensas in Mexico and the Deacons for Defense and Justice in the United States.

### **3.1 Literature Review**

What options are available to civilians during times of conflict? If we are to believe Thucydides that the “strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must,” (Strassler, 1996: 352/5.89) then civilians are mere victims at the mercy of armed actors. However, civilians do have agency to alter their fortune through the act of supplying information, community institutions, and armed resistance (Arjona 2016, Condra and Shapiro 2012, Jentzsch 2014, Kaplan 2017).

Militias as an empirical phenomenon have historically been overlooked. However, recently, there has been a growing literature. Carey, Mitchell, and Lowe (2013) find that pro-government militias were involved in 81 percent of all civil war country-years between 1981 and 2007. There is now a growing focus on militias as scholars come to understand the critical role they play in the conflict process. Scholars have examined the occurrence and variation of militias (Branch 2009; Carey, Mitchell, and Lowe 2013; Kalyvas and Arjona 2005), relation to the state (Blocq 2014; De Bruin 2014; Lyall 2010; Schubiger 2013), militia perpetrated violence (Cohen and Nordas 2015; Mitchell, Carey, and Butler 2014; Stanton 2015), mobilization (Blocq 2014; Kalyvas 2006; Lyall, Blair, and Imai 2013) and post-conflict dynamics (Acemoglu, Robinson, and Santos 2009; Dowdle 2007; Hughes and Tripodi 2009).

Yet, there has been little attention devoted to militias outside civil wars and even less attention on onset. There is uncertainty whether the factors that lead to militias in civil wars also results in militias outside them. In order to determine whether militias have similar causes inside and outside civil wars I examine current theories, focused on crime, institutions, and inequality, to ground the discussion that follows. Much of the existing militia literature borrows from more established fields of study such as rebel onset, social movements, and collective violence outbreak.



### 3.1.1 Crime

In recent years crime has exploded in countries like Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, and Venezuela. Of the top 50 most violent cities in the world, measured by homicides per 100,000 residents, 41 are in Latin America, including 21 in Brazil (Bender and Macias 2016). At the same time, state judicial systems are weak and unable to enforce the law across vast areas. In the setting of high crime, civilian militias are seen as indications of citizen desperation at the horrifying environment. Facing high crime rates and inefficient state justice systems crippled by corruption, civilians take the law and a gun in their own hand (Prillaman 2000). Addressing the rise of the Ronda Campesinas in Peru, Starn (1999), in addition to theft, argues that distance from law enforcement drew citizens together to form a community militia.

However, non-state policing is not just about crime. The case of autodefensas in Mexico illustrates this point. Civilian militias did not emerge in areas where crime was at its worst. In Mexico, although government figures on violence such as homicides related to the drug war are unreliable (the government stopped publishing organized crime related homicides in 2011) it is considered to be higher in the northern region of Mexico in states like Chihuahua and Sinaloa (Milenio 2016). However, autodefensas are concentrated in the central region of Mexico. Chihuahua had the highest number of drug-related homicides in 2011 (21,184), yet, the state only had 5 municipalities that saw the emergence of a militia (Osorio, Schubiger, and Weintraub 2016). In contrast Guerrero and Michoacán, which have the second and fifth most drug-related homicides respectively during the same period, had about 20 municipalities that featured civilian militias (ibid).

### 3.1.2 Institutions

While crime is used to explain motivation, institutions explain how civilians engage in collective action. Institutions are formal or informal rules, norms, and practices that structure interactions (North 1990).<sup>1</sup> While there maybe a willingness, civilians must also have the collective ability to resist. Civilians with a preference for security, or any other good in which no one can be excluded, does not mean that good will be produced. The inability to exclude those that do not contribute to the production of security means individuals will free ride and militias will not be formed (Olson 1965). It is costly for civilians to form militias since it takes time away from production, requires investment of resources, and lack skills that violence specialists already possess. Civilians would rather free ride off the

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<sup>1</sup>Organizations are different in that they “consist of specific groups of individuals pursuing a mix of common and individual goals through partially coordinated behavior” (North, Wallis, and Weingast (2009).)

efforts of others.

Scholars have therefore focused on the quality of institutions and their role in fostering a capacity for collective resistance. Pre-existing effective local institutions afford communities the chance to create and sustain collective action. Institutions influence conflict resolution schemes, capacity to coordinate, interpersonal trust, reciprocity, and social cohesion. These factors have been found to alter a community's capacity to launch and maintain collective action (e.g. Dasgupta and Serageldin 1999; Ostrom 1990; Petersen 2001; Putnam 1993).

Recently, scholars have focused on institutions to explain, mostly, non-violent civilian resistance. Civilian institutions within conflict are especially important (Arjona 2016; Kaplan 2017; Osorio, Schubiger, and Weintraub 2016). Arjona 2016 argues that resistance is dependent on the form of rebel governance and the quality of pre-existing local institutions. Kaplan (2017) makes a similar argument to explain non-violent resistance in Colombia. Osorio, Schubiger, and Weintraub (2016) focus less on governance while continuing to examine the impact of institutions on civilian resistance. Focusing on armed resistance in Mexico, they argue that contemporary armed mobilization is rooted in historical processes. Given a preference for mobilization, a historical legacy of armed resistance creates conditions under which the community arms itself.

### **3.1.3 Economic Inequality**

Another approach examines civilian militias through the lens of inequality. Economic inequality creates security inequality. Lower income citizens feel relatively insecure compared with wealthier neighbors, producing a greater demand for organized vigilantism in unequal localities (Phillips 2017). Poorer citizens in situations that lack private security and receive little attention from the state are prone to organize their own security. Economic inequality also creates a distribution of labor that can lead to organized vigilantism. Inequality encourages a patron labor hierarchy in which wealthy residents fund a group of poorer residents as a informal security force.

Neoliberalism fits into the picture of inequality. In the neoliberal mode, the state individualizes the tasks of government such as placing the responsibility of welfare on citizens while also prioritizing the security of global capital. Neo-liberalism promotes a shift toward a model of government less involved in direct service provision and more focused on managing and organizing (Godoy 2006; Goldstein 2012; Goldsmith and Eggers 2004). In a more market-oriented and individual view of security, consumers are more responsible for their own security, both in terms of their behavior and in terms of making provisions

for their own protection. Collective violence, like lynchings, erupt as a violent attempt to subvert the system by those disadvantaged. In extreme inequality, those that have resources turn to the law as a means of protecting their property and power from the disadvantaged (Godoy 2006)

## 3.2 Rise of the Militia

I now consider the conditions of civilian militia onset. Non-state cooperation or state-like order arises when violence specialists have a long time horizon. Individuals in a stateless society cooperate as long as the time horizon is stable (Arjona 2016; Bates 2008; Kaplan 2017). States form to gather revenue in the form of taxes from its subjects if the shadow of the future is long enough (Boix 2015; Bates, Greif, Singh 2002; Grossman 2002; Levi 1988). Long time horizons are key to the onset of cooperation, stateless or not, but what happens when violence specialists do not have a sufficient time horizon?

To answer this question I examine combinations of political order involving three actors: the state, other violence specialists, and civilians.<sup>2</sup> In the first situation a violence specialist, either the state or another state-like actor, establishes a local monopoly on the use of violence. The specialist in violence provide order when they realize that they can survive and benefit by assisting in the growth of their subjects' prosperity (Bates 2001; Olson 1993). If this is the case, producers will believe the specialist will not engage in predation and invest. In turn, the specialist will delegate authority to those with resources and skills, resulting in subjects being able to organize and govern economic organizations. The final result is that those violence specialists will “vest their power in those who will invest their capital”, securing their survival (Bates 2001, 85). There are three possible combinations of this type of order: state order, non-state order (gangs, organized crime, rebels), or overlapping order. In all these cases, the specialist uses violence for wealth creation.

Either one of the three types of order will leave civilians content, secure from other violence specialists and from their own. Civilians consider alternatives only in response to a threat that forces them to pool their resources towards a shared state-like structure (Boix 2015). In the absence of destructive violence, they have little incentive to engage in alternatives. Civilians, rather than migrate, loot, or resist will engage in productive activities under the common knowledge that none will loot. That is, they will carry out a non-state cooperative equilibrium, or if looting is normalized a local state will form, either way they will not have to resort to costly alternatives.

We now move into an environment in which specialists rather than using violence for

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<sup>2</sup>I assume civilians do not have a preference on the type of actor who supplies order as long as it is stable.

wealth creation uses it for wealth destruction. Destructive violence can be carried out by the state and other specialists, leading to three versions: state, non-state, or simultaneous predation. Like cases under order, civilians are agnostic as to the specialist carrying out destructive violence. Citizens no longer have an incentive to produce wealth since a portion of income is subject to the incoherent extraction policy of the violence specialist (Olson 1993). The specialist has failed to produce political order. With no security, subjects are not only fearful of raiding from their local violence specialist but also of other neighboring ones and fellow subjects. Reverting to predatory tactics removes the cost subjects would incur for plundering their fellow citizens (Bates 2008). Civilians in either of the three types of predation look for alternatives to their current situation.

All violence specialists are predators. They would take as much revenue as possible if they could (Levi 1988). It is not that they take but how much they take and what they do with it. Take a share and provide security and civilians will not consider alternatives. However, use violence for destruction and you may have a fight on your hands. Civilians consider alternatives such as migration and resistance due to payoffs. For example, under a militia group the payoff for civilians will be their production minus their defense expenditures. Civilians would have to shift part of their resources away from production and towards defense. Defensive actions, such as patrols and checkpoints, would reduce time and resources for economic activities. They would trade-off a part of their economic production for the production of security, in effect lowering their wealth for the added production of security. Civilians will only prefer a militia if the total output, net of the time devoted to defense, is greater under the rule of militias than under violent expropriation. That is, civilians will prefer a militia when the cost from looting are higher than the costs of self-defense. The cost from looting are higher than the costs of defense when the violence specialist acts as a predator. Civilians make a similar calculation when considering migration, non-violent resistance, or collusion with the predator. This leads to the question of why violence specialists would decide to switch from protector to predator and why civilians would choose guardianship over predation.

I outline the theory and explain onset by first discussing why violence specialists resort to predation and why civilians decide to arm for protection. The main argument is that varying time horizons create the conditions for guardianship militias rather than another predatory actor. A democratization shock has heterogeneous effects, lowering horizons for specialists in violence and raising them for civilians. A high discount rate pushes specialists to switch to destructive violence. When there is no tomorrow, then there is no incentive to behave with restraint. For civilian militias, political reforms lowers their discount rate and increases the extent to which they value the future relative to the present. Militias with a

low discount rate will have an interest in securing their future not plundering it. *I propose that predatory violence specialists should raise the risk of civilian militia onset.* Below I explain the role of violence as either productive or destructive after which I turn to discuss the horizons of violence specialists and civilians that give rise to militias.

### **3.2.1 The Role of Violence**

Actual or threatened physical harm are part of the repertoire of violence specialists. Violence takes two forms, either serving to create or destroy wealth. Productive violence, or tamed violence as Bates (2001) calls it, keeps subjects from harming or preying on other subjects. Part of the stabilization involves demilitarizing private forces, obtained through a combination of repression and co-optation. It also means punishing other violence specialists, armed actors, or individuals who engage in raiding or harming other subjects. Protective violence aims to enforce the equilibrium of order by defending property rights and encouraging subjects to engage in productive activity (Bates, Greif, and Singh 2002). In return they are paid by subjects who consume their services. They sell protection. This may be protection from other armed groups but it is also protection from their own attacks (Tilly 1985). Protection is a commercialized good. Actual or threatened physical violence is organized as a means to increase economic production (Olson 1993).

Destructive violence is that of expropriation. This type of violence takes two forms: physical and material violence. Physical violence such as murder and assaults have the first effect of physically eliminating or coercing challengers. It also has the second effect of deterring others from challenging an actor's policy. Physically coercing a challenger eases the actual process of looting, this does not speak to the mental and social impact of harming someone, as the owner of the property is not able to defend their claim or are forced to comply. That same violence, which serves to ease the process, also serves to deter others from defying and reinforces a specialist's policy. Beating someone who refuses to pay protection money not only makes that person more likely to comply but also makes others more likely to pay for protection to avoid physical violence.

The Klan used physical violence to deter challenges to the white caste system of the South. It targeted those they perceived as challenging segregation. Violence was meant to eliminate the person challenging their hold on the South but it was also meant as a signal to others as a warning not to oppose segregation. For example during 1964 in Concordia Parish, Louisiana, the White Knights, believing that Henry Dee was a militant revolutionary, kidnapped him as well as his friend, Charles Moore, as they hitchhiked to pick up his paycheck (Nelson 2016). Klan men tied them up, assaulted them with a beanpole, and

interrogated them. Asking them about gun smuggling, Black Muslims, and insurrectionists the teens knew nothing about, one falsely claimed that a local black pastor was hiding guns. Some of the Klan men left to inform the local sheriff of their actions. Rather than arrest the men, the sheriff and a highway patrol officer traveled with them to search the church without a warrant. The beaten teens were driven to an offshoot of the Mississippi River, there the Klans men tied the boys to a Jeep engine block and dumped them in alive. At the time the Klan's hysteria over the growing momentum of the civil rights movement and potential federal legislation was reaching a panic. This is just one of many examples of Klan violence as a means to eliminate and intimidate those challenging segregation. CORE workers, NAACP chapter presidents, and people who attended meetings and demonstrations were the frequent target of Klan violence.

Violence was not limited to Black Americans. On February 8, Roy J. Beason, was abducted and beaten by the Klan in Adams County, Mississippi for allegedly having an affair with a black woman. As this example shows violence was also related to social rule such as interracial dating or sexual relations. As segregation was the system upon which whites maintained a privileged position, violence had the outcome of not so much expropriation of wealth but the prevention of Blacks from accumulating it and the retention by whites, among the other benefits of political and social domination.

This is different than other violence produced by state like specialists such as the mafia. The mafia is a private enforcer of contracts that uses unlicensed violence in an unregulated market (Blok 1975; Gambetta 1993). There are economic activities that are made illegal and go unregulated by the state, however, like legal economic activities, contract enforcement is still needed. The mafia provides services and, like states, creates its own opportunities for a protection racket (Tilly 1985). For example, in Sicily the owners of a furniture store asked the Catania family for help in ridding an extortionist. In a set up, the Catania family sent an enforcer to deliver the extortion payment but instead killed the man (Gambetta 1993). The favor granted the Catania family a partnership in the store and also a warning to other would-be extortionist. By taking over a share of the business, the mafia appropriated wealth as payment for protection and afforded the business the opportunity to continue operating free of unregulated extortion much like a state.

### **3.2.2 A Violence Specialist's Horizon**

Discount factors are key to understanding why violence specialists turn to predation. A specialist with a low discount rate acts as a guardian of subjects, for a price. The shadow of the future has been a key component of the literature on non-cooperative bargaining (Ax-

elrod and Keohane 1985; Fearon 1998; Oye 1985). In the simplest form, non-cooperative bargaining examines the interaction of two players who are trying to maximize their payoffs in a Prisoner's Dilemma. One or both sides might defect believing they can gain more. Time horizons relate more closely to a Prisoner's Dilemma game with repeated play. In a single play of a two-person game, each self-interested player should defect rather than cooperate, despite each player benefiting the most from mutual cooperation (Luce and Raiffa 1957).

The outcome is altered in repeated play. The higher the future payoff is valued relative to the present-day value, the less the incentive to defect today. Violence specialists have an incentive to continue providing protection, that is cooperate, when they can secure a steady flow of tax payments (Bates 2008). The tax level must be high enough to induce the regime away from confiscating wealth but low enough to provide citizens an incentive to pay rather than to withhold (Bates, Greif, Singh 2002). The loss of tax payments provides a check against government predatory behavior. If violence specialists prey on citizens, that is exchanging long-term tax payments for the short-term benefits of loot, it faces a new environment in which attempting to seize future property it encounters a society that is armed and less wealthy and therefore more costly and less rewarding. Both the positive inducement of public revenue in the form of tax payments to the violence specialist to penalize those who raid and the negative prospects of securing sub-optimal loot in an armed society creates political order. Actors cooperate when the relative value that players place on the future is large (Schelling 1960). When the length of interaction between actors is narrow, cooperation through the use of reciprocity is difficult to achieve (Axelrod 1984).

A long shadow of the future is not always possible and can be shortened by political reform. I argue militia emergence is possible when a violence specialist discounts the future. Under a short shadow of the future, the specialist will prey on subjects (Bates, Greif, Singh 2002; Boix 2015). A specialist discounts any possible future punishment, making the immediate payoffs from destructive violence more enticing. The move to plunder without supplying protection triggers the breakdown of order as the specialist is no longer concerned with future losses of rent extraction as they are heavily discounting them.

However, destructive violence is not costless. For specialists, destruction violence has the same benefit: additional resources (only distinguished by the amount extracted at a given time). However, each strategy has a different cost attached to it. The specialist will balance the trade-off between the payoff and cost attached to each path. The cost of productive violence are materials in the form of resources devoted to security, while the cost of destructive violence is a poorer world as subjects have little incentive to produce or create capital since it may be stolen by bandits. Therefore the cost of productive violence

is incurred up front while the costs of destructive violence occurs later. When the time horizon is shortened, the trade-off between the cost and benefit shifts in favor of accepting a lower future payoff since associated destructive costs will be incurred later. Organizations working under a constrained time prioritize the most important goal that can be achieved in the short term and as a result are more likely to accept the trade-off associated with expropriation and destruction.

The overriding preference, under a shortened horizon is survival. In an insecure environment, with fatal threats abound, actors will strive to secure immediate survival above all else (Inglehart 1997). Under long time horizons, violence specialists trade off maximizing current payments for greater future payments. Under short time horizons, it is the opposite. They trade off future payments for the maximization of current payments. Desperate groups working under a shortened horizons will be more likely to make the trade-off. When a violence specialist experiences shortened horizons that induce them to find resources to continue existing, the incentive for destructive violence should be higher. It is optimal only when survival is at risk and not possible through the more time-consuming process of productive violence.

Changes in their discount factor may result from political reforms that increase uncertainty for specialists such as democratization. For example, the former Soviet Union under Gorbachev legalized opposition parties which in part resulted in elite officials looting state enterprises due to an uncertain future (Bates, Greif, Singh 2002).

In the case of Mexico, the end of one-party rule in 2000 marked a switch in drug policy. The government increased targeting of cartel leadership, fragmenting organizations and in the process sparking a war between the state and cartels (Calderón et al. 2015; Guerrero Gutierrez 2011; Phillips 2015). The Calderón administration prioritize the leadership strategy (targeting for arrest kingpins and lieutenants) as a key part of his counter-narcotics policy (Calderón et al. 2015). By the start of 2011, the Mexican government had arrested or killed twenty of the thirty-seven most wanted drug lords, twice the number captured during the two previous administrations (Guerrero Gutierrez 2011). However, the decapitation strategy created the unintended consequence of increasing violence (Phillips 2015). Arrest and killings of kingpins created tensions and fragmentations within organizations. Splintering attracted the interest of rival organizations which viewed the targeted group as weak, creating an opportunity for rivals to attack and seize strategic territory. Fragmentation and intensified fighting with rivals shortened time horizons of targeted organizations as they fought for survival. The uncertain future of the organization necessitates the forced expropriation of resources that cannot be obtained from the lengthy process of drug trafficking.

Outside of political reforms, there are other exogenous shocks that alter actors' dis-



count factor. Another important cause of varying discount rates are economic reforms. The hacienda system had been in place for hundreds of years in Peru and other Latin American countries. They were large estates run as semi fiefdoms. In Peru, the legal standing of that system came to an end in 1969. That year General Juan Velasco Alvarado abolished haciendas. The decision was in part based on ending the unjust social order and also on modernizing the country. Reform did not have the intended results most hoped it would. A drowning economy in the 1970s and mismanagement prevented the reaping of benefits. However, the actions of the government had raised expectations among villagers and even encouraged them to arm themselves for a better life (Starn 1999). The government fostered a feeling among rural poor of entitlement to prosperity, a place in the nation, and personhood (ibid).

At the same time, massive theft followed land reform in the Peruvian countryside. Theft was described as being everywhere. Horses, chickens, and crops were not safe from thieves. How former landowners and their coercive capacity fit into widespread theft has been less studied. A deeper look into former landlords makes sense given their historic role in the provision of violence (Bates 2001; Moore 1996; Tilly 1990). It seems unlikely that former hacienda owners and their armed foremen left ex-serfs to live out their dreams. It is much more likely that they attempted to coerce them into sharecropping, resembling the fate of freed people following the US civil war (Foner 1988). In 1976, after a break-in at a schoolhouse in Cuyumalca a militia, the Ronda Campesina, formed that day to patrol the dream of progress that took hold in the Peruvian Andes after land reform.

### **3.2.3 A Civilian's Horizon**

If the time horizon falls, the immediate payoffs from destructive violence are more attractive and the likelihood of political disorder is higher. Olson (1993) would describe this type of actor as a roving bandit. The roving bandit will not enforce long-term contracts, respect debt, or consider future output. However, this is self-defeating. Destructive violence may extend their rule in the short term, allowing them to survive and continue to fight another day, but it comes at a long term cost. Predation results in an immediate benefit but that surge or maintenance of income gives way to a long term loss as society becomes more militarized. A forward looking violence specialist would see that the losses outweigh the cost in the long run. Not only is the potential return smaller but they also face the possibility of armed resistance to their rule. Militias threaten predatory actors by substituting and/or neutralizing the violence specialist. To prevent destructive violence, civilians shift resources away from production and towards supplying defense against opportunistic

actors. The security that civilians produce is costly and suboptimal as they lack the comparative advantage of violence specialists but it affords civilians an opportunity to return to an equilibrium in which producers and warriors have no incentive to plunder.

Taking up arms entails its own risks but civilians accept them since destructive increases the cost from looting above the cost of defense. This is still not enough to explain why civilians form to protect rather than to plunder, essentially why militias are protective and not another roving bandit. After all, if there is general uncertainty about the future for all actors involved everyone should plunder since there is little concern about present actions. Civilians can join the predatory specialists or create their own group. In fact, some civilians do join the predatory actor. In Mexico, one of the most startling recruits for the cartels have been elite Mexican soldiers (Falco 2018). The leakage of Mexican special forces into the cartels first began in the 1990s when the Gulf cartel recruited members from an elite airborne unit, known as Grupo Aeromvil de Fuerzas Especiales (GAFE), to create its own armed enforcers known as Los Zetas. La Familia, the precursor of the Knights Templar, continued to recruit soldiers, luring them with expensive bottles of Scotch and lucrative job offers (*ibid*).

Yet, some civilians do not act as predators and instead form a protective armed group. For example, the Deacons did not “make daring sorties into the white neighborhoods or exact any sort of revenge” (Ardery 1965). This occurs when a civilian’s discount factor remains below that of the specialist. This points to the idea that discount factors are not constant across actors or even space. Factors varies across actors, including the violence specialist and civilians, indicating that democratization can increase a specialist’s discount factor and at the same time decrease (or have no effect) on a civilian’s factor — or at the very least maintain a lower factor. If their factor did not remain below that of the violence specialist then civilians might switch to destructive violence.

As important as varying discount factors across actors is spatial variation. The effects of an exogenous shock may be concentrated in certain areas, effecting the same actor to varying degrees across a given area. For violence specialists, high value targeting had varying effects on different types of DTOs. Regional cartels switched to predation while national cartels turned to oil extraction and human smuggling (Guerrero-Gutiérrez 2011).

An example demonstrates why varying civilian factors across time and space create the conditions for militia onset. During the civil rights movement in the United States, civil rights legislation and protests had two separate impacts. For the Klan, civil rights campaigns to end segregation in Deep South states threatened its survival. North Carolina, while the site of marches and other civil rights protests, was not targeted in the same intense manner by civil rights groups as Deep South states. In 1964, the Student Nonviolent Co-

ordinating Committee (SNCC), one of the leading civil rights groups, had 4 offices located within North Carolina compared to Mississippi's 30 offices (Carson 1995). That same year SNCC undertook five campaigns in Mississippi and none in North Carolina (ibid). It was in Deep South states like Mississippi, under a spotlight designed to show the US and world the terror of white supremacy, that the time horizon of the Klan fell. The 1954 Brown vs Board of Education ruling signaled a turning point for segregation and briefly shortened the shadow of the future for white supremacy by calling into question the Southern caste system, thus, giving rise to the civil rights Klan (Hill 2004). Yet many Southern states refused to capitulate, easing the sense of urgency. Little changed in the following decade until civil rights workers and Southern blacks pushed from the top and bottom for their rights (Umoja 2013). The Mississippi Klan faced a rapidly shortening horizon that led to an increasing use of violence for the maintenance of segregation. All Klan groups fought for white supremacy, whether through marches, speeches, intimidation, torture, arson, or violence, but it was those Klan groups facing an increasingly falling horizon that attempted to maintain segregation through a guerrilla war.

For civilians living under the yoke of the Klan, civil rights legislation and protests had the opposite effect on their time horizon. CORE's and SNCC's freedom summer campaign in Mississippi and Louisiana afforded black residents a larger vehicle to register previously repressed protests (Meier and Rudwick 1975). This is particularly the case in small towns in Deep South states. In rural areas, the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom of 1963 had less importance than the local march to open up the public pool that was broken up by dogs and batons (Dittmer 1994). In small Southern towns, there was a sense of being forgotten, or purposely ignored, by prominent national civil rights leaders and left at the mercy of the Klan and other white terrorists (Payne 1995). CORE's and SNCC's establishment of freedom houses, freedom rides, and support for protests, amplified their voice to a national level and raised the opportunity for local residents to claim their rights. The civil rights movement affected individuals and groups within the South to a different extent, favoring some and disfavoring others. It raised hopes of socially ascending and fostered fears of descending, triggering a sense of threat in some.<sup>3</sup>

In response to the Klan and increasing support from civil rights organizations, a self-defense group formed as a clandestine organization in Jonesboro, Louisiana. Their objective was to protect civil rights activists and black communities from Klan and other racist

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<sup>3</sup>The lowering of civilian discount rates may also account for the reversal of black migration. U.S. Census Bureau statistics suggest that nearly as soon as the Great Migration ended around 1970, it began reversing. Between 1965 and 1970, generally considered the migration's tail end, the South lost about 280,000 African-American residents. Just a decade later, between 1975 and 1980, it gained more than 100,000, a trend that has only picked up steam since.

violence. Rather than militias as an action of desperation (Godoy 2012), militias are an action of aspiration to secure their future.

So far, I have covered militia onset (a response to predation by a specialist discounting their future), why they choose to protect rather than plunder (a lower discount factor compared to the specialist), but civilians have other options than armed resistance or predation. For example, in the late 1990s in Los Angeles some communities took it upon themselves to reduce violence within their neighborhoods. Los Angeles since the 1980s had experience a rising crime rate, often linked to gangs, concentrated in black and brown communities (Friedman, Grawert, and Cullen 2016). In South Los Angeles, former gang leaders united to influence younger, more violent gang members to put down their arms (Krikorian 1988). Their countless hours of hitting the streets and talking to gang members brokered gang truces and a possible reduction in the homicide rate.

Civilian agency is largely based on Hirschman's (1970) classic troika: exit, voice, and loyalty. I will first address voice. Voice can be divided into violent and non-violent forms of defiance. I am interested in violent forms of resistance but it is possible for civilians to engage in non-violent defiance. This is what happen in Colombia. Civilians set up a council called ATCC to defend and advocate for the rights of villagers and protect them from armed groups such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and drug cartels (Kaplan 2017). However, the ability to non-violently protect civilians rests on the preference of the armed group. It is conditional on the ability of the community to alter the incentives and behavior of armed groups which is only possible when these groups are concerned about their reputations and legitimacy (ibid). Conditionality makes it difficult for civilians under the control of violent predators to form peace oriented organizations. Predatory actors are not concerned with their reputation or legitimacy, they are concerned about their survival, making it difficult for civilians to alter their preferences. An eye towards survival creates a "by any means" framework, limiting the likelihood of non-violent forms of resistance working.

Civilians can also flee. Returning to civilians' discount factors clarifies how they choose between exit and voice. People will only exit when the unclear benefit of moving is greater than the fixed and recurrent cost of living plus whatever cost will be incurred from staying (Laver 1976). The exit option as expressed through migration is the most attractive option to dissatisfied people usually when a new space can be occupied at low cost and which provide benefits that were not significantly lower than where people use to live (Hirschman 1978). Residents in the US and Mexico certainly used the exit option. In the US, between 1910 and 1970 an estimated 6 million African Americans left the South for the North (Toppo and Overberg 2015). There was a similar pattern of displacement in Mex-

ico. Around 281,418 people have been internally displaced since 2011 (Tuckman 2015). Migration is a referendum on the place that people are fleeing (Wilkerson 2010). Blacks, mostly from rural areas, fled the caste system of institutional Southern racism: restrictive Jim Crow laws, separate public facilities, and a dearth of economic opportunities (ibid). Southern black residents had a high discount rate and saw their future within the South as limited, preferring to exit to the North. The reversal of a high discount rate alters the cost benefit analysis for civilians choosing between exit and voice.

### **3.3 Conclusion**

Why do civilians move from consumers to producers of protection? The question challenges understandings of state power. It suggests that a state's monopoly on violence is observable in certain portions of its territorial, economic, and social entities and outside of those strongholds other violence specialists compete with the state. I propose that the uneven distribution of state violence is not limited to weak countries but instead is a fundamental feature of every state. State building is an ongoing process. It is a process of forming, establishing, and reestablishing power over territory or economic spaces while encountering challenges from other violence specialists. There are multiple competitors such as rebels, organized crime, and civilian militias that operate on the frontier of state power, where ever that frontier exist. Examining why a potential violence specialist forms is an important step in unpacking and re-conceptualizing state power. While the emergence of rebels and to some extent organized crime have been studied, civilian militias have been mostly forgotten. I argue that militia onset is a response to predation. An exogenous shock lowers a specialist's time horizon as a result switches to predation, violating one of the founding principles of political order: protection of property and livelihood. By rendering civilians insecure, predatory specialists provoke militias as the cost from looting exceed the cost of defense. Preferences switch towards forming a militia since civilians are unwilling to concede what is needed to satisfy the armed actor. Civilian militias forgo destructive violence when they have a low discount rate, prompting them to take up arms and patrol their neighborhood.

## CHAPTER 4

# Ya Basta: The Lime Picker versus the Narco

*“Nuestra guerra no es contra el Estado mexicano, ni siquiera contra el estado de Michoacán. Lo único que buscamos es que se restablezca el estado de derecho para poder tener una vida en paz.”* (Our war is not against the Mexican state, not even against the state of Michoacán, the only thing we are looking for is to restore the rule of law so that we can have a life in peace.)

— José Manuel Mireles (A leader of the autodefensas)

This chapter is the first of two testing the theory outlined in the previous chapter. I analyze one case in particular: autodefensas in the Mexican Drug War. The recent drug war has claimed the lives of more than 164,000 people from 2007 to 2015, higher than the number of civilian deaths in the wars of Afghanistan, 26,000, or Iraq, 160,500 (Breslow 2015).<sup>1</sup> This conflict has come to define and reshape the Mexican state. It has overhauled its judicial and police system in an attempt to root out systemic causes of drug violence (Uribe 2016). While the government attempts to dismantle drug cartels, the conflict exacerbates an already precarious security problem for citizens across the country. Some civilians took it upon themselves to address those security concerns by forming autodefensas to protect their family and property.

While the study of autodefensas has mostly been limited to journalistic accounts (Archibold and Villegas 2014; Asfura-Heim and Espach 2013; McCrummen 2013; Taylor 2013), there have been recent empirical studies attempting to understand the emergence of civilian militias in Mexico (Osorio Schubiger, and Weintraub 2016; Phillips 2017). This chapter seeks to explore why militias mobilized in certain parts of Mexico but not others through the use of a novel dataset on autodefensa growth and expansion across Mexico.

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<sup>1</sup>Some estimate the Iraqi civilian death toll closer to 500,000 (Breslow 2015)

Rather than viewing the rise of civilian militias as linked to security, inequality, or local institutions, as others have suggested, I find that autodefensas mobilize in response to predation. Cartel predatory behavior such as extorting, kidnapping, and intimidating, along with state absence, create an opportunity for community production of security. The opportunity creates a demand for protection services and incentivize citizens to form civilian militia groups. The relationship between predation and civilian initiated security-making further supports the concept of state making as a competition among violence specialists.

Before reaching the empirical analysis, I first provide the background from which the autodefensas stomped and lurched forward. After the brief history, I identify predatory cartels. I then recount the autodefensa movement that erupted out of the scorching lands of Michoacán and into the veins of Mexico. Next I lay out the data, after which I conduct statistical tests. I conclude with the implications of the findings. This is the first study, that I know of, to use a time-series cross-sectional dataset to examine the autodefensas as well as the first to examine the influence of all cartels, major or minor. By using this novel dataset I hope to plum the meaning of modern statehood.

## **4.1 History**

### **4.1.1 Drug War**

In December 2006, Mexican president Felipe Calderón launched a military campaign against drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) across the country, starting with the deployment of 6,000 troops to his home state of Michoacán (Tuckman 2012). The intensive counternarcotics campaign has since claimed the lives of more than 200,000, including politicians, students, and journalists (Lee and Renwich 2017). Within the first few months, the campaign brought some success such as the capture of drug lord Osiel Cardena Guillen, alleged former head of the Gulf cartel. By the end of February 2007 there were more than 20,000 soldiers and federal police spread out across Mexico as part of the drug war. In the first full year more than 2,000 people were killed. Cartels did not fall back into line. They struck back, killing Roberto Velasco Bravo, director of investigation for organized crime, Edgar Euebio Millan Gomez, federal police chief, and Esteban Roble Espinosa, commander of Mexico City's investigative police force, all within 8 days as well as killing hundreds of police and troops. There is broad consensus that Calderón's military approach contributed to the escalation of violence throughout the country (Dell 2011; Lessing 2015).

The question of why the drug war started in 2006 is an interrelated process. Calderón has consistently argued that taking the war to the cartels was the only way to stop Mex-

ico from becoming a “narco-state”. The campaign had a clear message: after decades of letting the power of the drug cartels grow, the Mexican state would take a stand for all to see. The first salvo in Michoacán aimed to contain rival cartels that engaged in tit-for-tat massacres as they battled over lucrative territory. President Calderón’s offensive was aimed at containing the rivalry between a locally based cartel called La Familia Michoacán and Los Zetas, at the time the enforcement arm of the Gulf cartel, which was transforming organized criminal warfare in Mexico with military-style strategizing and unbridled violence (Lakhani and Tirado 2016). Yet violence did not begin under Calderón. The surge started in 2005. A string of police and military operations by his predecessor Vicente Fox had failed to stem bloodshed (Tuckman 2012).

Mounting clashes between rival drug cartels certainly shaped the timing of the war, but political factors also influenced the decision. Calderón declared the war eight days after taking power, a move that was seen by some as an attempt to increase his political standing after a contested election. The 2006 presidential election was competitive between the two frontrunners: Calderón of the National Action Party (PAN) and Andrés Manuel López Obrador of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). The election was close. The protests, encouraged by López Obrador continued at Calderón’s swearing in ceremony, having to slip into the national congress through a back door to avoid barricades erected by the opposition at all the main doors. Inside the chamber clashes continued with representatives from PRD throwing punches and chairs at deputies from PAN in an attempt to reach the platform (Tuckman 2006). Chaotic violence marked President Calderón’s tenure from the start.

The role of the US cannot be ignored. In 2007, a counter-drug aid package was negotiated between US and Mexico. The Mérida Initiative appropriated over \$2 billion for security aid to Mexico. Through contracts with US based security firms, the Mexican government obtained Black Hawk helicopters, vehicles, surveillance aircrafts, intelligence equipment, arms, and more (Lakhani and Tirado 2016). In addition to equipment, the US has exported a kill or capture targeting strategy against the suspected leaders of Mexico’s drug empire. The high-value targeting (HVT) was borrowed from the US counterterrorism programs carried out in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other countries (Franzblau 2017). Without training, guns, and money, Mexico’s decade-long war on drugs would not have been possible (Lakhani and Tirado 2016).

Drug trafficking violence existed before 2006 but what made the conflict and continues to make the conflict so deadly is a combination of Mexico’s democratic transition, kill or capture targeting strategy, law enforcement effects, and availability of weapons. The ascent to power of Mexico’s opposition parties, epitomized by the election of Vicente Fox



in 2000, marking the end of 70 years of unbroken rule by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), is one explanation for why Mexican criminal organizations are more prone to violent behavior now (Astorga 2001, Snyder and Duran-Martinez 2009, Astorga and Shirk 2010). An increasing number of localities with different parties controlling different levels of government led to a breakdown of the pact between the state and organized crime groups. The informal pack prohibited visible drug-related violence and the sale of drugs inside Mexico (Astorga 2001). The decrease in government coordination facilitated the conditions for a violent conflict (Rios 2015).<sup>2</sup>

The kingpin capture or kill strategy is another factor and discussed in more detail later in the chapter. Related to the capture or kill strategy is the disruptive effect of law enforcement. Law enforcement undermines the capabilities of local criminal organizations to defend their territory, leading to neighboring groups attempting to overtake a weakened rival's "plaza" or geographical area of influence (Osorio 2015). Law enforcement disrupts the military balance among criminal organizations, motivating a challenge over the weakened rival's territory, thus setting off a turf war. Lastly, increased access to guns led to more violence. Dube, Dube, and Garcia-Ponce (2013) find that the lifting of the federal assault weapons ban in 2004 made it easier to obtain assault weapons in Mexico and contributed to violence.

## 4.2 Drug Cartels

Cartels can buy a kilo of cocaine in the Andean region for around \$2,000 (Keefe 2012). As it moves through the drug market its value only increases. In Mexico, that kilo is valued at more than \$10,000. Across the border in the United States it could sell wholesale for \$30,000 (ibid). Distribute it in grams at the retail level and that same kilo is valued at \$100,000 (ibid). It's not only cocaine. Cartels are diversifying and vertically integrating, producing and exporting marijuana, heroin, and methamphetamine. Between 80 and 90 percent of cocaine consumed in the United States is currently transshipped through Mexico (Organizations of American States 2014). That amount of drug trafficking produces a large profits. Gross revenue derived from exporting drugs to the United States is difficult to estimate given the nature of the market. However, estimates range from \$6.6, \$39, to \$64 billion (Rios 2008). The RAND Corp. estimates that Mexican traffickers earn \$30 billion in annual export revenue from cocaine, \$20 billion from heroin, and about \$5 billion from

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<sup>2</sup>PAN did not purposely set out to disrupt the informal pack between PRI and drug cartels. However, new politicians lacked the network and discretionary powers to maintain the informal pack. Unable to control crime, DTOs broke the pack (Rios 2015)

meth (Kilmer et al. 2012). Mexico is the number one foreign supplier of marijuana to the United States (Rios 2008).<sup>3</sup>

Drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) have been operating in Mexico for the past century, smuggling contraband across the Mexican border into the US (Beittel 2017). DTOs are fluid organizations that constantly shift (Corcoran 2013). While there are many DTOs operating in Mexico, the market is dominated by major cartels. When President Calderón entered office in December 2006 there were four dominant DTOs: the Arellano Felix Organization (AFO), the Juárez/Carillo Fuentes organization (Carillo Fuentes Organization (CFO)), the Gulf cartel, and the Sinaloa cartel. Under President Calderón's term, organizations have fragmented into many groups. There are up to nine major organizations: Tijuana/AFO, Sinaloa, Juárez/CFO, Gulf, Los Zetas, Beltrán Leyva, La Familia Michoacana, Knights Templar, and Cartel Jalisco-New Generation. Along with fragmentation of the major groups, many organizations have diversified into other types of criminal activity.

Guerrero-Gutiérrez (2011) suggests a typology of different DTOs. There are four main types of DTOs defined by their level of territorial control and business activities: national, regional, toll-collector, and drug trafficking cells. National cartels are vertically integrated DTOs. They control and maintain many drug routes along the Northern and Southern borders in Mexico. In addition to entry and exit routes, they have international routes to and from Mexico. They are primarily interested in expanding control over new access points along the northern border, bringing them into conflict with other cartels. These organizations seek to increase their profits from drug trafficking by diversifying into human smuggling and oil theft. They include Sinaloa, Gulf, Los Zetas, and Jalisco New Generation cartel.

Regional cartels have limited control over drug smuggling routes that pass through their territory. They play a secondary role in the drug trafficking business, receiving smaller profits. Unlike national cartels that use drug profits to diversify into human smuggling or fuel theft, regional cartels instead diversify into other profitable crimes such as extorting, kidnapping, and stealing cars. Regional cartels include Beltrán Leyva Organization, La Familia Michoacana, and Cabelleros Templarios.

Toll-collector cartels generate most of their income from toll fees received from other organizations that transport drug shipments through their territory along the northern border. Being confined to border municipalities, they cannot diversify their illegal activities as widely as national cartels. There are two toll collector cartels: Arellano-Felix and Ju'arez

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<sup>3</sup>U.S. Border Patrol has been seizing steadily smaller quantities of marijuana, from 2.5 million pounds in 2011 to 1.9 million pounds in 2014. Mexico's army has noted an even steeper decline, confiscating 664 tons of cannabis in 2014, a drop of 32% compared to the year before.

cartel.

Drug trafficking cells are usually pieces of fragmented national or regional cartels. They are locally based but their range of operation can extend from a few contiguous localities to several states. Their business activities include drug distribution and drug dealing within their controlled municipalities. Examples include La Resistencia, La Mano con Ojos, and Los Incorregibles.

Below I give a brief profile of regional DTOs since I argue that they are the most predatory of the three cartel types.<sup>4</sup> I outline their history, area of operation, and profit generating activities.<sup>5</sup>

### ***Regional Cartels***

#### **Beltrán Leyva Organization (BLO)**

The Beltran Leyva Organization mainly operates in the western coast of Mexico. It was founded by four brothers: Marcos Arturo, Carlos, Alfredo, and Héctor. As part of the federation with the Sinaloa cartel, BLO acted as the security force and enforcers for Sinaloa. To counter the power of rivals Gulf Cartel, which had created the Los Zetas, the BLO recruited U.S. born Edgar Valdez Villarreal, “La Barbie”, as a lieutenant in its armed wing that served as the Sinaloa organization’s enforcers, known as Los Pelones (InSight Crime 2017). The arrest of BLO’s leader, Alfredo Beltrán Leyva, through intelligence reportedly provided by Guzmán “El Chapo”, forced a split from the Sinaloa DTO in 2008 (ibid). A bloody conflict ensued between the former allies. During early 2009, the BLO began to encroach on the territory of its former ally in states such as Morelos, Guerrero, Jalisco, Sonora, and Durango, touching off a series of violent incidents in parts of central and Southwestern Mexico.

Targeted government enforcement efforts weakened the organization. Starting in 2009, Arturo Beltrán Leyva, was killed during a two hour shoot out with the Mexican military. In 2014, the final remaining brother, Héctor, was arrested. The demise of its leadership has resulted in the splintering of the organization into several smaller groups including Los Rojos and Guerreros Unidos (Beittel 2017). Los Rojos traffics in cocaine as well as kidnapping and extorting civilians (Cawley 2014). The Guerreros Unidos, according to the Mexican government, are responsible for kidnapping and murdering of 43 Mexican teacher trainees after local police in Iguala, Guerrero handed them over (ibid).

The BLO still remains influential. It operates in the states of Morelos, Guerrero, and Sinaloa (National Drug Threat Assessment 2016). Through its alliance with the Juárez cartel and Los Zetas it continues to move drugs across the border.

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<sup>4</sup>See Appendix B for an outline of national and toll cartels.

<sup>5</sup>I exclude drug trafficking cells since they are more like gangs rather than DTOs.

### **La Familia Michoacana (LFM)**

Based originally in the Western state of Michoacán, La Familia was established in the 1980s to protect communities from DTOs and other criminal organizations. However, it evolved into a drug cartel that engaged in much of the same behavior it originally sought to prevent (Logan and Sullivan 2009). Aligned with Los Zetas before the group split from the Gulf cartel, LFM broke from Los Zetas in 2006 (Suverza 2009). LFM employed many of the same military tactics that Los Zetas used to intimidate rivals and civilians such as extreme and symbolic violence (Finnegan 2010).<sup>6</sup> LFM also pushes a pseudo-ideology or religious aspect to justify violence which involves leaving signs, known as narcomantas, on corpses that refer to their death as divine justice (ibid). It specializes in methamphetamine production and trafficking as well as other synthetic drugs. It is also known to smuggle marijuana and cocaine as well as tax and regulate the production of heroin.

La Familia claimed to have won public support in Michoacán, acting as a de facto state. It resolved local disputes, provided employment, and engaged in social work. At times employing the language of a political insurgency or of an evangelical crusade, the group won hundreds of recruits in just a few years. At the height of its power, LFM was one of the most powerful and violent of Mexico's criminal organizations, engaging in drug trafficking, kidnapping, extorting, and racketeering. International contacts in methamphetamine distribution in Holland, India, China, and Bulgaria enabled it to move its product across the globe (Grayson 2010). In the US, it partners with criminal groups in major cities like Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, and Los Angeles, to move cocaine (ibid).

After 2010, LFM played a less important role. In November 2010, the organization reportedly called for a truce with the Mexican government and announced it would disband (Grayson 2010). In December 2010, it was reported that its co-founder Nazario "El Más Loco" as known as El Chayo, Moreno González was killed in a shootout with authorities, although his body was never recovered (Althaus and Dudley 2014). In March 2014 reports were proven false after Moreno González reappeared and was killed in a shootout with Mexican federal police in March 2014 (Stevenson and Castillo 2014). Jos de Jesús Méndez Vargas, "El Chango", took over after Moreno disappeared, but was arrested in June 2011. LMF fragmented after the targeting of its leadership and has been largely replaced by the Knights Templar in Michoacán, although active cells still traffic, kidnap, and extort in Guerrero and working class suburbs in Mexico City (Althaus and Dudley 2014).

### **Cabelleros Templarios**

In March 2011, banners hung throughout Michoacán announcing that the Cabelleros Tem-

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<sup>6</sup>One of its most infamous acts involved the rolling of five severed heads of allegedly rival criminals across a discotheque dance floor in Uruapan, Michoacán (Finnegan 2010).

plarios (Knights Templar) would continue to carry out "altruistic activities that were previously performed by La Familia Michoacana" (Sullivan and Bunker 2012). The Knights Templar started as a splinter group of LFM and claimed to be defending residents in Michoacán. Like LFM, the Knights are based in Michoacán and preach a version of evangelical Christianity. Propaganda from the cartel blends a curious mix of Michoacán regionalism, Christianity, and revolutionary slogans. One of the co-founders of the group "El Más Loco" Moreno González is regarded as a pseudo-saint by members. Soldiers raiding safe houses in Michoacán have recently found altars topped with three foot high statues in the image of Moreno, shown in golden medieval armor and carrying a sword (Grillo 2012).<sup>7</sup>

While the Cabelleros Templarios preach about defending residents, they specialize in trafficking and manufacturing methamphetamine and moving cocaine and marijuana north. One of the biggest traffickers of crystal meth to the United States, the cartel has an army of around 1,200 gunmen (Grillo 2012). However, with relatively little control over the cross-border drug trade, they are forced to negotiate with other cartels in order to move illicit products north. In addition to trafficking, the Knights extract payment from shops, gas stations, avocado growers, taxis, and iron mines. Iron ore has become a big business. It begun by shaking down mines for extortion payments, charging a quota but soon they demanded them to sell them or give them the mines (Cuvillier 2014). The cartel helped boost iron production at a time when Chinese industries created a large demand (ibid). In the first six months of 2013, a record 5.5 million metric tons of minerals sailed from the port of Lazaro Cardenas in Michoacán to China (Grillo 2012). The Knights controlled all aspects of social and economic life, killing many business owners, kidnapping people who objected, closing businesses, and collecting high extortion rates (Althaus and Dudley 2014). According to avocado growers in Michoacán, who provide more than half the global supply, the Knights Templar cut deeply into their profits (Beittel 2017).

The Mexican government and self-defense forces have reduce the strength of the Knights Templar. Moreno González, "El Más Loco", who co-founded the organization during his hiding, was killed in March 2014. Enrique "El Kike" Plancarte, second-in-command was killed a few weeks later. In late February 2015, the new leader of the cartel, Servando "La Tuta" Gomez, was captured (Noel 2015). With the capture of Gomez the group was largely

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<sup>7</sup>Narco-religion is not exclusive to the Knights, "El Chapo" Guzmán is a devotee of Jesus Malverde and Arturo Beltrán Leyva was devoted to Santa Muerte. However, Knights Templar are the only ones to develop a cult like messianic ideology (Licon 2011). The exact religious beliefs of the Knights are unclear. The Knights' infamous code book, which soldiers seized in raids, lists 53 commandments that members must obey. "The Knights Templar will establish an ideological battle and defend the values of a society based on ethics," says order number 12. Others concern discipline and organization (Grillo 2012). "Any knight who betrays the Templars will receive the maximum punishment, their properties will be taken and the same fate will befall their family," says number 52 (ibid).

debilitated and fragmented into spinoff groups such as Los Viagras (Kryt 2016). The remaining cells of Knights Templar fight for control of the state against the Jalisco-New Generation cartel.

### **4.3 DTOs, Decapitation, and Time Horizons**

There are two types of organized crime-related violence that are classified based on the criminal activities they foster: drug trafficking ridden violence — the main purpose is to maintain or gain control over drug trafficking routes, points of entry and exit, and distribution markets — and Mafia ridden violence — or local illegal protection markets (Guerrero Gutierrez 2011). When directed toward citizens, the main purpose of mafia ridden violence is to gain profits when DTO's have a marginal role in the drug trafficking business. When directed towards rival gangs and authorities, the purpose of mafia violence is to keep or gain control over a limited territory in which the organization could run its illegal activities. Mafia ridden violence is a more recent phenomenon than drug trafficking violence.<sup>8</sup>

Of the three main types of cartels, regional cartels are more likely to engage in predatory violence. This is particularly evident when comparing the Sinaloa and Knights Templar cartel. The Sinaloa cartel invests in and provide socio-economic goods and governance in order to build up political capital (Felbab-Brown 2019). Developing political capital through their sponsorship of illicit economies enhances security of the marginalized populations who depend on illicit economies for their basic livelihood (Felbab-Brown 2011). Sinaloa remains one of the few criminal groups in Mexico that has not diversified extensively into crimes such as kidnapping and extortion. It keeps a low profile to limit its exposure to enforcement and sustains a majority stake in the drug business rather than diversifying its empire.

In contrast, the Knights Templar's extortion, a form of taxation by a non-state actor, was not only a source of money but also a source of authority. In one case, the Knights Templar targeted the avocado industry in Tancítaro, Michoacán. Before 1997, importing of Mexican avocado into the US was banned. It was not until 2007 that the ban was fully lifted. Before the lifting of the ban about 45% percent of avocados consumed by Americans were imported, after 2007 it varied between 60% and 80%, most recently topping 85% in 2014 (Flannery 2017). In 2012, Mexico was responsible for nearly one-third of the world's avocados. The center of the avocado industry is located in Michoacán, more specifically in the tierra caliente region. The state of Michoacán alone produces 85% of Mexican

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<sup>8</sup>Mafia ridden violence is somewhat of a misnomer since the mafia is in the business of protection (Gambetta 1996).

avocados, roughly 26% percent of global supply, and is a 15 billion dollar industry. In the town of Tancítaro more than a million dollars' worth of avocado ships out every day on trucks. Conflict between rival cartels lead them to supplement their drug-smuggling income by extorting local business owners, kidnapping — often killing — landowners for ransom, seizing orchards, and torching local avocado packaging facilities (ibid)

Decapitation created a predatory actor. Lacking control over smuggling routes across territories large enough for them to generate sufficient profit, regional cartels diversified into expropriating and destroying wealth to survive in its fight against the state and other cartels. National and toll cartels shifted to other revenue generating activities that made use of their access to Northern and Southern borders. While regional cartel time horizons' were shortened by decapitation, civilians, especially those in rural areas, supported the government's tactics.

Cartels have existed in their current form since the 1990s when the cocaine smuggling route shifted from the Caribbean into Mexico. Yet, for the most part cartels refrained from selling drugs or engaging in any type of overt violence in Mexico. This changed following the democratic transition, epitomized by the election of Vicente Fox in 2000 (Rios 2015). The informal pack prohibited visible drug-related violence (Astorga 2001). Political heterogeneity inhibited negotiations between government levels, limits information sharing, impedes consistent practices, and creates a patchwork of corruption rather than a comprehensive framework (Rios 2015).

President Calderón expanded the policy of “war without quarter” started by President Fox (Boullosa and Wallace 2015). Calderón sent troops to Michoacán to contain rival cartels that engaged in battles over lucrative territory. The massive crackdown by Calderón reduced conditionality, leading to a large conflict between the state and cartels (Lessing 2017). Conditionality is the deliberate policy of directing more repressive force at cartels that use violence but limiting repression against those cartels that do not attack civilians or the state. Conditionality had been the policy in the past, that is, act against violent cartels but leave the rest to conduct their business. This is not what Calderón decided to do. With the support of the US —through the US funded Merida Initiative— and key advisors, the Mexican government's coercive power grew, deploying troops, targeting top kingpins for capture, and fragmenting cartels into smaller organizations (Guerrero Gutierrez 2011). Yet it did not curb violence nor did it reduce the profits of the cartels.

The same strategy of fragmentation had been successfully used in Colombia and achieved the intended results of lowering violence. Not in Mexico. Lessing (2017) argues that the difference was that Colombia relied on a policy of conditionality, or only targeting the most salient cartels, thereby creating incentives to forgo overt violence against the state. In

Mexico, Calderón's policy was unconditional. There was no incentive to eschew anti-state violence since all cartels would be targeted regardless of if they attacked the state or not.

A clear tactic of the unconditional crackdown in Mexico was the decapitation policy. Targeting the highest levels of cartel leadership differed from that of previous administrations. The Calderón administration focused much less on crop eradication of marijuana and poppy and seizure of cocaine and more on arresting leaders. While violence typically escalated during 2008 and 2009 in the drug-trafficking municipalities, in most mafia ridden municipalities organized crime-related deaths did not become endemic until 2010. Between 2009 and 2011, the army, navy, and federal police captured or killed twenty of thirty-seven of Mexico's most wanted drug lords, more than twice the number of kingpins captured during the last two administrations (Guerrero Gutierrez 2011).

The unconditional crackdown, and the decapitation tactic in particular, shortened time horizons for cartels. It did so in three ways. First, it created inter-cartel fighting. Drug cartels are in competition to control strategic crossings and territories to move their product (Calderón et al. 2015). When the government targets a DTO's leader, it weakens the organization, and in the process creates incentives for other cartels to challenge for control of trafficking routes and territories. The ensuing conflict puts at risk the survival of the organization not just because other cartels are attacking a weakened organization but also due to lower-ranking members fighting among themselves for control. Second, killing a leader or other high ranking members breaks the chain of command that disciplines lower members (Phillips 2015). Breaking the chain can disrupt and isolate DTO cells, leading to fragmentation and a changing of tactics to ensure the survival of the remaining cells. Lastly, capturing or killing a leader may result in a battle for succession within the organization. Other cells or factions may take this as an opportunity to split from the group, further jeopardizing its viability (Calderón et al. 2015).

### **4.3.1 Falling Time Horizons**

All DTOs were targeted by the kingpin strategy, see Figure 4.1.<sup>9</sup> In addition, at the start of 2010 the Mexican government focused more attention on disrupting criminal profits used to finance DTOs' operations (Seelke and Finklea 2013). In October 2012, the Mexican Congress approved an anti-money laundering law that subjected vulnerable industries to new reporting requirements and creating new criminal offenses for money laundering. As a result of the drug interdiction efforts, the profits of the DTOs have been curtailed (ibid).

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<sup>9</sup>Los Zetas were the most targeted DTO, measured by leaders killed or captured, with 18 leaders targeted. The second most targeted group, Sinaloa, had 12 leaders killed or arrested.



Yet, not every DTO reacted and adapted to government repression in a similar fashion. The typology of national, regional, and toll can help assess the impact of the kingpin strategy. Inter-cartel fights, breaks in the chain of command, and leadership struggles, can make it costly to engage in long-distance drug trade since it requires coordinating a large network.<sup>10</sup>

Decapitation alters how cartels generated their income. Mexican DTOs are in the business of selling contraband. They are a global business with forward and backward linkages for managing supply and distribution in many countries (Beittel 2017). They are concerned with bringing their product to market in the most cost effective way to maximize profit. Mexican DTOs are the major wholesalers of illegal drugs in the United States and have an increasing share of US retail-level distribution through partnerships with US gangs (Tucker 2017). Their primary tools of trade include violence and bribery, as the “Plata o Plomo” (silver or lead) phrase encapsulates, referring to the option of accepting bribes or facing death. Violence is used to discipline employees, enforce transactions, limit the entry of competitors, and lower the bribe price (Lessing 2017). Corruption limits government action against the organization, provides impunity, and sets up a well functioning operations. DTOs have to be patient in order to gain profits from drug trafficking, a patience that only comes when there is enough time.

High-level targeting lowered time horizon and led them to shift to other criminal activities to survive. Some DTOs have expanded their business activities to include human smuggling, stealing oil, extorting, kidnapping, and sex trafficking. The degree of control over drug trafficking routes provides information about the incentives to diversify into various types of illegal activities (Guerrero Gutierrez 2011). National and toll cartels have control over major drug trafficking routes and are more likely to expand their illegal activities to include human smuggling or oil theft, taking advantage of the routes they control. Regional and smaller DTOs, however, lack the capacity and structure to diversify into such illegal activities. Yet they do have the capacity to engage in extractive resource tactics to supplement losses from government repression. Not only does it help recover losses but it also plays a role in sustaining a DTO in its costly and prolonged fight against rivals and the government.

Regional cartels shifted from specializing in trafficking narcotics to specializing in seizing and destroying wealth. Cartels like the Knights Templar and La Familia before the decapitation strategy took full effect, employed most of their labor force towards moving

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<sup>10</sup>Cartels do not have to be targeted in order for time horizons to fall and its negative effects to take place. Cartel members just have to think it will happen and long term cooperation maybe jeopardized (Guillén, Torres, Turati 2018).

product, expanding their market, and coercing officials. Regional cartels do not exert control over any drug entry or exit points instead, only controlling segments along drug routes and have to pay toll fees to cross drugs to the United States. This changed after the high level targeting limited their ability to carry out their main income generating activities. Factions that have been displaced from drug trafficking had the assets, such as weapons, gunmen, and personal relations with some local authorities, that allows them to successfully engage in illegal protection provision (Guerrero Gutierrez 2011). They shifted from a trafficking specialist to violence specialist, using their labor and assets to generate income. This was the first effect of the decapitation strategy.

The second effect proved deadlier. Rather than acting as a benevolent specialist that is satisfied with a fraction of a subject's resources and willing to leave the rest, it switched to a predatory actor, extracting more than a fraction. High value targeting forced all cartels to expand beyond their traditional area of economic operation but it also forced them to find additional resources quickly. Facing state repression, internal fragmentation, and competition, regional cartels acted to ensure their survival. This came at the expense of those under their control.

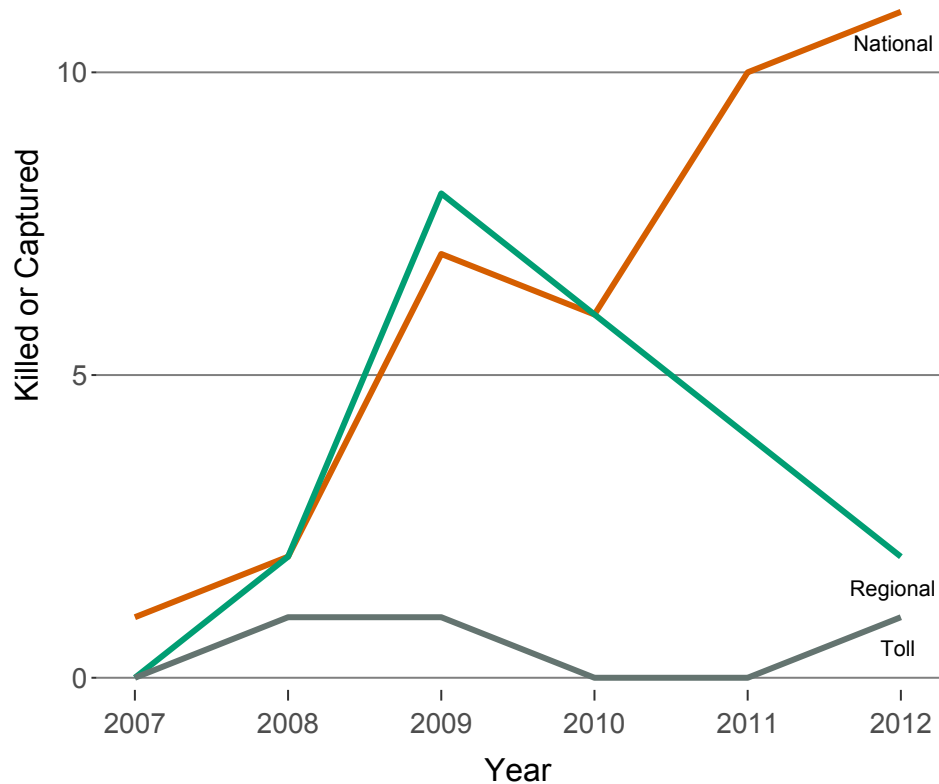
### **4.3.2 Raising Time Horizons**

At the same time that the decapitation of cartels was threatening and pushing regional cartels into predatory actions, the same campaigns were broadening the horizon of small town residents. In 2012, 71% of Mexicans said illegal drugs are a very big problem in their country and even more (77%) saw the violence associated with drug cartels as a major challenge. (Pew 2012). Concerns about illegal drugs and cartel-related violence are especially widespread in the North, where Mexico's cartels have been especially active.

Decapitation was a means to ease concerns of citizens. In 2009, see Figure 4.1, the government captured or killed a total of 16 senior cartel members, the highest number in any single year of the drug war and more than the past two years combined (1 in 2007 and 5 in 2008). Until the Calderón presidency, decapitation had not been a priority.

In 2012, the Peña Nieto administration vowed to redirect the state's focus. Instead of prioritizing the killing or capture of high ranking cartel members, the government would focus on root causes of violence such as high employment, lack of trust in the authorities, and poverty. However, the shift away from his predecessor's path of hunting down top leaders of drug cartels did not occur (Alexander 2015). In 2015, three years after coming to power, armed forces had killed or captured Mexico's "most wanted" drug kingpins. Of the 15 remaining on the attorney general's most wanted list, there were originally 37 but the

**Figure 4.1:** Cartel Leaders Killed or Captured by Type, 2007-2012



Calderón administration captured 22, Peña Nieto claimed nine midway through his tenure.

Regional cartels were especially targeted during the first years of the Peña Nieto administration. Of the six most-wanted drug lords captured or killed in 2013 and 2014 half came from regional cartels: Héctor Beltrán Leyva of the Beltrán Leyva cartel and Nazario “El Chayo” Moreno and Dionisio Loya Plancarte of the Knights Templar. In addition, Enrique “Kike” Plancarte, a high-ranking leader in the Knights Templar was also killed in 2014 but his name did not appear on the list of the 37 most wanted.

Rather than sticking to the list of the 37 most wanted, the Peña Nieto administration created its own list of 122 high level priority targets. At the end of his tenure, 105 had been removed from the list (Mosso 2018). Of the 105 arrested or killed, the majority occurred in the year 2013, 63 neutralized, followed with 13 in 2014 (ibid). Of the 105 targets eliminated, 13 belonged to regional cartels and all between the years 2012 and 2015. Though Los Zetas and Sinaloa experienced most of the losses, 57 eliminated, targeting seemed to be proportional to the level of territory controlled by the cartels — national

cartels control 43% of municipalities while regional ones control 13%.

Citizens supported the high value targeting policy. The Pew Research Center since 2009 has asked Mexicans whether they support the use of the Mexican army to fight drug traffickers. Every year the poll was taken, from 2009 to 2014, a vast majority (over 80%) of Mexicans supported the army and their use to fight the drug war. After the capture of Miguel Treviño Morales, Z-40, of Los Zetas in 2013 the deeply unpopular President experienced a bump in his approval rating (AP 2013).

There is a high level of confidence among the Mexican people in the army and marines, the two organizations carrying out the policy of decapitation. The opposite is true for municipal and state police. The pattern of high confidence in the army and marines holds even among states like Michoacán and Guerrero which have historically fiercely resisted the federal government (Avina 2014). In addition, more citizens than not agreed that the government's campaign against drug traffickers was making progress between the years 2009 to 2014.

High value targeting did not engender trust in elected officials to protect them. If that were the case citizens would not have formed militias or cited the lack of state action against cartels as a reason for forming them. Less than half of Mexicans see the courts (44%) and the police (38%) as having a good influence on the way things are going in the country (Pew 2012). In certain areas of Michoacán, there is no accountable government and no public trust that can be broken (Slater 2015). According to Mireles, a charismatic leader of the autodefensas and doctor, the militia must ward off all criminal elements, regardless of uniform (*ibid*).

Rather the policy of decapitation points towards a dual effect. For regional cartels, the strategy forced an exit out of trafficking and an entrance into highly extractive forms of expropriation to survive. For citizens, the policy, at a minimum, did not lower their time horizon. The army and marines, in the eyes of those living with roving cartels, were carrying out a policy that they overwhelmingly supported. Mexican authorities turned to the military because of the entrenched corruption of local and state police, who are often on gang payrolls (Fisher and McDonnell 2018). At the same time, the public was uneasy about the moral cost of the drug war: 74% said human rights violations by the military and police were a very big problem (Pew 2012).

The concern for human rights violations did not stop civilians from supporting the use of the army to fight drug traffickers. Supporting a policy that is self-harmful is partially accounted for by the violent nature of crimes committed by cartels. Exposure to violence is correlated with increased levels of anger and support for harsh punishment (García Ponce, Young, and Zeitzoff 2018). Morally outrageous crimes increase support for harsh punish-

ments. Citizens turn to militias because they promise harsher punishments than the state can provide (ibid). Punishment included taking of property, beating, torturing, and killing without due process because of a fear of suspected cartel members being set free by a corrupt court system. Decapitation of cartels afforded citizens a broader time horizon than cartels since it may have served as a spark for outraged citizens. Those under the brutal rule of the Knights Templar, La Familia Michoacana, and Beltrán Leyva Organization wanted more than the heads of cartels. They wanted its body, arms, hands, legs, and feet.

Returning to Tancítaro, the world capital of avocado production, security arrived at a high cost (Flannery 2017). Families whose orchards were seized by cartel gunmen were returned but not by the hand of the state.

## 4.4 Autodefensas

Tierra Caliente is located in three different states: Michoacán, Guerrero, and Mexico state. It is a long and arid valley surrounded by rugged mountain ranges that provide cover for mass production of opium, heroin, and meth. The illicit drugs are then moved north along the paved roads of the valley. It has a tropical climate and has the highest average annual temperature in Mexico (Manzo 2017). The inaccessible and remoteness of Tierra Caliente has for centuries pushed it to the periphery of state rule. Well into the twentieth century, the region was characterized as a refuge for all kinds of outlaws evading the state (ibid).<sup>11</sup> This changed with the rise of commercial agriculture. The Michoacán region is now the country's second most important producer of limes, primary source of avocados, and a wide variety of other fruits and vegetables. While the region is a center for agriculture it remains one of the poorest and least developed in Mexico. Many in the valley work low paying jobs: caring for orchards, picking fruit, or working seasonally in the packing sheds (Althaus and Dudley 2014).

It was here in 2013 in the fertile soil of Tierra Caliente that armed citizens emerged against the cult-like Knights Templar. Besides producing tons of US-bound methamphetamine, the organization fed off the local population. The Templars seized key parts of the legal economy, including much of the state's logging and mining industry. They expanded their reach into everyday life, adjudicating local crimes and punishing offenders publicly (Devereaux 2016).

Farmers of avocados and limes had to pay a quota for every kilo they produced; corn growers were forced to sell their maize cheaply to the criminals, who sold it at double the

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<sup>11</sup>In the 1960s the region was the base of two guerrilla organizations: National Revolutionary Civil Association (ACNR) and the Party of the Poor (PDLP) (Avina 2014).

price to tortilla makers; people who owed money handed their home over to the cartel, who brought notaries to sign over the titles (Tuckman 2012). Those who stood against the gangsters risked being tortured, sometimes publicly, or decapitated (Althaus and Dudley 2014). In Guerrero, narcos' began coming down from the poppy fields in the mountains to shake down anyone from taxi drivers to hotel clerks for extra cash (Matloff 2013). It got so bad that residents didn't venture out after dark.

Refusal meant businesses or residences might be burned down. Or worse. In convoys of SUVs emblazoned with red Maltese crosses and armed with grenade launchers, Templars roamed the land, kidnapping, collecting money, recruiting followers, trafficking in meth and all the while portraying themselves as protectors of Michoacán (Wilkinson 2014). Convoys of Templars would arrive in town, their trucks covered in bullet holes and painted with bloody hands on the side of their vehicles seeking their target (Holman 2015). Men and women would be kidnapped, some found dead while others are returned after ransom is paid. One woman frequently sees the men who kidnapped her relatives but there is nothing she can do (ibid). In another case 10 people were killed in an ambush while returning from a meeting with authorities about the Templars (Reza 2014). Local police forces and many politicians also colluded with the Templars, accepting bribes, looking the other way, and even assisting them (Tuckman 2012).

On February 24, 2013, Hipólito Mora, a lime grower in the town of La Ruana, called for a town meeting at 10am (Devereaux 2016). At the meeting he made his case for the formation of a militia. Asking the crowd what they should do in the face of Templar violence. For Mora the answer was clear: fight. He managed to convince about 250 people to join him (ibid). They set off with whatever they had to fight the Templars: decades old home made shotguns and bird hunting rifles but also AR-15s and AK-47s (Wilkinson 2013). They marched to Templar owned or stolen property. When they arrived they found them abandoned. They plundered their newly conquered territory, finding weapons and luxury cars for their nascent movement.<sup>12</sup> Hours later in the near by town of Tepalcatepec,

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<sup>12</sup>How the autodefensas managed to obtain high caliber weapons, bulletproof vests, and armored pick-up trucks is debated. Autodefensa leaders claim most of their material came from Knights Templar strongholds they overtook as well as business patrons who diverted their farming and business profits to the cause (Archibold and Villegas 2014). Mora, the leader of the La Ruana chapter, suggests that AR-15s and AK-47s were at times purchased by lime producers (Devereaux 2016). Groups of local businessmen channeled tens of thousands of dollars to the autodefensas, which in the initial days were made up of farmers and townspeople (ibid). In Tepalcatepec, cattle owners, angry that the cartel was about to take over their association's governing board, joined the autodefensas (McCrummen 2013). A group of local businessmen channeled tens of thousands of dollars to form the militia (Archibold and Villegas 2014). To arm fighters, business patrons invested money for the group to purchase assault-style rifles and trucks in Texas (ibid). One local mango producer contributed about \$30,000 of his own money (ibid). Avocado sellers and growers in the town of Tancítaro brought back guns from the US hidden in their trucks (Flannery 2017). The avocado growers association even funds a semi-professional police force called the Tancitaro Public Security Force that trains in

Jose Manuel Mireles, a doctor, did the same.

The movement quickly expanded after the initial meeting. Autodefensas erected barricades at entrances to towns, engaged in gunfights with cartels, and executed alleged cartel members. The Templars fought back, setting up blockades to strangle communities with autodefensas, leading to shortages of food, gasoline, and medicine (Devereaux 2016). Retaliation did not stop more towns from taking up arms. Militias continued to mount ambushes. Groups formed in the Pacific states of Michoacán, Jalisco, and Guerrero, in the northern border state of Chihuahua, in the eastern states of Veracruz and Tabasco, and just outside Mexico City (Asfura-Heim and Espach 2013). Autodefensas operated in 25 out of 32 states, most geographically concentrated in the states of Michoacán (22.7%) and Guerrero (19.2%). There are also high concentrations in Jalisco, Chiapas, and Veracruz (Osorio, Schubiger, and Weintraub 2016). Most groups tend to focus on local crime such as robbery, rape, and other violent attacks. They have limited their actions to seizing alleged delinquents and criminals and either punishing them publicly or handing them over to the police (Asfura-Heim and Espach 2013).

The government struggled in its response to the rise of the autodefensas. Many feared that a group with little oversight could exacerbate violence, undermine the rule of law, violate rights, and increase crime (ibid). The director of the National Security Commission argued that drug cartels were behind the autodefensas, providing arms and funds. Others accepted them. The governor of Michoacán, pledge support for the groups in the form of police training and equipment. The federal government, at first, called on the self-defense groups to disarm, arguing that vigilantes with no law-enforcement training or accountability would exacerbate the volatile situation (Archibold and Villegas 2014). As they moved to disarm the groups, they were blocked by protesters, which resulted in the military killing three residents (ibid). Rather than continue confronting them and those communities they had failed to protect, the government signed an agreement with groups, transforming them into an officially sanctioned security force (Fausset 2014). One year after the autodefensas confronted the Templars, the government decided to co-opt the vigilantes and create the Rural Defense Corps under the control of the military (ibid). As part of the agreement they had to register their weapons and formally disband (Wilkinson 2014). They were allowed to keep their handguns and assault weapons but no rocket launchers (ibid). Some have

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mobile tactic urban combat (ibid). Since the uprising some groups have hired accountants to help manage the funds coming from wealthy ranchers and businessmen within Mexico, many of whom have been displaced because of violence (Kinosian 2014). Funding also comes from remittances that Mexican immigrants in the US send back home (Wilkinson and Becerra 2014). Michoacán is one of the top Mexican states exporting workers to the US, it is not surprising that fundraising events occurred in Southern California and Chicago (Reza 2014). Certain actors within the Mexican government argue that autodefensas were funded by drug cartels, such as New Generation, as a means to target rivals (Partlow 2014).

complied, more than 3,000 people have signed up and more than 6,000 weapons have been registered (ibid). Yet not all are complying with the agreement. Some have refused and continue to keep arms outside the Rural Force, citing the government's inability to guarantee protection against vengeful cartel bosses (Lucio 2014). Jose Manuel Mireles, the doctor who led the Tepalcatepec autodefensas, refused to join and was arrested in June 2014 along with 80 of his supporters for possessing illegal weapons (Fausset 2014).

Splits and violence has erupted between competing groups. One of the most bitter rivalries involves Mora, the founder of the autodefensas in La Ruana and Luis Antonio Torres Gonzalez, "El Americano", a leader of the Buenavista autodefensas. The feud started when Rafael Sánchez, a prominent figure in the local lime business was found dead in a charred truck close to La Ruana (Wiilkinson 2014). Sánchez had been a major supporter of Gonzalez, "El Americano". Gonzalez accused Mora of killing Sánchez. Mora and Sánchez had been locked in a land dispute, Sánchez accused Mora of refusing to return seized lime orchards and fields (ibid). Mora in turn accused Gonzalez of maintaining criminal ties (Devereaux 2016). In retaliation, Gonzalez flooded La Ruana with hundreds of his supporters (ibid). Mora only escaped with the aid of a government helicopter. Later that year on December 16, 2014, Gonzalez led a convoy of 200 to 300 gunmen into La Ruana, armed with .50-caliber rifles. The armed convoy stopped at a Mora affiliated barricade and dismounted. Both sides exchange words, rocks were thrown, and finally shots. The gunfire lasted nearly two hours. At the end of the confrontation 11 people died, including Mora's son, Manuel (ibid).

## **4.5 Data and Research Design**

The historical overview suggests that the emergence of autodefensas in Mexico is broadly consistent with the theoretical model. Mexican civilian militias formed in response to the predatory tactics of certain cartels.

There are other possible factors that may have contributed to the emergence of the autodefensas that I test including: insecurity, crime, violence, corrupt government officials, and economic underdevelopment. Looking at the data reveals why some municipalities formed militias while others did not.

In the following analysis I examine a new dataset on civilian militia formation during the Mexican drug war. The dataset is a cross-section of all Mexican municipalities. Data for the dependent variable, autodefensas, is from 2013 while independent variable data is from 2012, or the most recent year possible. I examine the data using a rare event logistic regression model due to the binary nature of the dependent variable. In addition, to the cross



sectional analysis, I carry out a more limited time-series cross-sectional analysis focusing on the years 2011 to 2015. Lastly, I use a matched data set as a way of preprocessing data to gain the advantage of reducing the link between the treatment and control variable.

#### 4.5.1 Autodefensas

The dependent variable, *autodefensa*, is a dichotomous variable that is coded 1 for municipalities that experience an autodefensa group in the year 2013.<sup>13</sup> I use multiple sources to gather information on the location of militias. Mexican media sources such as *El Cambio de Michoacán*, *El Universal*, *Excésior*, *Milenio*, and *Animal Político* are used to code the location of autodefensas. To minimize concerns of coverage bias in news reports, I use information gathered from Mexico's National Commission on Human Rights (CNDH) to supplement media coverage. CNDH is a fully independent public organization that enjoys judicial, organizational, and functional autonomy from the Mexican government. In 2014, CNDH chronicled the history of the autodefensa movement by conducting 3,000 testimonies, including interviews with over 300 autodefensa members and about 600 state and municipal officials. The reports were obtained from an archival research trip to the National Archives of Mexico located in Mexico City.

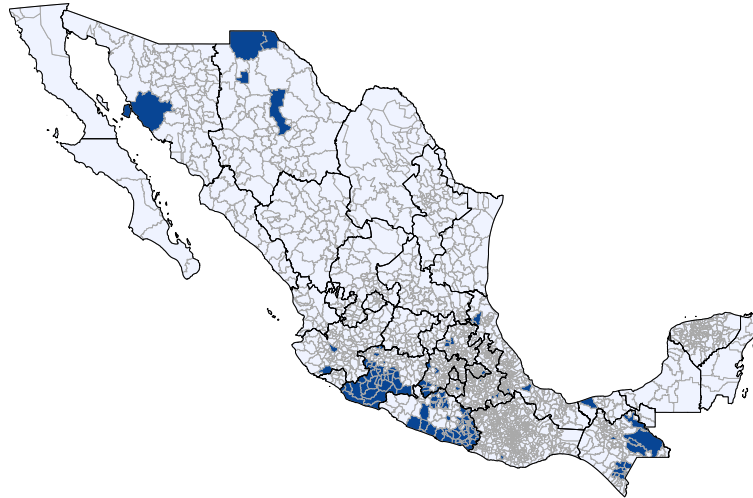
Figure 4.2 displays the location of autodefensas by municipality. In total there are 14 states, of 32 federal entities, and 133 of 2,438 municipalities, that experienced autodefensas. Most groups are concentrated in the states of Guerrero and Michoacán, 35% and 28%, respectively. In Guerrero, most of the autodefensas are concentrated in the Costa Chica, Montaña, and Costa Grande region. In Michoacán, most are located within the Tierra Caliente region.

Before moving on to the explanatory variables, it is important to consider the frequency of militia formation. Most municipalities had no militias. The rarity of civilian militias presents some statistical problems. Standard logistic regression techniques can underestimate the probability of rare events (King and Zeng 2001). Estimated coefficients from logistic regression analysis with many fewer observed events than non-events will be too small. In addition, standard methods for computing event probabilities with logistic regression produce results biased in the same direction as the coefficient estimates. To manage this problem I use a bias-corrected logistic model for rare events data (King and Zeng 2001). Individual observations are also correlated within counties and years. To address

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<sup>13</sup>I focus on the year 2013 for two reasons. First, this was the first wave of autodefensas to emerge in the modern period of Mexico. Therefore making the groups comparable. Second, after 2013 the government legalized some groups. Legalized groups fall outside the scope of this project since they are not civilian militias but instead state sponsored groups.

**Figure 4.2:** Autodefensas per Municipality, 2013



this, I used robust standard errors (Golder, 2006). Standard errors were adjusted using Lumley and Heagerty (1999) weighted empirical adaptive variance estimators where the true dependence structure does not need to be specified prior to running the analysis.

#### 4.5.2 Types of Cartels

The main independent variable, cartel type, is used to measure the type of dominant cartel within a municipality.<sup>14</sup> I use Guerrero-Gutiérrez's (2011) typology of different DTOs. There are three main types of DTOs defined by their level of territorial control and business activities: national, regional, and toll-collector.<sup>15</sup> Based on Guerrero-Gutiérrez, the

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<sup>14</sup>Cartels are for the most part not seen as militias. However, recently some have taken on activities that resemble that of autodefensas. In my mother's home town of Mechoacanejo, Jalisco, a town of 2,600 inhabitants, the Jalisco-New Generation cartel patrols the streets, questioning unknown individuals, and surveilling the town. These actions, unlike autodefensas, are geared towards economic activities. On one occasion, a vehicle was forced to pull over at the entrance of the town. All occupants were asked what they were doing in the town, where they were from, and who they knew in the town. The questions were design to screen out potential challengers. The Jalisco-New Generation cartel has reasons to secure their investment, they recently paved a highway that runs along the back routes, a highway that is in better condition than of the federal toll one.

<sup>15</sup>I exclude drug trafficking cells for two reasons. First, they are mostly focused on small-scale drug distribution, with territorial control a secondary concern. Second, they are fluid organizations, combining and fragmenting several times.

national cartels are: Sinaloa, Los Zetas, Jalisco-Nueva Generación, and the Gulf cartel.<sup>16</sup> Regional cartels are considered to be: La Familia Michoacán, Los Caballeros Templarios, and the Beltrán Leyva Organization. Toll collector cartels are: Juárez and Tijuana. I use the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) mapping of cartel territory from 2012 to measure the dominant cartel in each municipality (Beittel 2017). The DEA defines drug cartels as "large, highly sophisticated organizations composed of multiple DTOs and cells with specific assignments such as drug transportation, security/enforcement, or money laundering. Command-and-control structures are based outside the United States; however, they produce, transport, and distribute illicit drugs in the US with the assistance of DTOs that are either a part of or in an alliance with the cartel" (2015b). DTOs are "complex organizations with highly defined command-and-control structures that produce, transport, and/or distribute large quantities of one or more illicit drugs" (2015b). Dominant cartels are the central cartels relative to other active DTOs in the same geographic territory (DEA 2015b). There are three binary measurements corresponding to the three types of cartels: *National*, *Regional*, and *Toll*. If a national, regional, or toll cartel is the dominant DTO within a municipality I code the *National*, *Regional*, or *Toll* variable as one and zero otherwise.

Figure 4.3 shows the composition of cartel territorial control. National cartels are the most prevalent form of DTOs, controlling 43% of municipalities, followed by regional cartels with 14%, while toll cartels control only about 3%. As suggested by Arjona (2011), measurements of armed group activity are imperfect indicators of their presence. Non-state armed actors, like DTOs, may operate in an area without detection by the authorities or the media. Osorio (2015) suggests that, rather than considering the measure as a "verified presence", it is more accurate to use the indicators as "reported activity". The variables match theoretical argument that violence specialists under short time horizons are more likely to act as predatory actors. In this case, regional cartels, as suggested above, are more likely to engage in predatory activities due to their restricted control over major drug trafficking routes and lower capacity after the government targeted their leaders for arrest.

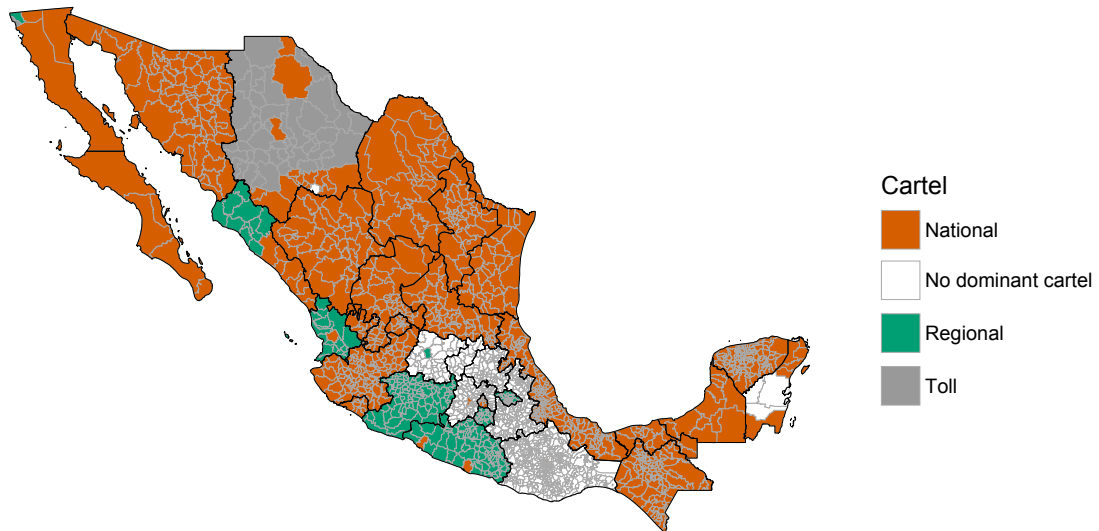
## State Capacity

In addition to the main independent variable, I also include other explanatory variables. I use several measures to account for state capacity. First I use *GDP per capita* in thousands of pesos from the year 2008. Higher income is a proxy for local police capabilities (Fearon and Laitin 2003). Municipalities with capable police forces can reduce the likelihood of militia onset by limiting drug cartel activity and disrupting militia networks. The data is

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<sup>16</sup>There is some debate as to whether the Gulf cartel is considered a national or regional DTO. However, I agree with Guerrero-Gutiérrez's categorization of the Gulf cartel as a national cartel.

**Figure 4.3:** Type of Cartel per Municipality, 2012



from Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI) taken from the EVES database (Bravo Regidor, Grau Vidiella, and Maldonado Hernández, 2014).

I also account for state capacity by examining the controlling party of a municipality. Magaloni et al. (2015) argue that state capture by DTOs is greater in areas where the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) holds office. During the PRI's dominance for most of the 20th century, politicians struck deals with DTOs, trading toleration for bribes. The long alliance between the PRI and DTOs resulted in variation in levels of law enforcement, with PRI controlled areas maintaining their entrenched interests. The variable *PRI mayor* is collected from municipal-level electoral data from the Center of Research for Development (CIDAC) which provides the political affiliation of the mayor. Rios (2015) argues that coordination between levels of government is more important than just the party at the local level. The Mexican government is less able to control criminal organizations where different levels of government are ruled by different parties. I use Rios' dichotomous measurement, *Coordination*, to indicate whether state and municipal governments are the same or not, with 1 indicating rule by the same party and 0 rule by different parties.

I examine geography as a measure of state capacity. First I look at relative distance. Rugged terrain such as mountains and dense forests make it difficult for the government to detect and defeat non-state armed actors (Buhaug, Gates, Lujala 2009). I use Dube, García-Ponce, and Thom's (2016) *Ruggedness* measurement. They define ruggedness as

the average difference in elevation between a grid point inside a municipality and its neighbors, after which the average across all points in a municipality is taken. I also take into account road network since a sparse road network favors non-state armed actors (Fearon and Laitin 2003). *Road density* measures the ratio of the total length of highways contained within a municipality to total municipality area. The data is from Osorio (2015), which is taken from INEGI (2014). Second, I look at absolute distance. Operating over longer distances places the government at a disadvantage since there are physical barriers for the transportation of repressive forces, limited knowledge of the local environment, and higher costs to overcome the longer distance (Herbst 2000). The variable *Distance from security station* is collected from the Mexican Attorney General's Office (PGR) and measures the distance from the nearest state security station. Security stations can include federal police headquarters, military garrisons, or air force bases in the year 2000 (Dube, Garciá-Ponce, and Thom 2016).

The state capacity measurements so far attempts to capture formal measures of state weakness. Yet the state might purposefully fail to provide protection. To measure the unwillingness of the state to deploy its capacity in the defense of communities I examine corruption. Susceptibility to corruption shows the state authorities unwillingness to enforce laws and look the other way when a crime occurs. Corruption is measured as the percentage of the state population who reported paying a bribe in order to avoid jail time (Transparencia Mexicana 2012).

## **Crime**

One of the most common points for addressing the origins of militias is insecurity violent crime. According to Rosenbaum and Sederberg (1974) civil militias are indications of citizens' desperation at a difficult and dangerous time: facing a worsening crime rate and a disheartening state justice system, citizens take the law into their own hands. Prillaman (2000) argues that the "void created by weak, inefficient and inaccessible courts has been filled by a combination of mob action, vigilante justice, and law and order politicians tapping public frustration and exposing some of the more base impulses of society" (p. 172). I test three measurements of crime: *homicide*, *kidnap*, and *extortion*. All data is from INEGI and is defined by reported rates per 100,000 inhabitants. All three measures are taken from the year 2012.

## Repertoire

Historical processes are another alternative explanation for why civilians take up arms. Given a preference for mobilization, a historical legacy of armed resistance creates conditions under which the community arms itself. Historical experiences condition a return to armed resistance. First, a history of uprisings provide successful experiences of resistance against hostile actors. Second, institutional legacies represent repertoires from which communities can revive and adapt to fit different purposes (Tilly 1995). Osorio, Schubiger, and Weintraub (2016) argue that the Cristeros rebellion, in which citizens rebelled against repressive anti-Catholic policies in 1920s Mexico, formed the roots of the contemporary autodefensa movement. The historical legacy of the Cristeros rebellion explain why communities formed or did not form autodefensas. The variable, *Cristeros*, is a dummy variable which takes the value of 1 for municipalities that had Cristero rebels in 1929 and 0 otherwise (ibid).

## Stalemates

Another explanation is the future expectation of violence. Jentzsch (2014) develops a theory of militia formation based on battlefield dynamics. Jentzsch suggests that communities form militias when the government and insurgents are locked in a stalemate. Stalemates provide the opportunity for the formation of militias, shape people's incentives, and deprive local elites of regional and national support forcing them to search for alternative solutions. There are two possible ways to measure stalemates in the Mexican drug war: the conflict between the government and DTOs and conflict between individual DTOs. The government and challenger relationship is the conventional way to measure stalemates (Jentzsch 2014; Walter 2002). However, the conflict in Mexico is not conventional. Most of the violence is from cartels targeting rivals or individuals thought to be rivals (Fallecimientos por Presunta Rivalidad Delincuencial). It is, therefore, more appropriate to measure stalemates not as a conflict defined as between the Government and a DTO but among DTOs. While it is difficult to measure stalemate in the Mexican drug war, there are proxies. I use three variables to measure a stalemate: *DTO count*, *presence of rival cartel*, and *DTO related homicide*. First, DTO count measures the number of DTOs operating within a municipality. The data is from Coscia and Ríos (2012) which tracks the presence of ten DTOs in each Mexican municipality from 1991 to 2010. It is possible that in municipalities in which only one DTO operates there exist no stalemate since it has complete control over the territory. In areas with a greater number of DTOs there is a great possibility that the DTOs are deadlocked and unable to establish a monopoly. The count of DTO however does not take

into account the possibility that DTOs are allies and therefore not locked in a stalemate but sharing territory, for example Sinaloa and Arellano-Felix sharing Tijuana. I therefore use rivalry cartel as an alternative measure. The variable measures whether two rival cartels are located within the same municipality (Coscia and Ríos 2012). Presumably, the objective of rival DTOs is to force out their competitor and establish a monopoly, the presence of a rival DTO may indicate an inability to make progress against a DTO. Lastly, I look at the number of DTO related homicides. The data, from 2010, is collected by the Mexican federal government and identifies confrontations between criminal organizations without the involvement of authorities. A lack of or low number of homicides between DTOs may indicate a stalemate. This coding is motivated by existing literature's characterization of stalemate as periods of lower-intensity conflict (Richani 2013) and periods in which each side retreats to its own strongholds, creating fewer opportunities for large-scale violence (Licklider 1995).

## **Local Institutions**

A prominent argument both in the literature and popular culture is that local institutions shape whether civilians take up arms (Arjona 2014; La Serna 2012; Starn 1999). Arjona (2014) understands the decision to resist rebel groups as rooted in local institutions. Local institutions matter and are distinguished as either high or low quality. High quality institutions are both legitimate and effective as oppose to low quality institutions which are either illegitimate, ineffective, or both. Community members have a desire to protect the status quo and the capacity for collective action when pre-existing institutions are high quality. Arjona argues that resistance to rebel rule is more likely when communities have high quality pre-existing local institutions. To measure the quality of local institutions I focus on the indigenous population percentage per municipality. The variable, *indigenous population percentage* from the year 2010, is collected by the INEGI and measures the percentage of residents of the municipality age 5 years or older who speak an indigenous language. Indigenous communities are close-knit small groups with repeated interactions, qualities that should make collective action such as community policing more obtainable (Ostrom 1990; Olson 1965).

## **Inequality**

Phillips (2015) argues that local economic inequalities creates a demand for civilian militias out of a sense of relative deprivation of security. In addition, inequality creates a patron-and-worker hierarchy that is suitable for a patron based defense force. I used two

variables to measure inequality: *Poverty and GINI*. The poverty variable is created by the Mexican government and measures wealth and quality of life within a municipality (INEGI 2010). An alternative measure is GINI and is from the National Council of Evaluation of Social Development Policy (2012). It ranges from 0 to 1, where 0 indicates equality and 1 indicates complete inequality.

## Demographics

I also include *Population* as a variable. A greater municipal population increases the number of potential recruits for a civilian militias. In addition, a larger population makes it more difficult for the state to keep tabs on individuals at the local level (Fearon and Laitin 2003). I use data from the INEGI to measure the natural logarithm of municipal population from the year 2010.

## 4.6 Results

Results from the bias-corrected logistic model for rare events are displayed in Table 4.1. To get a better understanding of the magnitude of the estimated relationships between the explanatory variables and civilian militias formation beyond simple statistical significance (Ward, Greenhill, and Bakke 2010) I also predict incident probabilities with 1,000 simulations per fitted value (King and Zeng 2002). Expected probabilities for various fitted values of the key findings of interest is shown in Figure 4.4.

Table 4.1 displays the results from the rare events logit model with municipalities as the unit of analysis. The first model is the primary model. The main independent variable, regional cartel, shows a strong positive relationship with the emergence of autodefensas. This finding suggests that municipalities with the presence of a regional cartel type are more likely to organize and form civilian militias. The finding is consistent across all five models. Looking at Figure 4.4 we can see that civilian militias are more likely in municipalities where a regional cartel is located. Municipalities controlled by regional cartels like the Templars are predicted to have an almost nine percent probability of experiencing a civilian militia.

I also conduct a spatial autoregressive probit regression to take into account spatial dependence. Table C.1, located in the appendix, displays the results of the model. The results are close to the main findings, showing regional cartels increase the probability of civilian militia forming.

Beside regional cartels, *population* and *poverty* seem to have a relationship with the

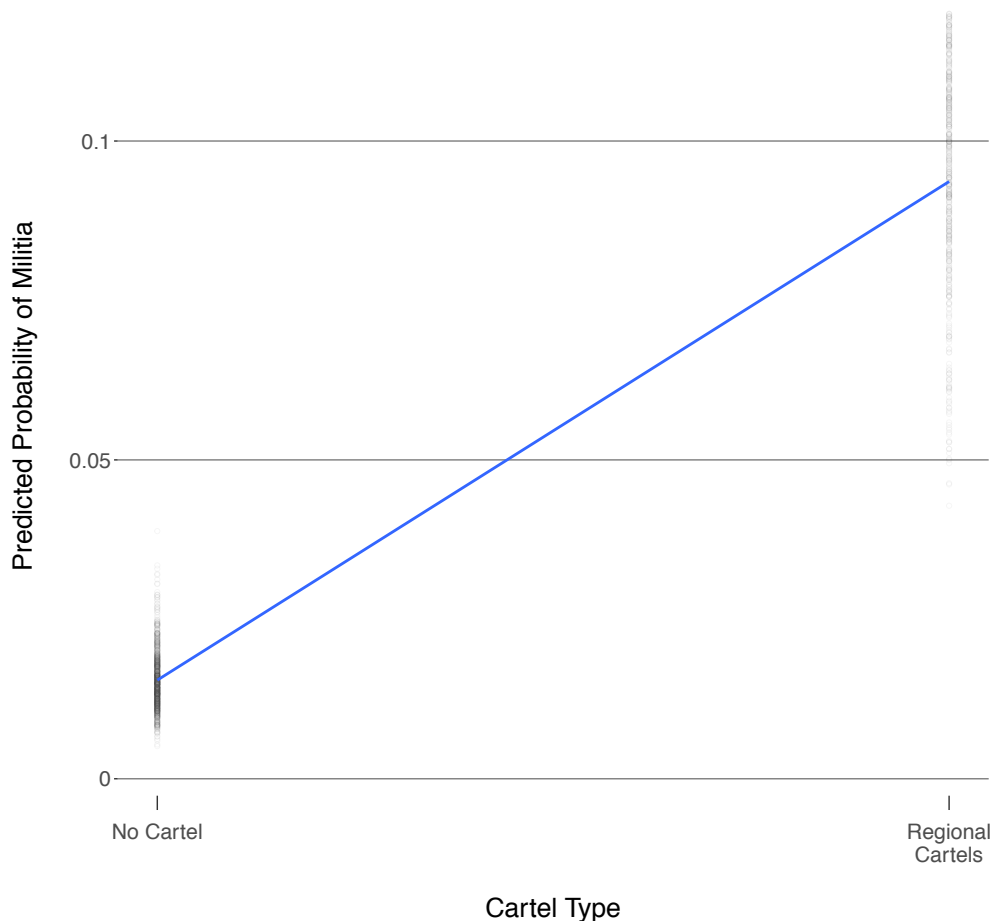


**Table 4.1: Emergence of Autodefensas, 2013**

	1	2	3	4	5
Regional	2.187*** (0.374)	2.374*** (0.380)	2.195*** (0.394)	2.232*** (0.353)	2.456*** (0.370)
National	-0.031 (0.459)	0.214 (0.383)	-0.197 (0.449)	-0.037 (0.469)	0.257 (0.403)
Toll	-0.207 (1.503)	0.951 (0.828)	-0.188 (1.376)	-0.472 (1.437)	1.634** (0.765)
Indigenous population (%)	-0.512 (0.738)	-0.435 (0.653)	0.967** (0.444)	-0.523 (0.737)	-0.508 (0.829)
Cristero	0.492 (0.446)	0.494 (0.433)	0.404 (0.438)	0.481 (0.454)	0.557 (0.470)
Population (log)	0.754*** (0.148)	0.789*** (0.171)	0.386*** (0.098)	0.756*** (0.142)	0.802*** (0.142)
GDP per capita	-0.034 (0.073)		-0.136 (0.127)	-0.028 (0.077)	0.002 (0.068)
Poverty	0.956*** (0.265)	0.925*** (0.230)		0.955*** (0.266)	0.904*** (0.251)
DTO count	0.046 (0.099)	0.043 (0.090)	0.005 (0.094)		-0.019 (0.083)
Homicide rate	0.00005 (0.004)	-0.002 (0.004)	0.00004 (0.004)	0.001 (0.003)	
PRI mayor		0.066 (0.179)			
Gini			15.740*** (2.784)		
Rival cartel				0.001 (0.001)	
Extortion					0.001 (0.001)
Constant	-11.347*** (1.541)	-11.950*** (1.759)	-14.474*** (1.632)	-11.352*** (1.454)	-12.081*** (1.420)
Observations	2,442	1,876	2,440	2,442	2,353

*Note:*\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01  
Robust standard errors in parentheses

**Figure 4.4:** Expected Probability of Autodefensas, 2013



formation of militias. This is consistent with the literature and suggests that more populated and poorer municipalities are more likely to form autodefensas, due to the potential number of recruits, difficult monitoring process, and sense of grievances.

Other alternative explanations are less supported. Two of the most prominent explanations, state weakness and crime, seem less associated with the emergence of autodefensas. It is possible that GDP per capita and the general homicide rate do not adequately proxy for state failure and crime. I discuss this below. Battlefield dynamics, proxied by the number of DTOs, seem to have less of a relationship with the rise of autodefensas.

I also find that institutions, proxied by close knit communities such as those sharing indigenous languages, are not associated with the emergence of autodefensas. This suggests that autodefensas are not linked to established forms of community police in many

indigenous populations in Mexico. Local community policing have an established history in Mexico, particularly in Southern indigenous communities (Gomez Duran 2012). The current crop of militias differ in motivation from indigenous armed groups.

Related, the results show that repertoires are less associated to militia onset than other types of resistance. The Cristero rebellion of 1920 does not seem to be related to present day militia onset. If as Tilly argues repertoires are “learned cultural creations” that can be revived and adapted for a variety of purposes than maybe the community forgot the lesson. It has been close to a hundred years between the 1920 rebellion and today’s militias. I therefore turn to more modern experiences of rebellion: the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) and the Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR). EZLN operated in the Southern state of Chiapas as an indigenous insurgency against neo-liberalism and globalization. It pushed its way on to the international stage on January 1, 1994 after storming government buildings and freeing political prisoners but soon renounced violent rebellion and signed a ceasefire agreement. EPR announced itself in 1996 by declaring war on the Mexican government and advocating a socialist peasant revolution. The EPR was well-armed and had access to significant sums of money through several kidnapping-for-ransom schemes involving wealthy businessmen in the early 1990s (Paulson 2007). The new guerilla group concentrated its efforts along the coastal regions of Guerrero and the Loxichas region of Oaxaca.

I use declassified Mexican government documents to locate both EZLN’s and EPR’s area of operation. EZLN remained within a few municipalities that they called autonomous municipalities where “the people command and the government obeys”. EPR operated within the states of Guerrero and Oaxaca, covering more municipalities than EZLN, 19 compared to EZLN’s 10. I code the variable *Rebellion* 1 if either the EZLN or the EPR staged an attack or where attacked by the government in a municipality and zero otherwise. Similar to the Cristero rebellion, municipalities that experience either EZLN or EPR revolts were not more likely to see militias 15 years later (see Table D.1 in the appendix). Combined with my findings on indigenous populations, these results suggest that institutions and repertoires are less relevant to the onset of militias. It is difficult to explain away why institutions and repertoires are less important in this case but it could be due to the unique nature of the drug war (Lessing 2018).

In model two, I use an alternative measure of state capacity. Magaloni et al. (2015) argue that PRI controlled municipalities are more likely to be captured by DTOs due to decades of corruption and collusion. I examine municipalities controlled by the PRI and find that there is no association between party control and autodefensa emergence. In the appendix section I include other state capacity variables as well as other proxies for crime

and battlefield dynamics. Table D.2, in the appendix, reveals that ruggedness and road density are associated with autodefensas. Greater ruggedness increases the probability of civilian militias while greater road density decreases the probability. This may suggest that state failure is a necessary condition of civilian militias. Although, distance to security station is not associated with autodefensas.

State unwillingness to enforce its monopoly, measured by corruption in Table D.2, indicates a negative relationship with the formation of militias. The unexpected finding suggests that an unwillingness to protect the population discourages civilians from taking up arms. A possible reason is that corruption is not measuring state capacity but a smooth running operation in which cartel members can effectively carry out their operations without the scrutiny of the state to impede their main profit generating activities. Cartels, therefore, have little incentive to prey upon the population.

Model three includes a different measure of inequality. GINI, like poverty, is related to the formation of autodefensas. This may support the idea that economic hardships are a motivating factor for civilians taking up arms.

Model four in Table 4.1 adds an alternative proxy for battlefield dynamics, presence of rival DTO. The alternative measure again shows that there is a weak relationship between territorial control and civilian militias. Table D.4, in the appendix includes another proxy, DTO related homicides, however, results seem to also suggest a weak relationship.

Lastly, in Table 4.1, model 5, I use another measure of crime, extortion. Extortion has been cited as one of the main factors pushing civilians into armed resistance (Asfura-Heim and Espach 2013; Devereaux 2016; Tuckman 2012). However, I find that extortion is less associated with autodefensas. In the appendix, under Table D.4, Model 1, I also find that kidnapping has a weak relationship to militia formation. It is puzzling at first until one considers extortion, as well as other tactics such as kidnapping and money laundering, as only part of the predatory actions that motivate civilians to take up arms. Rather than crime motivating civilians to arm themselves, it is governance that gives rise to self-defense militias, as the finding in Model 1, Table 4.1, reveals. Civilians supply protection against a destructive violence specialist.

#### **4.6.1 Time-Series Cross-Sectional Analysis**

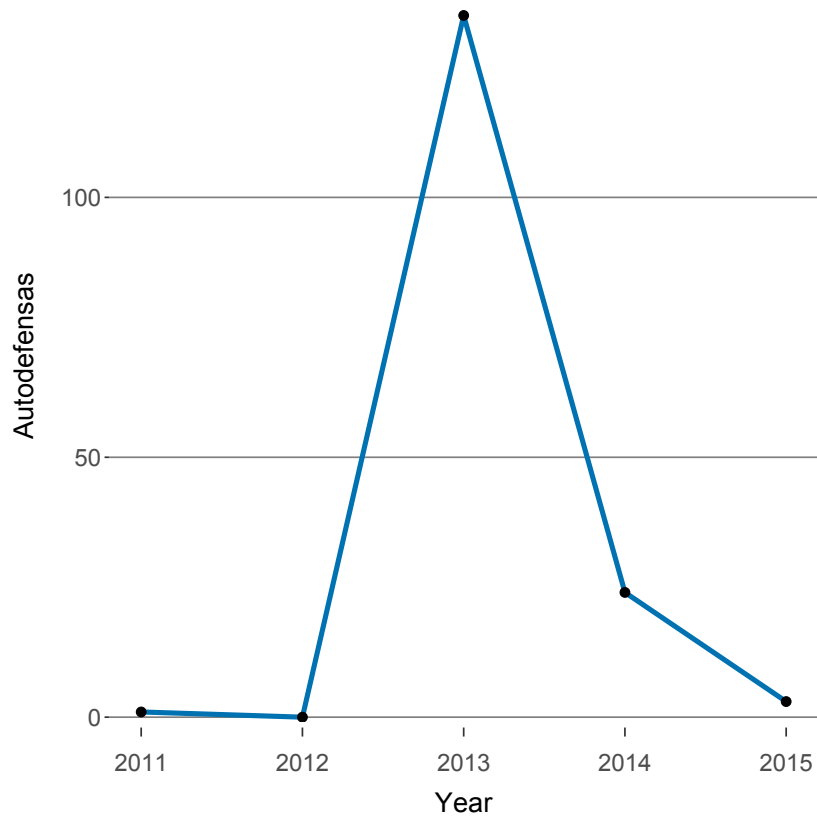
I also conduct a time series cross sectional analysis at the municipal level from 2011 to 2015. However, data is more limited than that of the cross sectional analysis. For example, the Mexican government does not release annual municipal reports on the number of individuals that speak an indigenous language. I therefore, do not include measurements of

indigenous population. Instead of indigenous population I rely on historical experience to capture local institutions. Arjona (2016), Kaplan (2017), Osorio, Schubiger, and Weintraub (2016) argue that previous community collective action, violent and non-violent, increases the probability of resistance. I measure historical uprisings through participation in the Cristeros rebellion (Osorio, Schubiger, and Weintraub 2016)

I use media reports and human rights reports to track the growth of the autodefensa movement from 2011 to 2015, see Figure 4.5. After 2013, civilian militias can be affiliated with the government through the pacification effort of incorporating Autodefensas within the rural police force. I exclude any militia that is associated with cartels or the government in order to adhere to the definition of civilian militias established in the previous chapter. The measurement is a binary variable with 1 indicating the presence of a civilian militia in a municipality and 0 otherwise. I measure population by taking the log population of a municipality. State capacity, measured by distance to a security station, is the same variable used in the cross sectional analysis since it is consistent across the temporal span. Data is from the Governance Secretary (SEGOB). I also include a measure for poverty, taken from the yearly municipal census. I measure a stalemate through the presence of rival DTOs. Two or more rival DTOs operating within a municipality indicates a possible stalemate. Data is taken from DEA maps. The measurement is binary with 1 meaning rival DTOs operate in the same municipality and 0 otherwise. Cartel activity is obtained from DEA maps, which document territorial control across Mexico from 2011 to 2015. I sort the indicated dominant cartel of a municipality into the categories of either national, regional, or toll. Lastly, crime is measured by homicide rate per 1,000 residents, which is obtained from the Executive Secretariat of the National Public Security System (SESNSP).

The results are similar to the cross sectional analysis. Table 4.2 suggests that regional cartels increase the probability of autodefensas forming in a municipality from the years 2011 to 2015. The predicted probability, shown in Figure 4.6 based on Table 4.2, suggests that there is close to a 4% increase in the probability of an autodefensa group forming when a regional cartel controls a municipality versus when no regional cartel is dominant. Table 4.2 shows that national cartels discourage the formation of militias. This finding further supports the theory that type of governance matters. National cartels, at times, provide public goods such as parks, festivals, and protection from other cartels (Astorga and Shirk 2010). Also significant is distance to security station, suggesting that low state capacity influences the emergence of civilian militias. Population is also associated with the formation of militias. The time series cross sectional analysis supports the above analysis and provides further evidence that violent predatory actors are a key factor in explaining why civilians take up arms. As important, the analysis provides less support for other

**Figure 4.5:** Number of Autodefensas by Year, 2011-2015



alternative explanations like historical experiences, local institutions, and crime.

#### **4.6.2 Robustness Test**

To test the robustness of the results, I perform an additional analysis using a matched dataset. Matching is a method of data preprocessing to control confounding factors that influence outcomes in which treated cases are paired with control cases that are similar along confounding factors (Ho et al. 2007; Rubin 2006). Matching has the advantage of reducing the link between the treatment and control variable, thereby making estimates based on subsequent parametric analysis less dependent on modeling specification (Ho et al. 2007).

Matching has two advantages: addressing the nonrandom nature of treatment and removing extreme counterfactuals. First, matching treated cases with similar control cases allows researchers to control for differences due to the nonrandom nature of the treatment assignment. Confounding variables occur prior to the treatment assignment but are corre-

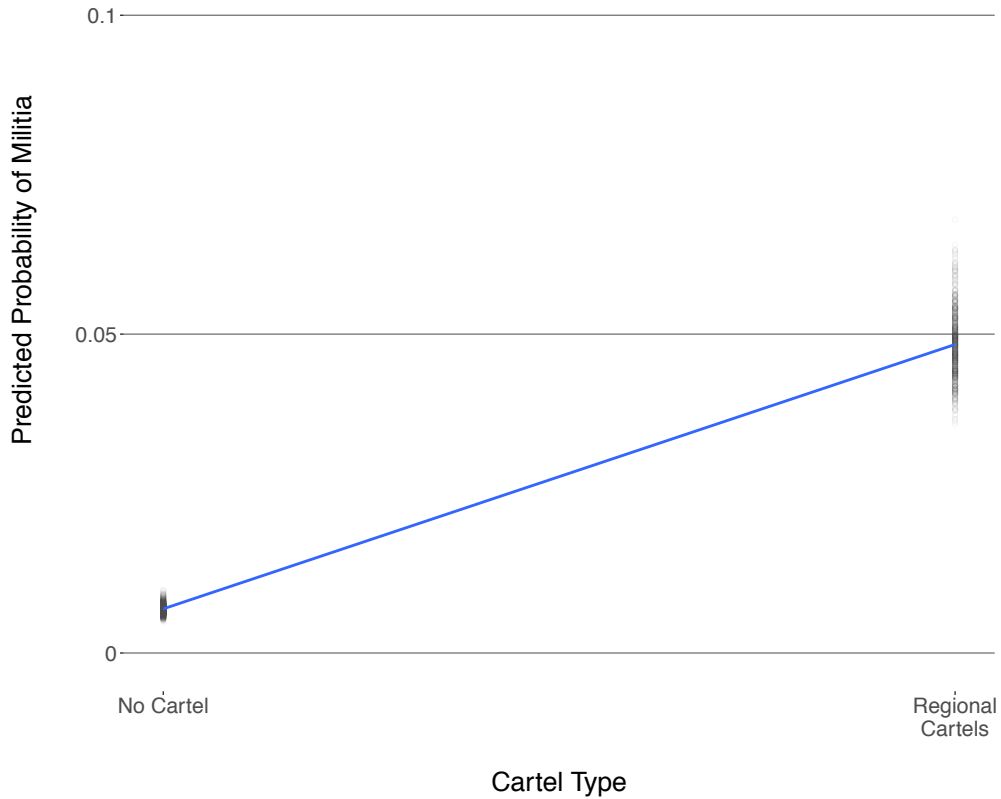
**Table 4.2:** Emergence of Autodefensas, 2011-2015

	1
Regional	0.624** (0.275)
National	-1.284*** (0.313)
Toll	-1.205 (0.810)
Cristeros	0.495** (0.242)
Population (log)	0.442*** (0.089)
Distance to security station (log)	0.017*** (0.005)
Poverty	-0.005 (0.018)
DTO Rivarly	0.854 (1.083)
Homicide rate	0.465*** (0.155)
Constant	-8.760*** (1.359)
Observations	7,214

*Note:*

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01  
Robust standard errors in parentheses

**Figure 4.6:** Expected Probability of Civilian Militia, 2011-2015



lated with the treatment and influence the dependent variable conditional on the treatment itself (Ho et al. 2007). They influence outcomes of autodefensas onset, including the manner in which cartels self select into territories. Researchers would be able to obtain estimates of the militia’s causal effect by controlling for confounding variables. Matched samples control for confounding factors by pairing treated cases with a control case that are similar along confounding factors and improves estimation by controlling for differences resulting from the nonrandom treatment assignment (Morgan and Winship 2007). Second, matching removes extreme counterfactuals by eliminating control observations with no parallel among treated cases (King and Zeng 2006). Matching reduces the difference between populations and in the process decreases modeling assumptions.

Pairs were identified using genetic matching with replacement (Diamond and Sekhon 2013). Genetic matching is a multivariate matching method developed by Sekhon and

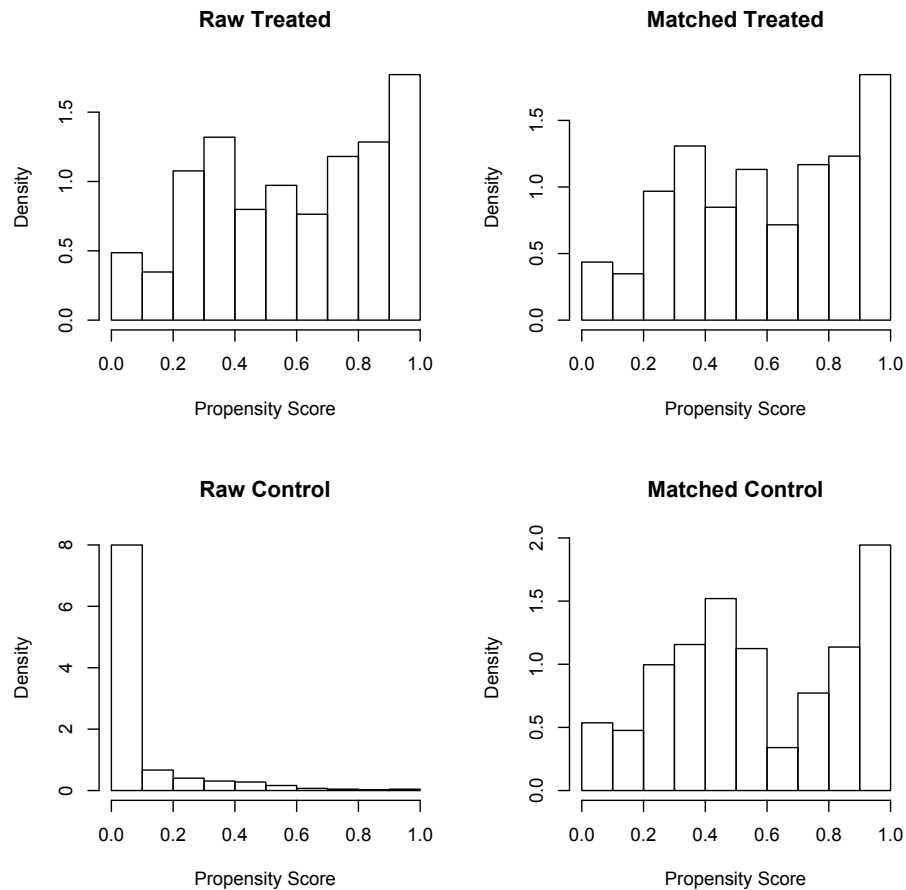


Mebane (1998) that uses a search algorithm to improve covariate balance based on a generalization of the propensity score and Mahalanobis Distance (Diamond and Sekhon 2013; Rosenbaum and Rubin 1985). The multivariate matching method maximizes the balance of observed covariates across matched treated and control units. The advantage of genetic matching is its ability to directly optimize covariate balance without having to correctly specify the propensity score, which can be challenging given the manual process of checking covariate balance in matched samples (Diamond and Sekhon 2013). Genetic matching was used to create 172 control and 288 treated units from the original sample of 1,876. I include variables that have been identified as increasing the probability of regional cartels operating in a municipality. The results are matched with replacement so that no control observation was used more than two times. I use matching with replacement since this results in the highest degree of variable balance and lowest conditional bias (Abadie and Imbens 2006).

There are two main assumptions one accepts when matching data that narrows the scope of the findings. First, selection on the observables requires that the common variables that affect treatment assignment and treatment-specific outcomes be observable. Second is strong ignorability. Strong ignorability holds when there is unconfoundedness and overlap. Unconfoundedness assumes that beyond observed covariates there are no unobserved characteristics of the individual associated with both the potential outcomes and treatment (Sekhon 2009). Overlap considers the similarity of the covariate distribution for the treated and untreated subpopulations. While unconfoundedness is untestable, overlap can be assessed, in part, through propensity score distributions. Figure 5.8 shows the overall distribution of propensity scores in the treated and control groups. It illustrates that before matching, the propensity score for the treated population (top left plot) tended to cluster towards the right while the control population (bottom left) skewed left. This indicates there is little to no overlap before matching. After matching, the propensity score distribution for both the treated and control units are closer, however, while distribution improves overall there is still a lack of complete overlap. As a result, any inferences regarding these observations would have to rely on modeling assumptions in place of direct support from the data.

Table 4.3 reports the closeness of the matched groups and reveals that there are imbalances between cases with and those without regional cartels before matching. Regional cartels, for example, are located in municipalities with lower GDP per capita (mean 0.507) while municipalities without regional cartels have a higher GDP per capita (mean 1.441). As a consequence, the GDP per capita mean is lower for municipalities with regional cartels. These differences may result from the fact that municipalities that are less wealthy are

**Figure 4.7:** Distribution of Propensity Scores



unable to engage in effective policing strategies to uproot cartels (Fearon and Laitin 2003). In addition, reduced economic opportunities increases the attractiveness of joining a cartel for residents of poorer municipalities (Collier and Hoeffler 2004).

Since no standard has yet emerged for assessing balance across treated and control populations, I assess balance using several measures including the mean for treated and control populations, mean differences between treated and control, improvement in balance, and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov equality of distribution tests for continuous variables (Table 4.3). The tests reveal that balance, for the most part, improves after matching the data. Most of the mean differences improve after pairing observations. For the Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests,  $\leq .1$  suggest that the distribution of means is highly dissimilar, whereas values closer to 1 signify increasing similar distributions (Sekhon 2009). Greater balance among the matched subsets suggest a minimizing difference across these samples.

**Table 4.3: Balance Summary Statistics**

	Mean treated	Mean control	Mean difference	% improvement mean diff.	K-S test
<i>Prematching</i>					
National cartel	0.014	0.582	-0.569	—	—
Toll cartel	0.003	0.33	-0.029	—	—
Indigenous population (%)	0.084	0.157	- 0.073	—	0.147
Cristeros	0.948	0.370	0.578	—	—
Population (log)	0.974	9.469	0.0506	—	0.254
GDP per capita	0.507	1.441	-0.934	—	0.074
Poverty	-0.035	-0.095	0.060	—	0.084
DTO count	0.955	0.524	0.431	—	0.174
Homicide rate	30.317	21.320	8.997	—	0.258
PRI mayor	0.465	0.545	-0.080	—	—
Coordination	0.372	0.592	-0.220	—	—
Ruggedness	200.510	160.830	133.89	—	0.157
<i>Postmatching</i>					
National	0.014	0.023	-0.009	98	—
Toll	0.003	0.003	0	100	—
Indigenous population (%)	0.084	0.087	- 0.003	96	0.243
Cristeros	0.948	0.944	0.003	99	—
Population (log)	9.974	9.949	0.025	95	0.093
GDP per capita	0.507	0.431	0.076	92	0.239
Poverty	-0.035	-0.070	0.035	42	0.138
DTO count	0.955	0.642	0.312	27	0.052
Homicide rate	30.317	25.734	4.538	49	0.218
PRI mayor	0.465	0.438	-0.017	78	—
Coordination	0.372	0.375	-0.003	98	—
Ruggedness	200.510	198.759	1.751	96	0.097

I use the matched sample to conduct a rare event logit regression.<sup>17</sup> The results of the matched sample are presented in Table 4.4. The results suggest that regional cartels play

<sup>17</sup>I do not conduct a difference in means test between treated and control groups. This is certainly possible, particularly when using exact matched data. However, outside of exact one-to-one matching, using a difference in means estimator assumes that any remaining imbalance in the matched dataset is unrelated to the treatment and has no effect on the outcome (Ho et al. 2007). These two assumptions are difficult to justify. Parametric models can adjust the matched sample and is particularly important in this case since there are remaining imbalances. The two-step procedure known as doubly robust has the advantage that if either the matching or the parametric model is correct, estimates should be consistent (Robins and Rotnitzky 2001). The preprocessed dataset, if appropriate, should include a selected subset of the observed sample for which the treatment and background variables are unrelated since treatment and control covariate distributions resemble each other. The result is considerably less model dependent along with a reduction in bias and variance (ibid).

**Table 4.4:** Emergence of Autodefensas, 2013 - Matched

	Treatment Only	All Covariates
Regional	1.900*** (0.370)	1.200*** (0.430)
Observations	460	460

*Note:* \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01  
Robust standard errors in parentheses

a crucial role in explaining the emergence of autodefensas. Both matched models support the idea that local governance influences whether civilians form militias. Table 4.4, the basic specification without any controlling variables, suggest that regional cartels increase the probability of civilians forming militias within a municipality. Both models indicate that regional cartels are related to militias.<sup>18</sup> The matched sample finding is consistent with previous models. Population and poverty are associated with an increased probability of an autodefensas group forming. The predicted probability, based on the full covariate model, suggests that a municipality dominated by a regional cartel is associated with a 26% increase in the probability of a autodefensa group forming, see Figure 4.8.

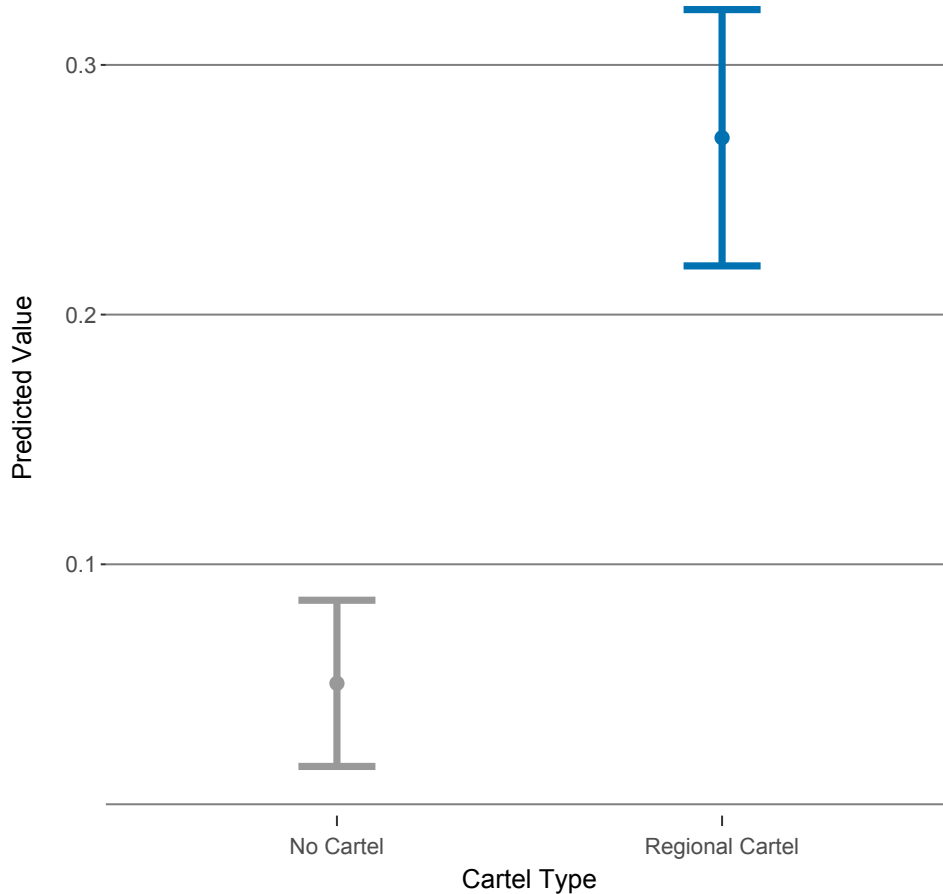
## 4.7 Conclusion

Narco corridos are a narrative style of Mexican music based on corridos or ballads (which date back to the Mexican Revolution) that sing about the exploits and lives of drug lords and their henchmen (Garsd 2015). After El Chapo escaped — again — in 2015, the narco corrido market was flooded with highlights of the Sinaloa cartel and its infamous leader. The Knights Templar, not to be out done by a competitor, asked bands to produce corridos for their organization (Milenio 2014). In one song titled “Nací Caballero Templario” (I was born a Knights Templar) Baltazar Cervantes sings “Taking care of my land and my state, tierra caliente, this is how the Templars look, we are chosen to carry out divine justice, to protect the innocent from anyone who stained my tierra caliente. I was born a Knight Templar ” (ibid). The Templars propagated a narrative of defending the people of Michoacán from other cartels and the state. Their narrative was far from the truth.

In the Tierra Caliente region the Knights Templar, as well as other regional cartels, ruled their own private fiefdom fueled by methamphetamine and the wealth of those they

<sup>18</sup>I only report the main variable of interest, the full model is located in the appendix in Table E.1.

**Figure 4.8:** Predicted Probability with 95% Confidence Intervals, Matched



terrorized. “They were everything” claims Mora, one of the founding members of the autodefensas when speaking about the Knights Templar, taking what they wanted when they wanted (Devereaux 2016). Templars taxed producers and workers of the area’s main economic crops, lime and avocados, taking a cut and threatening the livelihood of almost every resident. They targeted remittances from immigrants living in the US. The Templars engaged in a campaign of identifying locals with connections to the US and kidnapping those they could for ransom (Holman 2015). When that was not enough, they outright expropriated land and businesses. Paid off or threatened by cartels, the police were of little help.

As the theoretical section predicts, and the data confirms, Mexican civilians took up arms not due solely to crime or state failure but rather as a consequence of local governance. Civilian militias emerge through a process of opportunities and shifts in local

incentives brought about by a violence specialist facing a higher discount factor. While all cartels were targeted by the government, regional cartels, mostly due to their limited control over drug trafficking routes, turned towards extractive resource tactics to recover revenue lost by the increasing cost of the drug war. Regional cartels, unlike national or toll cartels, extracted resources from the local population without providing security or protection. Instead, regional cartels destroyed and captured the wealth of its subjects, acting like a predatory violence specialist. While the decapitation strategy shortened the time horizon of cartels, it increase that of rural residents. Mexican civilians subjected to regional cartel rule were more likely to take up arms in a push that both threatened and reaffirmed the state. Those that supported and joined the autodefensas participated in a fluid process of state formation, attempting to establish order and security in areas characterize by the lack of both. Devoid of order, they took up arms and in the process developed a nascent leviathan.

## CHAPTER 5

# We Shoot Back: The Deacons versus the Klans

*“If blood is going to be shed, we are going to let it rain down— all kinds, both black and white. We are not going to send Negro blood by itself.”*

— A.Z. Young (Member of the Deacons for Defense and Justice)

On February 21, 1965, civil rights activist Malcolm X was gunned down in New York City. That same day, the first affiliated chapter of the Deacons for Defense and Justice was founded across the country in Bogalusa, Louisiana. Malcolm X’s ideas of self-defense would soon manifest itself in the Deacons.

This chapter examines the Deacons for Defense and Justice, a civilian militia formed to protect black residents and civil rights activists against white supremacist violence and intimidation. The Deacons emerged in the context of a growing civil rights movement, increasing opposition to the Vietnam War, and continuing political unrest. The violence perpetrated to prevent equality among US citizens involved some of the most heinous crimes committed by both state and non-state armed actors in the modern US era: Bloody Sunday in Selma, 16th Street Baptist Church bomb, and the murder of three civil rights workers in Mississippi.<sup>1</sup> In this context, the Deacons formed to provide protection against white supremacist violence and in the process take the first steps towards a state.

There has been little, if any, quantitative research examining the Deacons.<sup>2</sup> The lack of research on the Deacons obscures their important role in the civil rights and black power movement as well as their contribution to the study of civilian militias. Prior to the Deacons, civil rights activists and supporters participated in ad hoc armed resistance. Either

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<sup>1</sup>These are only a few of the many acts of violence committed, not to mention the many acts of intimidation carried out during this era such as cross burnings, warning shots, and Klan rallies.

<sup>2</sup>For historical accounts of the Deacons see Hill (2004), Wendt (2007), and Umoja (2013).

gathering together in times of emergency or when information was provided about a specific threat (Umoja 2002). With the emergence of the Deacons, the role of protecting movement leaders, demonstrations, and the Black community was placed in the hands of a structured civilian militia. The Deacons, through the use of arms, show of force, secrecy, and numbers, challenged and deterred white violence. In one case in the late 1960s, a Deacon security team, armed with a dozen shotguns, unloaded on a vehicle attempting to throw a firebomb at a church housing a meeting in rural Mississippi (Wendt 2007). In another, during a demonstration in Wilkerson County, Mississippi, Deacons stepped in after a racist mob pointed their weapons at participants (Hill 2004).

The Deacons mark a watershed in the civil rights movement that anticipated the rise of the Black Panther Party and other black power groups.<sup>3</sup> This chapter uses novel declassified FBI documents, recorded interviews, and congressional committee records collected during an archival research trip in New Orleans to evaluate why the organization emerged in the Deep South. I find that the Deacons emerged in counties in which the Original Knights and White Knights, the two most militaristic Klan organizations of the civil rights era, established and operated klaverns, or local units. Compared to counties controlled by the dominant but less militaristic Klan organization at the time, the (United Klans of America (UKA), counties under the control of the Original and White Knights were more likely to see the Deacons emerge. I further find state capacity, crime, historical experiences, and institutions are less adept at explaining the rise of the Deacons.

Below I briefly discuss the history of the civil rights era, Klan, and Deacons. After, I discuss the research design and data. Following that, I analyze the data and present results. I conclude by examining the implications of the findings. This is the first study to quantitatively examine the Deacons as well as the first to record the growth and decline of the mid 1960s Klan.

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<sup>3</sup>The Black Panther Party (BPP) is one of the most comparable groups to the Deacons during this period. Both formed in the 1960s under similar conditions — lack of police protection and inequality — and conducted many similar operations such as protecting civil rights activists and the black community. In one instance, the BPP guarded Betty Shabazz —the widow of Malcom X — when she visited Oakland, CA for a memorial to mark the two-year anniversary of his death (Bloomand Martin 2013). Charles Sims even met Bobby Seale before he helped found the Black Panthers (Hill 2004). However, the BPP and the Deacons are separated by their ideology and location. The BPP positioned themselves as a vanguard party against an imperialist government. They sought to provide leadership to Black Americans in a global struggle against the colonial relationship that defined their experience and that of all people against imperialism. This required the capacity for armed resistance. The Deacons, unlike the BPP, did not seek to challenge the US government, or any government, instead their goal was to bring the federal government back into their communities. The BPP was mostly limited to cities while the Deacons operated in rural America. As a result, I do not consider the BPP as a civilian militia and are beyond the scope of this study.



## 5.1 History

### 5.1.1 Civil Rights Movement

Before I precede to discuss the Klan and the Deacons, I first contextualize both organizations within the time period they occupied. The civil rights movement of the 1950's and 1960's was a struggle for equality for African Americans and other people of color. The movement pushed against segregation, voter discrimination, and actions of racially motivated violence which informed all aspects of life for black people (Morris 1986). The movement galvanized around the repeal of "Jim Crow" laws in the Southern United States. These local and state laws enforced racial segregation in public facilities such as the classroom, bathrooms, theaters, train cars, pools, and legislatures. Racial segregation laws, established shortly after the end of the civil war, came to define race relations in the South for a century (Chong 2014).

The movement was marked by large scale activism across the United States. Activists relied, for the most part, upon non-violent protest and civil disobedience such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott in which African Americans refused to ride city buses in Montgomery, Alabama in 1966, and the Greensboro Woolworth Sit-Ins, a series of sit-in protests in North Carolina, to enact change. While most of the protest took place in the Southern part of the US, people of all races from all over the country joined to support racial equality. One of the most dramatic moments occurred on August 28, 1963 in Washington, DC when over 200,000 people came together for the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

The movement succeeded in passing civil right legislation and fundamentally altering and enacting lasting change. Movement leaders, such as Martin Luther King Jr., and Congress worked to achieve the passage of three profound pieces of federal legislation: Civil Rights Act of 1964, Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Civil Rights Act of 1968. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited discrimination in public places, demanded integration of schools, and made employment discrimination illegal based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 protected minority voting rights by prohibiting states from passing laws that discriminate against minority voters. The Civil Rights Act of 1968 provided equal housing opportunities regardless of race, creed, or national origin.

However, a focus solely on Martin Luther King Jr., major media events, and legislative victories, overemphasizes non-violence and misses an equally important part of the civil rights movement. Emphasizing non-violence shifts the narrative away from self-defense and ignores the role of coercion. A focus on non-violence is more pronounced when attention is on King and mass demonstrations, casting the movement as a top-down phenomenon

(Crosby 2011). This narrative is emphasized, in part, due to the appealing and reassuring story of the triumph of morality and national redemption but it was also a strategic choice by key members of the movement (Payne 2007). Prominent leaders feared the white public's reaction of a movement based upon self-defense (Hill 2004). The civil rights movement's moral power and dignity rested on nonviolent protest contrasting against the morally corrupt violent repression in the South (ibid). The movement relied on white northern sympathy, created by images of peaceful blacks resisting violent whites, to push for national legislation. Black self-defense and the use of force undercut the morality of the movement according to national leaders. For example, the Deacons in the national press were labeled as the "Black KKK" for their prominent display of arms and willingness to use force (FBI 1965). To avoid these types of stories and keep the support of northern whites, civil rights leaders denounced the use of violence.<sup>4</sup>

While leaders focused on nonviolence, self-defense and the use of force was present in the Deep South. Self-defense was commonplace in areas like Holmes County, Mississippi where "black residents set up nightly patrols, letting it be known that they had weapons and were prepared to use them." (Dittmer 1994, p.25). Black residents of the Deep South, far away from the national demonstrations in DC and other large northern cities, relied on arms to protect themselves against white vigilante violence which I discuss next.

## 5.2 KKK

The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) has been part of the fabric of the United States for the past 150 years. It has risen and fallen only to emerge again. There have been three prominent Klan waves: reconstruction, 1920s, and civil rights era. However, it has always existed in one form or another since 1866. I briefly discuss the three waves.

### *Reconstruction*

In 1865, near Pulaski, Tennessee, six young Confederate veterans gather together to form a fraternal organization. They were motivated by boredom and a "hunger and thirst" for excitement (Trelease 1979). The name was selected by following the standard practice in American college fraternities, using the greek word, kuklos, supplemented, for alliterative purposes, by the word "Klan" (Randel 1965). They also established much of the enduring iconography, initiation rituals, offices, and regalia and hood that is well known today.

At first, the Klan had a fraternal bend, playing "pranks" on local black residents (Tre-

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<sup>4</sup>This is in contrast to the private action of leaders. King and other leaders possessed arms to protect their homes and families (Hill 2004).

lease 1979). However, their tricks were not harmless. The Klan's actions used the tactics of slave patrols to maintain racial subjugation by terrorizing the black population (Cunningham 2013). Violators of the racial codes would be beaten and whipped. Soon, maintaining the racial and legal order were the main motives of the Klan. Under the leadership of former Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest, named the "Grand Wizard", the group quickly expanded under a message of white supremacy, the purity of white womanhood, and upholding law and order (Olsen 1962). The KKK violently intimidated black community leaders and northerners who supported them, all while receiving explicit or tacit support of Southern Democrats (Cunningham 2013). The Klan itself was highly decentralized with national leadership unable to control local chapters.

After rising vigilante violence in the South, Congress passed two Enforcement Acts in 1870, which made interference in voting efforts a federal offense and also forbade conspiracies that infringed upon the exercise of constitutional rights. This was followed by the 1871 Ku Klux Klan Act, which allowed federal district attorneys to prosecute conspiratorial efforts aimed at limiting constitutional expression. These laws, in addition, to congressional investigation, broke the Klan but did not end the subjugation of Black Americans.

#### *The 1920s*

In 1915, near Stone Mountain, Georgia, the first Klan cross burned, marking the beginning of the second Klan wave and coincided with D.W.Griffith's film *Birth of a Nation* and the fiftieth anniversary of the Civil War's end. With hundreds of Klan recruiting agents, or kleagles, under the guide of professional marketers, the size of the Klan rose to the largest of the three waves. Numbering 3 to 5 million members by 1925 and unlike the reconstruction KKK, klaverns, or local chapters, were not limited to the South. The Klan claimed members across the United States, including 50,000 in Chicago, 35,000 in Detroit, and 17,000 in Denver (HUAC 1967). In addition, members were far from marginal individuals of society. Blue-and white-collar workers joined as well as prominent community leaders.

Under the leadership of William J. Simmons, the Klan continued to engage in vigilante activities such as night riding, floggings, and at least one bombing as well as civic populism and political engagement (Chalmers 1981). The Klan had ties to many fraternal and church groups and organized around issues of good schools. They also played a large role in local and statewide elections. Klan-backed candidates were elected as governors and US senators in states such as Indiana, Texas, Alabama, Colorado, and California.

After 1925 scandals and changing political and economic factors caused the KKK to lose momentum (HUAC 1967). Unlike the reconstruction Klan, Simmons' Klan was highly centralized and profited a great deal from initiation fees and a monopoly on the sale of regalia and other Klan related products (Chalmers 1981). The lucrative enterprise caused

splits and in-fighting among the Klan leadership as they competed for the top position. Financial corruption coupled with mainstream political parties addressing grievances that attracted members eroded the Klan's support base.

### *Civil Rights Resurgence*

The "third wave" of the Klan was set off by the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling and a broader movement to maintain the political, economic, and social position of whites in the South. Like the reconstruction Klan, it was a decentralized movement, each of the 12 Klan organizations followed their own leaders and policies.<sup>5</sup> The most prominent Klan organization of the era was the United Klans of America, (UKA). It had thousands of members spread over several hundred klaverns (Cunningham 2013). The UKA was followed by the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan of Mississippi, which had about 2,000 members in 57 klaverns in Mississippi (FBI 1964). The third largest organization was the Original Knights of the Ku Klux Klan with a membership of around 1,500 in 24 klaverns in Louisiana (ibid).<sup>6</sup> All Klan organization engaged in violence and intimidation to achieve their goal of white supremacy. Freedom riders were mobbed by Klansmen, civil rights leaders homes were burned, and churches were bombed. However, I argue that the White and Original Knights were the most militant of the three largest organizations.

Klan organizations while possessing common ritualistic ceremonies, robes, and oaths, differed in leadership and exhibited different degrees of militancy (FBI 1964). To classify the degree of militancy among Klan organizations I use government reports and testimonies from the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), declassified FBI monograph on Klan organizations, and declassified FBI documents produced under COINTELPRO. I classify Klan organizations based on their militancy in order to measure the degree to which they use violence to enact their goal of white supremacy.

Compared to the White and Original Klan, the UKA took a more measured approach to the use of violence, at least by its top leadership. Bob Jones, the Grand Dragon of the North Carolina chapter of the UKA, frequently spoke about "bullet and balance," asking them to "use the balance" (Newton 2001). He argued that the path to restoring white supremacy lay in forming a powerful voting bloc not by bombing or flogging. However, there was ambivalence over the use of violence. The UKA established a defense fund to provide legal counsel for members charged with violent crimes (Cunningham 2013). Using the defense fund, the UKA came to the aid of three Klan members after they were accused of murdering Viola Liuzzo. That was not the only time the UKA used violence. They were

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<sup>5</sup>Klan organizations include: Association of Arkansas Klan, Association of Georgia Klan, Association of South Carolina Klans, Dixie Klans, Improved Order of the US Klans, Militant Knights, National Knights, Original Knights, US Klan, United Florida KKK, United Klans of America, White Knights.

<sup>6</sup>The next largest organization, the United Florida KKK had 868 members.

also responsible for the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing of 1963 that killed four girls and injured 22 others. Rhetoric espoused at rallies also sent conflicting messages. Local officers, prone to belligerent talks, sometimes called for violence. At one rally, Lloyd Jacobs, a leader of the UKA, proclaimed that “Klansmen are going to have to kill these Jews, Communists, and Negroes that are taking over our country and raping our white women!” (ibid). The UKA intimidated and murdered its enemies, yet it was the Original Knights and the White Knights that emerged as the most violent and militant of the Klan organizations.

The Original Knights and the White Knights are considered to be the most violent and militant of Klan organizations (Cunningham 2013; FBI 1964; Newton 2001; UHAC 1967). The White Knights were involved in the murder of three civil right activists, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner near Philadelphia, Mississippi during the summer of 1964. While searching for the missing civil rights workers, investigators inadvertently found the bodies of two black men, Henry Dee and Charles Moore. The two men were killed by the White Knights.<sup>7</sup> They are also associated with bombings and burnings across Mississippi during 1964 and 1965.

The Original Knights were just as violent in their pursuit of white supremacy. They assaulted, threatened, and harassed Black Americans and anyone who assisted them. On February 15, 1965, six days before the Deacons first affiliated chapter was founded, they attacked five black men in Bogalusa and damaged their car after they stopped at a gas station (UHAC 1967). Twelve days earlier they assaulted a CORE worker in order to force him to leave. Just like the UKA, the Original and White Knights had a contradictory relationship with violence: proclaiming in a handbill that their organization does not advocate violence unless it is necessary to protect and defend democracy while also claiming anything that suggested otherwise was the work of radicals and liberals. However, they also distributed leaflets in which they discuss the mass killing of blacks by Klansmen in Southern states just after the civil war, as well as “only small things” like whippings, tarring and feathering, and hangings (UHAC 1967).

While all three organizations had an ambivalent relationship when it comes to using violence to advance their goals, the Original and White Knights are distinguished in their level of militancy. First, all Klan members are required to take an oath at the time of admission. The individual promises to obey Klan rules and officers, be faithful to the organization, practice “Klanishness” with fellow members, and protect the secrecy of the order and its members (HUAC 1967). Secrecy is key to the Klan and is essential to the success of their operations. However, the White Knights differed from other Klans in their

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<sup>7</sup>It took more than 4 decades to bring charges against those responsible.

administered oath. The White Knights limited support for the Constitution as originally written and pledged to die to preserve “Christian civilization”. The oath required a member to pledge secrecy even in the case of murder, rape, and treason, cases in which other Klans made exceptions (in language but not in practice). While language might be mere window dressing, it contributes to a sense of militancy.

Second, intimidation and violence is a Klan’s way of life. It takes many forms: a cross burning, a beating, or murder. Yet, each act is intended to force citizens to conform to behavior approved by the Klan. The White and Original Knights were different in their intensity. Mimeographed directives from the organization sought to push a narrative that they were militants and as “militants, we are disposed to the use of physical force against our enemies” (UHAC 1966). Members were instructed to think of themselves as soldiers at war with an enemy who is only defeated when they are utterly destroyed. To fortify this military mindset, guerrilla warfare books were kept on hand and studied by members. While the Klan sought to destroy its enemies “socially” or “economically” if they failed to succumb, the mimeograph stated that they should be physically destroyed.

These were not just words, both the Original and White Knights trained and obtained weapons to carry out their goals. The mimeograph detailed that weapons and ammunition had to be accumulated, propaganda ready, counterattack maps and plans learned, and radios established. A Klan member, affiliated with the Original Knights, who also held a federal firearms license, purchased for resale 651 arms of all types along with 21,192 rounds of ammunition between May and August 1964 (UHAC 1967). Numerous sales were made to Klansmen in the Original Knights, White Knights, and UKA. Of the recorded 521 firearms sales, 237 were made in 18 cities in Louisiana, while 113 sales were made in 18 cities in Mississippi (FBI 1964a).

Below I give a profile of the most militant Klan type, the White and Original Knights.<sup>8</sup>

### ***Militant Klans***

#### ***White Knights***

The White Knights of Mississippi is considered to be the most ruthless and secretive Klan group of the era (FBI 1964; Southern Poverty Law Center 2011). The White Knights, at its height, had anywhere between 6,000 and 7,000 members (HUAC 1967). Compared to the UKA it was a small organization, but what it lacked in size it made up for in violence. They committed many crimes but the most horrific was the murders of three civil rights workers in Philadelphia, Mississippi, on June 21, 1964.

The White Knights were created in February 1964, after 200 members from the Mississippi branch of the Original Knights — discussed below — split from the organization due

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<sup>8</sup>See Appendix A for an outline of the UKA.

to internal dissension (FBI 1964b). The organization aimed to promote white supremacy and to maintain segregation of the races. Its Imperial Wizard was Sam Holloway Bowers, Jr, a salesman from Gulfport, Miss. Under his leadership nine murder and 300 beatings, burnings and bombings were committed (Lee 2006).

Unlike other Klan organizations, the White Knights were distinct in its structure, in part due to its military operation style (FBI 1965). There were two parliamentary bodies that hardly met, the klanburgesses and the klonvocation (HUAC 1967). More common were meetings attended by officers on province, district, and state levels in order to hold elections, allocate funds, and revise the constitution. The official hierarchy of the White Knights was smaller than other Klans. The imperial wizard was assisted by a grand dragon, grand giant, grand chaplain, and grand director of the Klan Bureau of Investigation (Lee 2006). The Klan organization was divided into congressional districts, provinces, and klaverns. The White Knight investigators occupied a special role within the Klan, acting as their eyes and ears. They investigated persons and civil rights organizations and recommended intimidation such as cross burnings or violence including beatings and bombings. Investigators could approve and participate in acts of intimidation, however, murder had to be authorized by the imperial wizard.

At the height of its power, in the fall of 1964 though the first half of 1965, the White Knights claimed a total of about 6,000 active members (HUAC 1967). Unlike other Klan groups, it was extremely secret in its operations. It never sponsored public rallies and leaders did not admit any association with the group. By the winter of 1964, the White Knights were being challenged by the UKA. Members defected from the White Knights to the UKA starting in late 1964 and throughout 1965 that by 1967 membership had dropped to less than 500 members (HUAC 1967). The loss was mainly the result of the UKA's superior organizational ability and use of public rallies as well as the White Knight's violent behavior.

### *Original Knights*

Prior to the organization of the Original Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, there had been no effective Klan activity within Louisiana for several decades. This changed when Roy E. Davis of Dallas, Texas reactivated the Klan in late 1960 (HUAC 1967). While Davis held the title of imperial wizard, his national kleagle (organizer) and grand dragon, J.D. Swenson of Bossier City, LA, exercised actual leadership (ibid). The purpose of the Original Knights, like all other Klans, was to promote "Americanism", white supremacy, and to maintain segregation.

At the height of its power in the summer of 1964 through 1965, the Klan could claim at least 1,000 members in about 46 klaverns (Attorney General of the United States 1965).

Within Louisiana, the organization prominently operated in three areas: Shreveport and Bossier City, Monroe, and Bogalusa. After the fall of 1963, it attempted to expand to Arkansas and Mississippi. Under J.D. Swenson, 300 Mississippians joined but quickly left the group and formed the White Knights (FBI 1964a). In Arkansas, some klaverns were formed in the El Dorado and Crockett area but soon folded (ibid).

The Original Knights, along with the White Knights, is considered one of the most violent Klan organizations of the era. Within each klavern there was a secret group whose membership was only known to other members labeled the “wrecking crew” (HUAC 1967). The crew consisted of hard-core members whose activities were unknown to the general membership.<sup>9</sup> These action groups ranged in size from three to more than a dozen men. To carry out their tasks, the group accumulated weapons and stockpiles of ammunition. Violence ranged from intimidation of city officials who proposed means to improve race relations to beating a civil rights leader, news reporter, and FBI agent, all in one event, as activists marched to protest denial of voting rights. In addition to the burning of many churches for supporting the civil rights movement, one of the most serious crimes occurred in June 1965 when Ernest R. McElveen killed a black deputy sheriff and wounded another in Washington Parish, LA (Keller 2009). In 1965, the height of its power, the Klan committed hundreds of cross burnings and assaults, 22 shootings, and 28 bombings (HUAC 1967).

By 1967, the Original Knights declined to less than 250 members due to internal strife, competition from the UKA, and a federal injunction. The White Knights split into three different organizations over charges of misappropriating funds for personal use. Under the threat of jail time, leaders revealed the names of 87 members, which was supplemented by the Justice Department with a second list of 151 names. A permanent injunction was issued against the group that prohibited the Klan from harassing and intimidating blacks who were exercising their civil or voting rights (Hill 2004).

### **5.3 The Klan, Civil Rights, and Time Horizons**

The Klan wave of the civil rights era followed the 1954 Brown vs Board of Education. The Klan grew, fueled by nativist anxieties over economic and political uncertainties, and later the threat to Jim Crow laws at the hands of grassroots protests and new federal policies (Cunningham 2013). There is always a core group of individuals keeping the fire alive with resources and rituals but its rise is bolstered by a peripheral membership fearing loss of power (Umoja 2013). Core members — those who viewed the Klan as part of their

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<sup>9</sup>This does not mean that violence was not discussed in general Klan meetings.



identity and see it as an inter-generational battle — recruit by accessing the window of opportunity that the civil rights movement afforded, tapping into the fear and perceived threat of racial change.

I consider the Klan a violence specialist. Locally it had the ability to apply violence at a low cost as well as benefits from defending a system that generated returns. Its ideology, training, and arms lowered its cost for applying violence. Mimeographed directives from the organization sought to push a narrative that they were militants and as “militants, we are disposed to the use of physical force against our enemies” (UHAC 1966). Members were instructed to think of themselves as soldiers at war with an enemy who is only defeated when they are utterly destroyed. While the Klan sought to destroy its enemies “socially” or “economically” if they failed to succumb, the mimeograph stated that they should be physically destroyed.

In many parts of the South they were a state within a state. Local law enforcement had been infiltrated. A directive from the White Knights instructed members that the first contact with the “enemy in the streets” should be “legally-deputized law enforcement officers” (HUAC 1967) Members, accordingly, volunteered to serve in their local law enforcement agencies. The embedded members had an oath not to uphold the law but to “preserve christian civilization”. Police, sheriffs, and elected officials who opposed the Klans were subject to slanderous attack. They accused defiant public officials of taking bribes, having illicit sexual relations with black women, or fathering illegitimate children (HUAC 1967). Rather than defend themselves against such attacks, officers looked the other way (Speri 2017). Law enforcement officers worked side by side with officers who were Klan members.

Not only was the Klan closer to a state than the federal government but it enforced its own social system. The caste system of white supremacy was a complex web of social and political customs, proscribed behaviors, government policies, and law (Nelson 2016). It provided white Southerners with relative economic security, status, and privilege. The need for low-wage labor perpetuated segregation. Since slavery, Southern employers have understood that low labor costs provided the South its comparative advantage over the highly endowed technology and capital of the North. Landowners and industrialists relied heavily on the racial system to maintain low wages and a repressed work force (Honey 1992). After World War Two, the South in the face of a growing higher wage industrial section still saw cheap labor as the key to growth. Segregation was required to keep African-Americans repressed within this system.<sup>10</sup>

From Reconstruction and onward, whites showed a willing to defend their caste posi-

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<sup>10</sup>Segregation is rooted in economic factors but is not the only factor (Cell 1982; Cobb 1981; Wright 1986)

tion at the expense of black life and freedom (Hill 2004). White social and economic status continued to be predicated on black subjugation through the civil rights era. The benefits of segregation constantly reinforced white loyalty to racism and violence. It was the material and social interest that made segregation so sticky. Removing segregation meant crushing the old social order. It was asking Southern whites to forgo their caste status and their privilege. This was too much of a demand for some. Many whites would not live with the broken pieces of the old social order.

In 1960s Deep South the Klan enforce de jure segregation. Following the civil rights campaign to end segregation, the White and Original Knights switched to brutal forms of violence. In some sense these two organizations do not fit the definition of predatory actors. They did not pillage in the same manner as regional drug cartels such as the Knights Templar. There are some cases of the White and Original Knights extorting Black Americans, kidnapping (not for ransom), and stealing property but they did not engage in direct wealth expropriation like the Knights Templar cartel. However, the White and Original Knights, like the Knights Templar, did switch to destructive violence under a shortening time horizon.

Bates (2010) defines a predatory actor as one that uses coercion to seize or destroy wealth, as a oppose to one that secures and promotes its formation. A specialist in violence produces political development when they realize that they can survive and benefit by assisting in the growth of prosperity. If this is the case, producers will believe the specialist's promise of refraining from predation. In turn, the specialist will delegate authority to those with resources and skills, resulting in subjects being able to organize and govern economic organizations. The final result is those violence specialists will "vest their power in those who will invest their capital," securing their survival (Bates 2010, pg. 85).

The destruction part of Bates's definition of predation is mostly left unexamined. Instead most examples of predation focus on looting such as in the former Soviet Union after its collapse, when "their future in office was no longer assured, [Communist party and the security services] began looting state enterprises, firms that extracted natural resources, and public funds that had been deposited in the banking system," (Bates, Grief, and Singh 2002). However, not all specialists in violence seize wealth, some also destroy.

The Klan was selective in whose wealth it secured and shared power with those it selected. It delegated authority to white individuals it deemed acceptable or at least did not interfere with its control of race relations. It undertook violence to maintain segregation that destroyed wealth for Black Americans and other perceived "enemies". Unlike the Knights Templar in Mexico, the Klan was mostly not interested in seizing wealth but instead in maintaining the caste system through violence.

The Klan has always been predatory. The organization since its foundation has sought to prevent blacks from accumulating wealth (Randel 1965; Trelease 1979). Violence and law (formal and informal) are its main tools of enforcement. Yet the severity of violence pulses.<sup>11</sup> The Klan promotes a predatory system but the organization itself only uses destructive violence during certain periods of its history. The Klan has always existed in some form since the 1860s, the three waves we are familiar with corresponds to periods they used systemic destructive violence. The common link in the three waves — and cause of destructive violence — was a threat to the caste system.

The first surged occurred during reconstruction. Nearing the 1868 election, white southerners feared freedmen would vote Republican. In the name of preserving law and order in a white-dominated society the klan turned to violence. Across the South, the Klan used violence to intimidate Republican voters. In Kansas, over 2,000 murders were committed in connection with the election. In Georgia, the number of threats and beatings were even higher. And in Louisiana, 1000 blacks were killed as the election neared (PBS 1979).

Killings surged again in the 1960s. It was the last step in a four step escalation of violence (Nelson 2016). First, a threatening phone call or visit. Then the burning of a cross, usually on the property of an individual. Next, a beating, flogging, burning, shooting into property or bombing. Lastly, extermination. Murders, assaults, and kidnappings reinforced the privileged position of whites at a time when the Klan felt under threat by the civil rights movement and federal legislation. Murders were not indiscriminate. Of the 17 murders committed by Klan groups in Louisiana and Mississippi from 1964 to 1967, 14 were motivated by affiliation — or suspected affiliation — with the civil rights movement (Nelson 2016). Tellingly, victims were interrogated on potential uprisings, gun smuggling, and whites assisting the movement.

Violence enforced segregation. There are many examples of the Klan murdering and assaulting those it suspected of being part of the civil rights movement. In one case on February 7, 1964 in Franklin County, Mississippi, Alfred Whitley was stopped at a roadblock, kidnapped, stripped, beaten, and forced to drink castor oil (Nelson 2016). The White Knights accused him of being a leader of the local NAACP and order him to give up names of white leaders of the organization, which Whitley did not know. In another case on February 15, 1964, James C. Winston was forced into a car at gunpoint in Natchez, Mississippi. Once in the car, the Klans men questioned him on his affiliation with the NAACP and ordered him to identify local black leaders. When asked if he would send his children (which he did not have) to a desegregated school, he replied that he would. The Klan stripped

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<sup>11</sup>While violence committed by the klan rises and falls, white vigilante violence is common in the South (EJI 2017)

him, forced him on the ground, and beat him with a bullwhip. One last example shows the sophistication and malice the Klan was willing to go to eliminate and deter others from joining the civil rights movement and ending segregation. On August 27, 1965, the Klan attempted to murder local NAACP president George Metcalfe of Natchez, Mississippi by planting a bomb under his car (Nelson 2008). The bomb exploded throwing Metcalfe from the car, shattering glass, and damaging vehicles parked nearby. Metcalfe survived, however, two years later Wharlest Jackson, a Korean War veteran, treasurer of the Natchez NAACP, and friend of Metcalfe was killed in a car bomb set by the Klan.

In addition to murders, the Klan carried out bombings. It was responsible for numerous bombings, dynamitings, and other incendiary acts (FBI 1964b). They used dynamite as a weapon of terror and destruction, dating back to the 1956 bombing of Martin Luther King Jr.'s house in Montgomery. There were over 100 bombings in Deep South states and arson of 30 black churches in Mississippi alone (SPLC 2018). In one case, the Klan placed a home made bomb at a physician's home after his wife had written an article in which she endorsed integration (FBI 1964). In another case, Klans men attempted to burn a house by pouring a five gallon can of gasoline and setting it on fire (ibid). They also forced families to flee their homes. In one case, telling a Black family they had to move from the area or suffer the consequences (ibid). They agreed to move.

The Klan had both the means and training to carry out bombings. Caches of arms seized in arrests reveal their stockpile of weapons, uncovering blasting powder, dynamite, fuses, and caps (HUAC 1967). Along with home made bombs. Some members received military training. In Macon, Georgia, an explosives school was attended by two dozen men (FBI 1964a). There they were given instructions in setting booby traps, rigging explosives, burning automobiles and buildings, destroying automobiles with easily obtained materials, and using fertilizer as explosives (ibid).

The main purpose of bombings or threaten bombings were to intimidate and eliminate those that sought to challenge the caste system. A bomb or threat was meant as a signal to those that sought the removal of segregation that they should think twice. These acts fit a predatory view, protecting the wealth of those it deemed acceptable from possible changes in the caste system and forestalling the wealth and therefore challenge of those it deemed unacceptable. The benefits of protecting the caste system is clear in the public policy of segregated states. Besley, Persson, and Sturm (2010) find that the exclusion of blacks from voting meant that policies could be tailored to vested interest rather than the whole population, creating stagnant growth in Southern states but concentrated benefits. Furthermore, Naidu (2012) shows that the disenfranchisement of blacks in the South led to an increase in land value by lowering tax rates on landowners.

Violence, forcible eviction, and intimidation demonstrates the Klans' struggle for maintaining the caste system in the South. A secret White Knights directive to its members issued on March 1, 1964, stated that enemies could be destroyed in any of the three ways: "Socially, Economically, Physically." (HUAC 1967).

### **5.3.1 Falling Time Horizons**

Not until the mid-1960s did some civil rights Klan organizations turn towards a more sustained use of destructive violence. They had used guerrilla like tactics before, during their first wave after the civil war, white conservatives turned to violence to maintain the social order rooted in white domination and aristocratic privilege (Tyson 1999).<sup>12</sup> Confronted by a newly active enfranchised Black population, a growing Southern Republican party, and Union troops, that sought a social vision more democratic than their own, they murdered, maimed, and terrorized hundreds, may be thousands, of black and white citizens. Much like after the civil war, campaigns by local Blacks and civil rights organizations like the CORE, NAACP, and SCLC, and SNCC threatened the caste system and its benefits. The perceived threat of their economic, social and political survival in turn prompted the Original and White Knights to turn to increasingly coercive tactics to prevent and deter further challenges to the white caste Southern system. They killed to survive.<sup>13</sup>

The federal, state, and local government had failed African Americans. In 1965, a year after the landmark Civil Rights Act, little had changed in the Deep South. Klan terror had succeeded in preventing any substantial enforcement of the act, resulting in many communities remaining segregated in all public facilities. The federal government fearing political backlash, avoided pressuring Southern law enforcement. The state chose "regime stability and narrow sectional interests over public safety considerations" (Goldsmith 2003, p.4). The passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act had the effect of sparking a renewed growth of the civil rights era Klan. The act threatened white dominance of the electoral map in the South. At the same time the Citizen Councils of America failed to hold the integration line. Since *Brown vs Board of Education*, Citizens Councils, made up of white civic and business leaders, led the opposition to integration across the South. Councils preferred legal and legislative strategies to violence, however, by the mid-1960s many segregationists regarded the Councils' non-violent strategy as ineffective (McMillen 1971). While federal law and the ineffectiveness of the Citizens Councils increased Klan membership across the

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<sup>12</sup>During Reconstruction young black men formed militias at a time when they were not officially sanctioned by federal and state authorities (Kerr-Ritchie 2000).

<sup>13</sup>It should be noted that the Klan carried out violence and intimidation during the third wave before civil rights organizations undertook large scale campaigns, but it was the intensity and changing of tactics by civil rights groups in 1964 and 1965 that prompted the growth and quality of Klan violence.

United States, only the White and Original Knights engaged in sustained violence against the black community and civil rights workers.

The UKA in North Carolina demonstrates the difference of both quality and quantity of violence among Klan organizations. The state was long considered the region's most progressive. While governors in other Southern states blocked integration efforts, no candidate dared to defy federal civil rights legislation in North Carolina. The election of Terry Sanford in 1960 further cemented the state as liberal. Defeating segregationist I. Beverly Lake, Sanford set about improving employment, education, and race relations. Sanford created a network of Good Neighbor Councils (GNC) to support interracial negotiation and to encourage reform in racial employment practices (Chafe 1980). While holding a moderate viewpoint, that at times placed it at odds with civil rights groups, it also recognized and legitimized African American grievances (*ibid*). After the passage of the 1964 civil rights act and acceptance by the state government, the UKA in North Carolina was isolated from mainstream institutions unlike Klan organizations in Mississippi. There a coordinated effort to preserve Jim Crow laws in the face of federal sanctions took hold (Cunningham 2013). Liberal politicians broadened the appeal of the Klan since segregationists could no longer count on the state government. Coupled with an absence of coordinated efforts by state and local policing against the UKA, the Klan thrived.

Why didn't the UKA react to race policies as violently as the White and Original Knights. After all, except for the difference in access to government institutions that unabashedly supported segregation, Klans in Louisiana, Mississippi, and North Carolina both encountered ambivalent policing and little cost for Klan participation (Cunningham 2009). I point towards another factor that threatened Klan members in Mississippi and Louisiana.

Moderate state governments such as those in North Carolina did not threaten the survival of the Klan, at least at the start, and mostly served to swell its ranks through ineffective enforcement. UKA used public mobilization of whites rather than violence to oppose integration. It was different in Mississippi and Louisiana. There civil rights activist threatened the White and Original Knights in a different manner. Civil rights workers and those pushing for equality sought to end segregation and therefore end the caste system, effectively shortening the Klans' time horizon. All Klans across the US from Mississippi to Michigan supported white supremacy. The UKA in North Carolina had the highest number of Klan chapters of the civil rights era. Yet it was not the most violent Klan. The tar heel state, though the site of marches and other civil rights protests, was not targeted in the same intense manner by civil rights groups as Deep South states. The main factor in the growth and quality of Klan violence was activism by blacks and the civil rights movement (Cunningham 2013; Umoja 2013). The White and Original Knights reacted with destructive

violence to the desegregation campaigns of CORE and SNCC.

CORE and SNCC targeted Louisiana and Mississippi with more protests and greater demands. In 1964, SNCC, one of the leading civil rights groups, had 4 offices located within North Carolina compared to Mississippi's 30 offices. That same year SNCC undertook 5 campaigns in Mississippi but none in North Carolina. It was in Southern states like Mississippi, under a harsh spotlight designed to show the US and the world the terror of white supremacy, that the Klan was threatened. In 1964, CORE planned the "Louisiana Summer" project, modeled after SNCC's Mississippi Freedom Summer that occurred that same year (Hill 2004). As in Mississippi, CORE focused on desegregation of public facilities and accommodations. That same year, of the 52 planned protests by CORE only one occurred in North Carolina while 20, almost 40% of CORE's protests for the year, took place in Louisiana and Mississippi.

In addition, after 1964, movement leaders openly embraced armed resistance (Umoja 2013). Before 1965, black activists, in places like Mississippi, practiced armed self-defense but did not advocate for its widespread use. SNCC and CORE depended on the protection of armed Black Americans while at the same time publicly advocating a nonviolence stance (ibid).

### **5.3.1.1 Difference between 1954 and 1964**

The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling signaled a turning point for segregation and briefly shortened the shadow of the future by calling into question the Southern caste system, thus, giving rise to the Klan's third wave. Yet many Southern states refused to capitulate, easing the sense of urgency (Chong 2014). White Southerners had many means to resist. They founded their resistance on fighting communism within the civil rights movement and upholding states' rights. Schools remained out of bounds for black children due to resistance and help from the state houses that stepped in on behalf of white citizens to prevent enforcement of federal law (McMillen 1994). It worked, 99% of schools in the South remained segregated in the 1960s (Orfield 2000).

Little changed in the following decade, even after the passage of the 1964 civil rights act, until civil rights workers and Southern blacks pushed from the bottom for equal rights (Hill 2004). It was different than federal rulings or law. The burgeoning civil rights movement created an opportunity for the Klan to recruit from a large pool of whites who felt aggrieved by racial change (Umoja 2013). The Original and White Knights facing an existential threat shifted to destructive violence. All Klan groups fought for white supremacy, whether through marches, speeches, or violence, but it was those Klan groups facing a falling time horizon that attempted to maintain segregation through a guerrilla war.

Boutcher, Jenkins, and Van Dyke (2017) support this, finding that white supremacists mobilize when threats to traditional economic, political, and social power of whites emerge.

By 1965, the White and Original Knights had sliced out a “Klan nation” in Southwestern Mississippi and Southeastern Louisiana through a well organized terrorist war (Nelson 2016). It was not only through force but also through the complicity of the state and local law enforcement agencies. In Mississippi and Louisiana, both organizations were highly organized and well-disciplined, fighting a guerrilla war to defend white caste privilege. In these lands, the Klan governed on all matters of race. They mobilized supporters, organized boycotts, and harassed reluctant local governments.

The Klan switched to increasing forms of violence to defend the caste system. Throughout slavery and Jim Crow, violence had been a coercive instrument for maintaining white supremacy. The Klan responded in a similar manner in 1964, using destructive violence to oppose desegregation. The civil rights campaign of 1964 targeted conservative Deep South states that rejected civil rights reform. Their rejection prompted civil rights campaigns and led to the Klans’ backlash. Violence replaced economic threats as the principal means of social control over blacks (Hill 2004). Between the years 1964 and 1965 Klan violence surged: in Louisiana and Mississippi the Klan killed 16 people, more than the number killed in the past decade combined (Nelson 2016). This signaled a switch from limited violence to brutal terror in defense of the caste system not seen since Reconstruction.

#### **5.3.1.2 Self-defeating**

Yet, the switch to destructive violence, meant to secure the Klans’ future, was self-defeating. The Klan has ebbed and flowed across the United States since its inception. In its ebb and flow it reveals a pattern. It is strong when leaders are able to capitalize on social tension and white fear. This leads to an increase in popularity and its fanaticism leads to violence. Prominent violence leads law enforcement, the government, and the press to scrutinize the organizations. It loses its public credibility and in-fighting between Klan members destroys its effectiveness.

The civil rights era Klan is no different in this pattern. Threatened by a burgeoning rural civil rights movement the White and Original knights, bolstered by new recruits, increased their acts of violence. Yet, the brazen attempts to maintained segregation pushed those in the civil rights movement to further press for progress and put pressure on the federal government to intervene. In fact, the tactics of CORE and SNCC were designed to do just that. There were many discussions among CORE and SNCC leaders about the safety of black and white Northern activists traveling to Louisiana and Mississippi (Chong 2014). A vocal group within the organizations saw it as an unneeded provocation, while others questioned



whether white students and activists should be part of the fight to end segregation (Dittmer 1994). In the end it was decided that bringing black and white Northern activists to the rural Deep South was one of the few means CORE and SNCC had to bring attention to the plight of black Americans fighting against racism and segregation (Carson 1995; Meier and Rudwick 1973).

Northern black and white activists organizing and protesting along local black activists had the intended effect. White and Original knights reacted violently. However, targeted attacks against blacks, which by then were being widely covered with the introduction of CORE and SNCC, and especially with the killings of white activists, was self-defeating as it increased pressure on the federal government to step in. The Attorney General Robert Kennedy established a nine lawyer unit from the Civil Rights Division to investigate terrorist acts in Mississippi (Nelson 2016). The killings of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner, in Neshoba County, Mississippi, who were part of Freedom Summer in 1964, enraged the nation and prompted the FBI to increase its presence in the region.

The campaigns of CORE and SNCC in Louisiana and Mississippi played into the ingrained belief of the Klan that liberal Northern whites were behind the uprisings (Cunningham 2013). The Klan and other white supremacist saw the civil rights campaign as another invasion. On May 3, 1964, White Knights imperial wizard Sam Bowers advised that “within a very few days, the enemy will launch his final push for victory here in Mississippi” (Nelson 2016). He predicted that Freedom Summer would result in “massive street demonstrations” between blacks and whites, resulting in “civil chaos and anarchy.” He called for white resistance to “communist authorities” inside the federal government that could result in the declaration of martial law. In response he called for white Mississippians to prepare their fists and guns.

### **5.3.2 Raising Time Horizons**

At the same time that local civil rights campaigns were threatening and pushing the Klan to eliminate its enemies economically, socially, and physically, the same campaigns were broadening the horizon of small town black residents. There had been protest and resistance to the caste system since its inception. However, in 1964 two civil rights organizations, CORE and SNCC, changed their tactics for achieving a more equal society. Both organizations had labored for civil rights in rural Mississippi, Louisiana, and other areas since 1961 (Meier and Rudwick 1975). That year CORE launched freedom rides to challenge segregation on interstate buses and bus terminals. Traveling on buses from DC to Jackson, Mississippi, activists were met with violent opposition in the Deep South, including the

firebombing of buses and a subsequent assault by a white mob (Carson 1981). Freedom Rides succeeded in securing an Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) ban on segregation in all facilities under its jurisdiction. While the freedom rides brought some success, organizations found that violent opposition by white supremacists in rural areas of the Deep South would not afford the opportunity of direct action campaigns that had been successful in cities such as Montgomery and Birmingham.

The 1964 freedom summer projects were launched to draw attention to the violent repression suffered by blacks in their attempts to exercise their constitutional rights. In addition, activists sought to form grassroots freedom movements to sustain the effort after activist left. The plan, proposed by Robert Moses, was to allow northern student volunteers to carry out simultaneous local campaigns in Mississippi and Louisiana. SNCC would focus on Mississippi, while CORE would center on Louisiana. Voter registration was the main objective of the project but it quickly shifted to directly addressing segregation and unequal public education systems. A turn that further threatened the Klan and reaffirmed CORE's and SNCC's commitment to the black community. Their initial voter registration did provoke some harassment but most whites regarded their action as a nuisance (Hill 2004). Voter registration was confined to the black community, limiting organizers interaction with local whites. Black voter registration posed a limited threat to white supremacy and the segregated caste system. Whites were a majority in most cities in counties. In Jonesboro, LA, blacks only comprised about one-third of votes. If all were registered, it would not significantly alter social relationships. White businesses would still thrive on segregated labor and the best jobs would remain secured. In addition, voter registration was met with less enthusiasm. People, especially young ones, were unmoved by the idea of registering to vote.

SNCC and CORE moved more towards the direction of letting the community control the movement. Rather than voter registration the community directly challenged desegregation through public demonstrations. It placed white and black civil rights workers in white spaces. Segregation was the base for the social and labor system of the South. Desegregation challenged the system of privilege that made sure whites obtained the best jobs, housing, education, and state services. If segregation fell, white workers would lose their dedicated channel of privilege.

SNCC, CORE, and local black leaders ensured segregation would fall. The project established 41 freedom schools teaching subjects like black history, philosophy of the civil rights movement, leadership skills, along with math and reading (Carson 1981). Activists, both local and Northerners, faced police and vigilante intimidation, local harassment, and an uncooperative voter registrar (Hill 2004).

For civilians living under the yoke of the Klan, local civil rights campaigns empowered black residents and led to mobilization. While white supremacist mobilized and engaged in warfare to forestall a threat to the white caste system, black residents mobilized under renewed potential for change. Rather than threatening their survival, as in the case of the White and Original Knights, local campaigns increased the time horizons of rural Black Americans. SNCC's and CORE's freedom summer campaign in Mississippi and Louisiana afforded black residents a larger vehicle to register their previously repressed protests (Meier and Rudwick 1975). This is particularly the case in small towns in Deep South states. There the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom of 1963 had less importance than the local march to open up the public pool that was broken up by dogs and batons (Dittmer 1994). In small Southern towns, there was a sense of being forgotten, or purposely ignored, by prominent national civil rights leaders and left at the mercy of the Klan and other white supremacists (Payne 1995). SNCC's and CORE's freedom houses as well as support for protests, amplified their voice to a national level and raised the opportunity for local residents to claim their rights.

The summer project had not achieved what it sought. Voter registration increased but CORE was unable to desegregate many public facilities such as libraries, swimming pools, and other public accommodations. They also had limited success in building a community organization that could hold its own after CORE left. However, in Jonesboro, LA, CORE volunteers had inadvertently contributed in helping bring about an armed self-defense organization.

### **5.3.2.1 What Came First?**

An alternative explanation is that the Deacons formed in places where the Klan was weakest and there was little risk of retaliation. This may also explain why Black Americans did not form Deacon chapters in the Carolinas where the Klan was strongest. There may be some truth in this alternative explanation. The Original and White Knights started to decline in late 1965 and were at a nadir by 1967. This was in part due to a push by UKA to recruit within Mississippi and Louisiana, internal divisions, and intervention by the federal government (HUAC 1967). The UKA had superior organizational skills and used systematic public rallies to espouse the Klan's cause, this afforded the UKA the opportunity to challenge the Original and White Knights (*ibid*). The UKA's strategy relied more on white mobilization than violence.

In addition to pressure from the UKA, internal strife within the Original and White Knights led to their decline. Internal divisions, often over suspected misappropriation of funds, contributed to the factionalization of the Original Knights, which the UKA used to

its advantage by recruiting those factions to the point where most klavens by the end of 1965 had switched over to the UKA (ibid).

Lastly, federal pressure forced the White and Original Knights from the shadows. In the *United States v. Original Knights of Ku Klux Klan*, the federal government obtained an injunction to protect blacks in Washington Parish, Louisiana. The injunction against the Klan, including members of the police force, was in part brought about by the Deacons' efforts of drawing attention to the violent repression of black Americans (Hill 2004). These three factors resulted in the decline of the Original and White knights by the end of 1965, ultimately leading to membership only in the hundreds rather than the thousands (HUAC 1967).

However, the Deacons rather than forming during the decline of the Original and White Knights, formed during the height of their power in the first half of 1965. Figure 5.6 shows that almost all of the Deacon chapters formed in 1965 and of those, most in the spring and summer (FBI 1965; Hill 2004). Oral history is particularly important in understanding the power of the Original and White Knights in 1965. One Deacon on July 9, 1965 in Bogalusa, LA., simultaneously defends the Deacons and describes the power of the Original Knights in a series of questions at a church meeting: "How many people have the Deacons lynched? How many people have they strung up from trees? How many homes have they bombed and how many churches have they bombed?... The Deacons are not night-riders who go down the streets spraying bullets into people's houses and shooting people in the back." (Project South).

Rather than the Deacons forming in areas where the Klan was weakest, residents in Louisiana and Mississippi viewed the Deacons as a prime factor in the Klan's demise. A Jonesboro resident in 1965 said that "Jonesboro quieted down a whole lot since the Deacons been here. The only thing we have had here was arrests... Other than that, we hadn't had any violence," (Project South). Another resident when asked if the Deacons cause more white violence or reduce violence replied, "It tends to quiet it down. Quite a bit," (ibid). This seems to suggest that the Klan weakened after the Deacons formed, not the other way around. There was finally a cost for Klan violence.

The Original and White Knights crumbled by the end of 1965. However, the Deacons emerged at the height of the two organizations' capacity. Residents of rural Louisiana and Mississippi perceived both organizations as threatening as ever in 1965 and the Deacons as an answer to that threat. The Deacons did not avoid North Carolina because it was the stronghold of the UKA. Rather, the qualitative difference in violence between the Klans provides a more accurate account of why the Deacons only formed in Deep South states. North Carolina was the stronghold of the UKA with over 15,000 members, more than the

Original and White knights combined. However, the Klan in North Carolina lacked the overt backing of the state government (ibid). Without the backing of the local government, Klan members were not as emboldened to take violent action such as the White and Original Knights (Cunningham 2013). Lacking support had two effects, the UKA was able to boost its membership but at the same time did not have support from the state to destroy its enemies in as an overt manner.

This set the stage for the qualitative difference in violence between the UKA and the Original and White knights once civil rights activists targeted states. Under increasing pressure from civil rights workers and with the support of state and local governments, the Original and White Knights shifted to more predatory violence while the UKA, with less pressure from civil rights workers and little state support, tended to avoid predatory actions. Therefore, differences in state government protection of civil rights laws prompted civil rights activists to intervene. The interaction of pressure from the civil rights movement and the level of local government support for civil rights laws facilitated differences in the frequency and type of Klan violence, prompting the emergence of the Deacons.

## **5.4 Deacons for Defense and Justice**

Under pressure from the civil rights movement, the White and Original Knights increasingly sought to maintain the caste system through killings, bombing campaigns, threatening unemployment, and intimidating blacks. The federal government, meanwhile, failed to enforce the Civil Rights Act. Deep South states ignored federal authority. Civil rights activists were often beaten and illegally imprisoned. It was at this time where passive resistance to white violence and intimidation would no longer hold. Some black activist had seen enough of national organizations conducting a pacifist and legal campaign founded on non-violence against murderous organizations bent on maintaining white supremacy.

That changed with the formation of a clandestine organization in the summer of 1964 in Jonesboro, Louisiana. This was not the first time Black Americans had picked up arms to protect themselves. Like Mexico, communities had previously turned to armed protection. In the civil rights era, African Americans frequently armed themselves. However, these self-defense efforts were informal and unorganized (Tyson 1999).

Members that joined the Deacons cited the lack of police protection, selective protection of only the white population, and lack of justice as a factor in forming the group. As one Deacon put it “Since they going to use [law enforcement] to take advantage of us, of our people, we thought it necessary for us to organize or join the Deacons, to have the authority to protect our people like they protect theirs. I didn’t see anything wrong with

that” (Anonymous CORE volunteer interview by anonymous, 1965).

The small town of Jonesboro was one of several mill towns in Louisiana that sprang up in the early 20th century as corporations sought timber. By 1960, the town reached about 12,000 residents, one third of which were black (Mitchell and Moore 1964). Most were employed in the Continental Can Company paper mill or the Olin Mathieson Chemical Company. Prosperous by Southern standards, Jonesboro’s black community still lived in poverty. About eight out of ten black families lived in poverty and 97% of blacks over the age of 25 did not complete high school (ibid). Segregation was just as strong as any other town. Blacks stepped off sidewalks and avoided the eyes of whites. Job sites were divided as well as restrooms. Certain public facilities were closed to black residents. Yet there was also a strong knit community centered around church (ibid).

This is where the Deacons first armed and patrolled black communities. They started as a loose self defense group in the summer of 1964. During that summer CORE planned “Louisiana Summer 1964” as a counterpart to the Mississippi Freedom Summer. CORE focused on voter registration and desegregation of public facilities. One of the sites chosen by CORE was Jonesboro. From the start, CORE activists were targeted by the Original Knights and other white supremacist. A gang of young whites broke the windows of the lodging house and would drive through the streets, verbally harassing and assaulting residents (Strain 2005). Black residents soon began to guard CORE activists. Among those was Earnest Thomas, who assumed a leadership position. Thomas, “Chilly Willy”, attended high school in Jonesboro before joining the air force and serving in the Korean War. CORE members were reluctant to accept armed protection. Armed self-defense clashed with their idea of nonviolent protest and the moral conviction that opponents could be moved by the strength of nonviolence (Meier and Rudwick 1975). However, fear in Jonesboro over white violence led many, but not all, CORE activists to compromise and accept armed protection at night (Hill 2004).

In the summer of 1964 a caravan of hooded Klans men rode through the black Jonesboro community. The convoy numbered 50 vehicles and was led by the assistant chief of police (Umoja 2012). They tossed leaflets into the street, warning blacks to stay away from CORE (ibid). It became clear that Thomas’s informal self-defense group was insufficient to provide protection. Under the leadership of Frederick Douglas Kirkpatrick, a newly arrived high school coach, the idea of a black volunteer auxiliary police squad was planted. Rather than an informal group, the auxiliary police would be officially sanctioned by local law enforcement (Hill 2004). Surprisingly, the chief of police, Adrian Peevy, accepted and deputized Kirkpatrick and four other individuals (ibid). Armed with an old police car, guns, and clubs, the newly established volunteer force set about to patrol and protect their commu-

nity. Yet, the chief of police had other ideas. Law enforcement aimed to use the auxiliary force to control and break up civil rights protests. It soon became clear to Kirkpatrick and his men that they would not be able to navigate their own aspirations and the restrictions of the established police.<sup>14</sup> The two contrasting ideas came to a head. Protection of the black community could not come from the same authority that accepted and supported white supremacy. Rather than continue operating under the police's banner, Kirkpatrick's black police met with Thomas's informal group. Six months later, the meeting would produce what become known as the Deacons for Defense and Justice (ibid).

The group quickly expanded and founded its second chapter in Bogalusa, LA, about 230 miles west of Jonesboro, in February 1965. Bogalusa was a small town of about 22,000 and also a sawmill town like Jonesboro (Strain 2005). They continued to expand through branches in Homer and Tallulah, Louisiana, as well as chapters in Mississippi and Alabama (Strain 2005). Unlike the Bogalusa chapter, Deacon groups in Mississippi decided not to affiliate with the Louisiana Deacons. In Natchez, Mississippi, Charles Sims, offered advice on how to set up a self-defense force but the Natchez group felt it had little to gain from a formal affiliation (Umoja 2002). Although the Natchez group decided not to officially affiliate with the Louisiana Deacons, it did use its name (ibid). The Deacons also attempted to venture into the North, especially Chicago, but their focus on right of self-defense was not as relevant to northern blacks, where racial violence was tied more to state authority, as opposed to the South, where vigilante violence dominated (Hill 2004).

The state responded to the Deacons with formal and informal repression. State officials opposed to the Deacons attempted to disarm the movement (Umoja 2002). Declassified FBI documents show that Mississippi state officials in 1967 proposed to make it illegal for members of the Deacons to possess firearms. The state district attorney for the Southwestern district of Mississippi gave the Mississippi State Highway Patrol the "authority to disarm all members of the Deacons" (FBI 1966). Other Southern states attempt to restrict the group by making it illegal for anyone to transport rifles and shotguns inside a car. Instead, the law required arms to be placed on a rack at the back of a vehicle. In addition, law enforcement agencies launched a campaign of harassment against the Deacons. On January 30, 1965, Deacon president Bradford and Earnest Thomas were patrolling during the day and guarding a group of college students rebuilding burned churches. After midnight, both men stood outside a cafe talking with arms openly displayed. Police arrived and arrested Bradford for displaying a weapon and public intoxication (FBI 1965). In another incident, three members were arrested for illegal possession of firearms in Mississippi (Umoja 2002).

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<sup>14</sup>In two instances the auxiliary police was forced to disband two lawful protests. One at a local restaurant and the other at a swimming pool (Hill 2004).

The federal government also set about repressing the Deacons. Under the Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO), the FBI began investigating the Deacons in 1965 until 1968 when it became inactive. Though not physically repressive, the program is a form of repression as it aims to suppress the group's capacity to organize and impose psychological distress through constant surveillance (Davenport 2009). They attempted to document the Deacon's organizational structure, chapters, attempts to expand, leadership changes, financial support, and coverage in the media. Of even greater interest to the FBI was how the group obtained arms.

The Original Knights also attempted to intimidate the group. In April, two months after the forming of the Bogalusa chapter, the Klan fired into the home of a local Deacon leader, Robert Hicks (Meier and Rudwick 1975). On January 17, 1965, the Klan burned two Jackson Parish churches that housed the Deacon movement.

By 1968, FBI informants were reporting no activity from any of the Deacon chapters (FBI 1968). The success of the Deacons may have led to their decline. The Deacons had made real gains in their quest for self-defense in the face of Klan terror. The local black community, to a greater degree, had internalized the Deacons' values of self-reliance, becoming more willing to defend itself (Hill 2004). Klan violence across the South dropped. The last attack in Bogalusa occurred on January 27, 1966, when James Farmer, a civil rights leader, visited the town for a planned march.

## **5.5 Data and Research Design**

The historical overview suggests that the emergence of the Deacons in the Southern United States is broadly consistent with the theoretical model. Black residents supplied protection to their communities in response to the absence of the state but more critical, to protect themselves against violent Klan groups that sought to uphold segregation. Like in Mexico, there are other factors that potentially contribute to the emergence of the Deacons: insecurity, crime, violence, abusive police forces, and economic underdevelopment. Looking at the data reveals why some counties formed militias while others did not.

In the following analysis I examine an original dataset on civilian militia formation during the civil rights movement in 1965. I conducted archival research in the Amistad Research Center housed at Tulane University in New Orleans during the summer of 2018. I use government, human rights, media, and interview transcripts to create a dataset of all US counties. The dependent variable, Deacons, is from the year 1965 while independent variable data is from 1964 or the most recent year possible. I examine the data using a rare logistic regression model with robust standard errors. I also use a time series cross



sectional analysis and matched data set as a robustness test.

### 5.5.1 Deacons

The dependent variable, *Deacons*, is a dichotomous variable coded 1 for counties with a Deacon chapter in the year 1965.<sup>15</sup> I use multiple sources to gather information on the location and founding of Deacon chapters. One of my primary sources is declassified FBI files on the Deacons. The FBI produced more than 1,500 pages on the activities of the Deacons from 1965 to 1968. Information was largely obtained through field office surveillance, informants, and infiltration.<sup>16</sup> I also rely on Hill's (2004) book *Deacons for Defense: Armed Resistance and the Civil Rights Movement* to identify the location and timing of chapters. Hill provides a detailed history of the group and in doing so challenges the myth a nonviolence civil rights movement. The book is used to corroborate information obtained from the FBI files. I also use newspapers that covered the group. Lastly, I rely on interviews conducted with civil rights workers and members of the Deacons themselves. The interviews were carried out by civil rights workers and scholars both during the rise of the Deacons and in the decade following their emergence. Hill (2004) argues that to understand the Deacons, scholars must listen to their own words since the group left behind very little of their own written documents.

It is difficult to put an exact number on Deacon chapters. The organization itself would not publicly say an accurate number of chapters or membership in part as a defensive strategy against the Klan. Charles Sims, a founding member and spokesman, would often claim in interviews an active membership of over 1,000 members in over 50 chapters. The FBI viewed these numbers as misinformation to deter Klan violence as well as to drum up interest. The FBI and Hill (2008) confirm that the Deacons had at least 28 chapters with several attempts to establish chapters in eight other cities including Philadelphia, Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles. Figure 5.1 displays the location of the Deacons by county. The map shows that the Deacons were active in a total of three states, Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Of the three states a vast majority of chapters were located in Mississippi, 46%, and Louisiana, 43%. Only 11% of the chapters were located in Alabama. The map shows that the Deacons were limited to the Deep South.

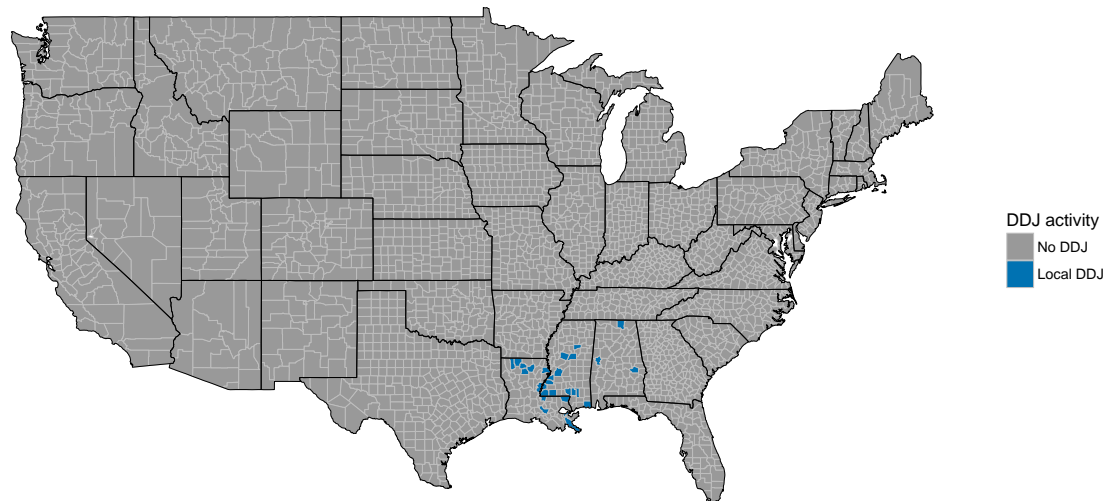
The Deacons were rare. The overwhelming majority of counties did not experience the formation of the Deacons. The rarity of civilian militias presents some statistical problems. Standard logistic regression techniques can “underestimate the probability of rare

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<sup>15</sup>I focus on the year 1965 since the Deacons were formally established in that year.

<sup>16</sup>Individuals and even members of the Deacons were willing to act as informants to convince the FBI that the organization was not a threat to the US government (Hill 2004).

**Figure 5.1:** Deacons by County, 1965



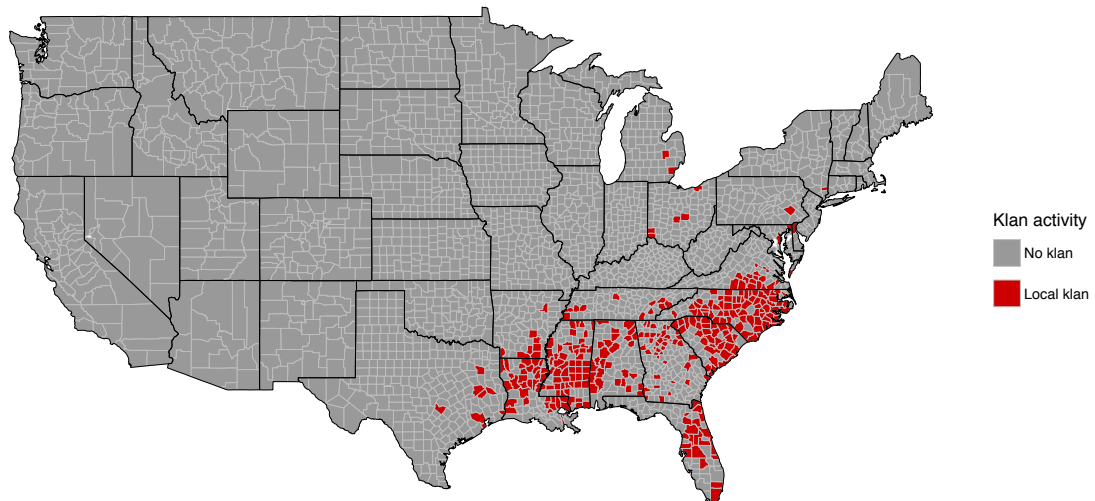
events” (King and Zeng 2001, p.137). Estimated coefficients from logistic regression analysis with many fewer observed events than non-events will be too small. More so, standard methods for computing event probabilities with logistic regression produce results biased in the same direction as the coefficient estimates. To manage this problem King and Zeng (2001) propose a bias-corrected logistic model for rare events data, or rare events logistic regression. I use this method below.

Individual observations are correlated within counties and years. To address this, I used robust standard errors (Golder, 2006). Standard errors were adjusted using Lumley and Heagerty (1999) weighted empirical adaptive variance estimators.

### **5.5.2 Klan**

The main independent variable, Klan organization, is used to measure the type of Klan activity within a county. While the UKA used violence and intimidation— and carried out one of the most heinous crimes of the era, the bombing of the 16th Street Church— the White and Original Knights maintained a greater sustained militaristic stance than that of the UKA due to the civil rights movement’s push into Southern states. Data is gathered from the hearing and report from the Committee on Un-American Activities in 1966 and 1967, Ku Klux Klan FBI Files on both the White and Original Knights (FBI 1964a; FBI 1964b, FBI 1964c), and a 1964 FBI monograph on Klan Organizations (FBI 1964d). I

**Figure 5.2:** All Klan groups by County, 1965



create two binary measures: white and original Klan chapters (*White and Original KKK*) and UKA chapters (*KKK*). The *White and Original KKK* variable is coded as one if there is a chapter of the Original or White Knights within a county and zero otherwise.<sup>17</sup> I also create another dichotomous variable, *UKA*, which I code as one if the UKA is operating within a county and zero otherwise.<sup>18</sup>

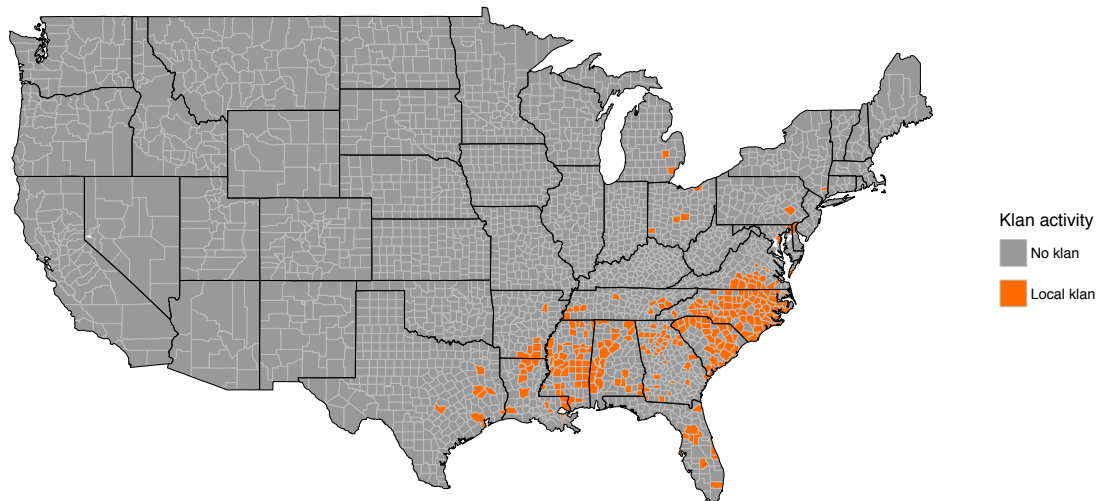
Figure 5.2 provides a map of all 11 Klan organization operating in 1964, including the White and Original Knights and the UKA. The UKA is the most prevalent Klan organization of the civil rights era, see Figure 5.3. The UKA was operating in 17 states and in 276 counties across those states. Its strong hold was North Carolina, with more than 60 counties. The more militant organizations are located in two states, see Figure 5.4. The White Knights had 32 counties under its control in Mississippi, while the Original Knights had chapters in 27 counties across Louisiana.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Different Klan organizations can and did operate within the same county. I conducted a robustness check using disaggregated measures of the UKA by state and find that results do not change. I also uncouple Original and White Knights into separate binary measurements and also find that results are similar.

<sup>18</sup>Besides the contrasting militancy of the organizations, I also focus on the UKA and White and Original Knights due to their size. They are the three largest Klan organizations of the civil rights era. Of the estimated 9,511 Klan members in 1964, about 84% are members in one of these three organizations. I conducted a robustness test that includes other Klan organizations but the results do not change.

<sup>19</sup>In addition to their shared militancy, I group together the White and Original Knights for an additional reason. The White Knights are a splinter group of the Original Knights. The Original Knights created an organization in Mississippi in the fall of 1963, however, it soon became inoperative and former members of the Mississippi section formed the White Knights in February 1964 (HUAC 1967).

**Figure 5.3: UKA by County, 1964**



## State Capacity

In addition to the main independent variable, I also include other explanatory variables to account for the emergence of the Deacons. I use several measurements to account for state capacity. First, I use police per 10,000 residents from the year 1964 to measure state capacity. The data is from the Uniform Crime Reports produced by the FBI and reports the number of employed police officers at the county level. Police forces represent the first line of official state repression and power projection (Davenport 2005).

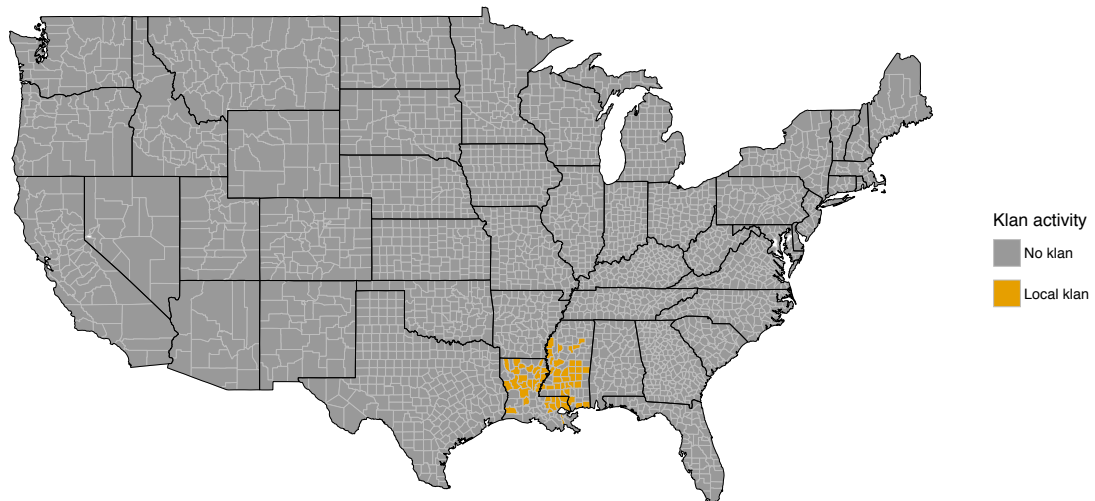
I also examine geography as a measure of state capacity. First I examine relative distance through elevation and highway personnel. I use the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) to measure elevation. It is defined as an elevation on the centroid location of a county polygon. Highway measures the number of employed highway personnel. The data is from the 1962 County and City Data Book produced by the United States Census Bureau.<sup>20</sup> Second, I look at absolute distance. The variable Security station is collected from the 1962 County and City Data Book and measures whether a security installation is located within a county or a neighboring county. Security stations can include forts, camps, training facilities, or air force bases. I also take into account the size of a county. Square miles measures the size of a county and is taken from the 1960 Census.

The above measurements more closely capture state weakness rather than state induced

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<sup>20</sup>I assume that higher highway personnel indicates a larger road network in a county.

**Figure 5.4:** White and Original Klan by County, 1964



weakness. The state's willingness to deploy its capacity in the defense of its subjects is difficult to measure as it deals with intent, however, a state's willingness can be glimpsed through its failure to prevent highly visible and public forms of violence. Lynching is one prominent form of a observable historical unwillingness to deploy state capacity in the defense of a particular population. I use Bailey and Tolnay (2015) to count the number of lynchings from the 1860s to the 1950s for each county.

## Crime

I measure crime using five measurements: homicide, larceny, assault, rape, and total crime. Total crime is a count of all four previously mentioned crimes plus robbery, burglary, and auto theft. All variables are from the 1964 FBI Uniform Crime Report and measured as the total count of a particular crime. The FBI did not produce county level crime rate reports until 1985, however, it does list the urban and rural crime rates. To overcome this limitation, I use the 1960 Census, which lists whether a county is considered urban or rural. If a county is considered urban by the Census I use the urban crime rate, if not I use the rural crime rate. I then calculate the crime rate per 1,000 residents from the county population census report.

## **Repertoire**

Building off Osorio, Schubiger, and Weintraub (2016), I examine past historical uprisings that are of possible relevance to black US civilians. The variable, Slave Rebellion, is a dummy variable which takes the value of 1 if a county experienced a slave rebellion between 1791 and 1865 and zero otherwise. Documentation of slave rebellions is from Aptheker (1937).

## **Stalemates**

In the case of the US, a country that was not experiencing open conflict, measuring military stalemates is challenging. However, one way to proxy for a stalemate in a non-conflict setting is to examine political stalemates. A county with near equal amounts of votes for opposing parties suggests a sharp divide among residents in which local elites can search for alternative solutions (Wilkinson 2006). I measure stalemates through the percentage vote for the leading presidential party in the 1960 election between John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon. The data is obtained from the 1962 County and City Data Book.

## **Local Institutions**

To measure local institutions I focus on black population percentage per county. The variable, Black Population (%) from the year 1962, is collected by the County and City Data Book and measures the percentage of residents of the county who are black. This might capture less institutions and more a large excluded portions of the population on the basis of ethnic background (Wimmer, Cederman, Min 2009).

I also examine four different organizations: CORE, NAACP, SCLC, and SNCC. I use many sources to locate local branches of these four organizations. I mainly draw from Meier and Rudwick (1973) as well as the University of Washington's "Mapping American Social Movements" project to locate CORE branches. For the NAACP I also use the University of Washington's database as well as Morris (1984). To locate SCLC I rely on Peake (1987). Lastly, I use the "Civil Rights Movement Veterans" project hosted by Tougaloo College in Mississippi, University of Washington's database, and Carson (1995) to map the location of SNCC branches. I aggregate the data to create a binary measurement with 1 indicating the presence of any of the four organizations and zero otherwise.

## **Inequality**

I measure inequality using two variables: median family income and mean persons per occupied unit. Both variables are obtained from the 1962 County and City Data Book.

## **Demographics**

I also include Population as a variable. A greater county population increases the number of potential recruits for a civilian militia. In addition, a larger population makes it more difficult for the state to keep tabs on individuals at the local level (Fearon and Laitin 2003). I use data from the county and city data book to measure the natural logarithm of county population for the year 1962.

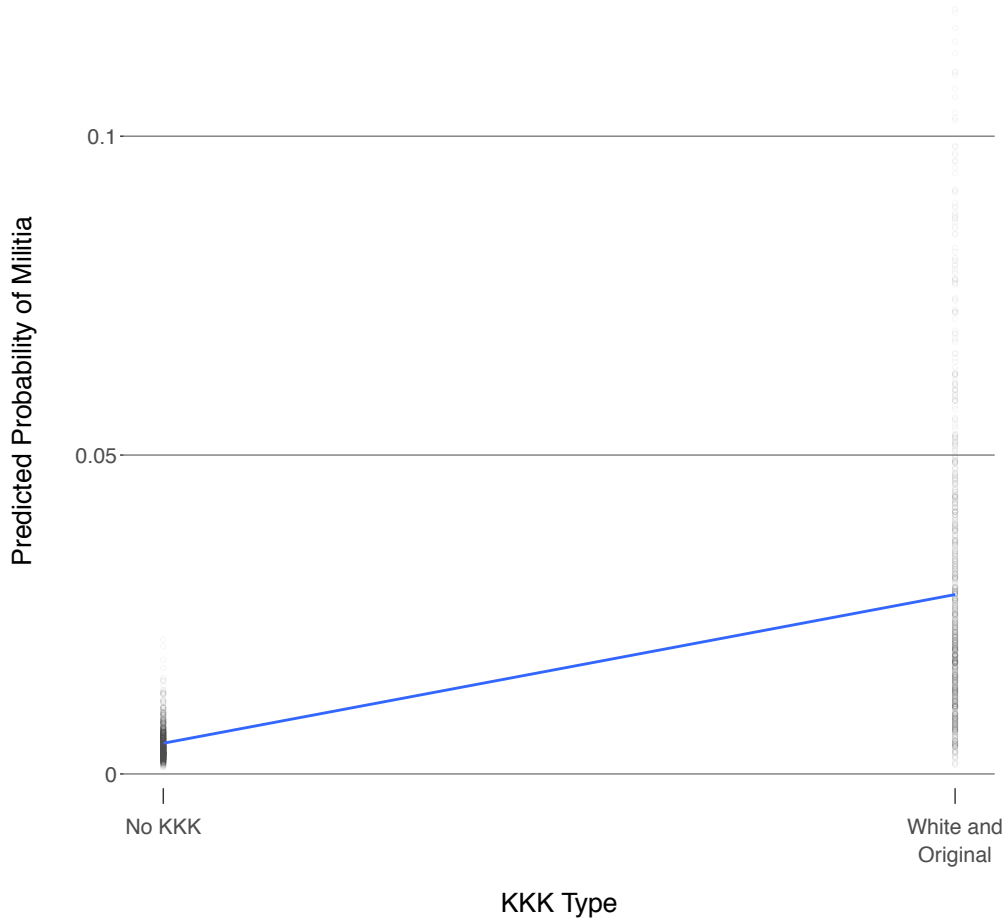
## **5.6 Results**

Results from the bias-corrected logistic model for rare events model (Kosuke, King and Lau, 2008), are displayed in Table 5.1. To get a better understanding of the magnitude of the estimated relationships between the explanatory variables and civilian militia formation beyond simple statistical significance (Ward, Greenhill, and Bakke 2010) I also predict incident probabilities with 1,000 simulations per fitted value (King and Zeng 2002). Expected probabilities for various fitted values of the key findings of interest is shown in Figure 5.5.

Turning towards the primary model, model 1, the main independent variable, *White and Original KKK* shows a strong positive relationship with the emergence of the Deacons. This finding suggests that US counties with the presence of the White Knights or Original Knights were more likely to organize and form self-defense militias. The finding is consistent across all models. To get a sense of the magnitude of the estimated relationship and the uncertainty around it, I plotted the predicted probabilities of the Deacons forming in Figure 5.5 using estimates from Model 1. We can see that the median of the expected probabilities of a county having a civilian militia form when the White or Original knights are present is approximately three percent. All other variables are fitted at their means.

The Deacons are all located in states considered to be in the Deep South of the United States. All the variation occurs within those states, I therefore run a geographical limited rare events logit model that only includes Southern states (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas). Table C.3, located in the appendix, shows similar results as the full geographic model, White and Original knights variable is still significant. I also expand and contract the

**Figure 5.5:** Expected Probability of Deacons, 1964



sample size since the meaning of the South is not standard. Both the more encompassing and limited sample have the expected results.

Lastly, I also conduct a spatial autoregressive probit regression to take into account spatial dependence. Table C.2, located in the appendix, shows the results. They are similar to the main findings and supports the theory developed here.

Besides White and Original klans, *Black Population* also seems to be important. This suggest that counties with a greater black population are more likely to join the Deacons. This is consistent with the literature and shows that a large ethnic group excluded from power is more likely to resort to extra-legal means to address grievances (Wimmer, Cederman, Min 2009). Alternative institutional measures are CORE, NAACP, SCLC, and SNCC. Of the four civil rights organizations only CORE seems to be related to militia on-set, the other three are less important (see Table D.5 in the appendix). Of the four, NAACP



**Table 5.1: Emergence of Deacons, 1965**

	1	2	3	4	5
White and Original Knights	1.662*** (0.404)	1.729*** (0.416)	1.581*** (0.380)	1.620*** (0.355)	1.672*** (0.404)
UKA	-0.442 (0.523)	-0.506 (0.479)	-0.514 (0.649)	-0.487 (0.549)	-0.415 (0.550)
Black pop. (%)	0.093*** (0.019)	0.083*** (0.021)	0.096*** (0.017)	0.095*** (0.022)	
Slave rebellion	0.928 (0.596)	0.839 (0.514)	1.120* (0.658)	0.966 (0.611)	0.997* (0.568)
Population (log)	-0.319* (0.175)	-0.391* (0.231)	-0.042 (0.159)	-0.558*** (0.196)	-0.282 (0.197)
Police per 10,000	0.073*** (0.026)		0.029 (0.021)	0.068** (0.027)	0.072*** (0.026)
Median fam. income	0.001*** (0.0001)	0.001*** (0.0001)		0.001*** (0.0001)	0.001** (0.0001)
Vote for leading president party (%)	0.075* (0.045)	0.073 (0.047)	0.064 (0.041)	0.064 (0.040)	0.074 (0.046)
Homicide per 1,000	-0.055 (0.047)	-0.074 (0.050)	-0.057 (0.047)		-0.053 (0.046)
Elevation		-0.002* (0.001)			
Mean persons per unit			-1.108*** (0.395)		
Larceny per 1,000				-0.013*** (0.005)	
NAACP					-0.257 (0.578)
Constant	-11.452*** (2.234)	-9.269*** (2.642)	-6.245*** (2.144)	-7.963*** (2.391)	-11.775*** (2.016)
Observations	3,050	2,993	3,054	3,073	3,050

*Note:*\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01  
Robust standard errors in parentheses

and SCLC are more similar, advocating for non-violent action while CORE and SNCC both took ambiguous positions on the use of violence (Morris 1984). It is unsurprising that NAACP and SCLC are unrelated to militia onset but it is noteworthy that SNCC is not, given similar tactics, ideologies, and cooperation with CORE. This could be due to CORE's early support for armed resistance (Hill 2004). These findings suggest that mostly non-violent organizations are unlikely to set the foundation for the mobilization of violent resistance.

If non-violent organizations are less able to provide the social capital for armed mobilization than violent repertoires maybe able to do so. In model one, slave rebellions seem to be less relevant in the onset of militias. This finding goes against the idea that previous forms of rebellion act as potential "receptacles of collective action" (Daly 2012) that a community can draw upon for coercive power. Like the Mexican case it maybe that lessons from over 100 years ago have been lost, especially since black resistance has not historically been taught in formal education (Lintner 2004). I exchange slave rebellions for racial incidents between the years 1961 to 1964, obtained from Spilerman (1971). A racial incident is coded if it had at least 30 participants, violence or destruction of property occurred, and were not focused upon institutional conflicts. I include only those in which the race of participants was coded as black. I code the *Uprising* variable as one if there was a racial incident within a county between 1961 and 1964. In total there were 28 riots.

Results suggest that recent repertoires are less related to the onset of militias (see Table D.5). Like the Mexican case, institutions and repertoires do not seem to enable arm civilian resistance. It is difficult to tell why given the large amount of work on the critical role of institutions (Arjona 2014; Kaplan 2016; La Serna 2012; Starn 1999). It is possible that I have not chosen an accurate representation of either institutions or repertoires. I should maybe focus on previous forms of modern black resistance. The Deacons were not the first time Black Americans had picked up arms to protect themselves. In the civil rights era, African Americans frequently armed themselves. One example is that of Robert F. Williams, a civil rights leader and local NAACP president (Tyson 1999). However, these self-defense efforts were informal and unorganized before the Deacons. It seems unlikely that current variables do not tap into accurate proxies for social capital.

Median family income, as a measure of inequality, suggests that a certain level of capacity is needed to form a militia. Interestingly, *Police per 10,000* is significant but in the opposite predicted direction. A greater number of police officers within a county indicates that the Deacons are more likely to emerge. There are two possible explanations. First, the US black population and the police force have a historically hostile relationship. The positive association may be picking up on the historical hostility and lack of trust for the

institution on the part of black residents, especially since Klan members infiltrated police departments in the South (UHAC 1967). Second, a higher number of police officers may suggest a greater demand for security. This could mean that the variable is not a measurement of state power but instead crime. I turn to alternative measures of state power later in this section.

Other alternative explanations are less supported. A prominent explanation for the rise of civilian militias is crime. However, I find that crime, as measured by homicide, is less associated with the emergence of the Deacons. It is possible that homicide rates do not adequately proxy for crime although it is one of, if not the most egregious forms of crime. I nonetheless examine alternative measures of crime below. I also find that population is not as associated with the emergence of the Deacons. Perhaps it is not absolute population but instead the relevant population such as the percentage of black residents as shown above.

In model two, Table 5.1, I use an alternative measure for state capacity. I examine the average county elevation and find that there is a small association between rough terrain and civilian militia emergence. In Table D.6, in the appendix section, I include other measurements of state capacity. The results reveal that highway personnel are associated with the Deacons. Similar to police, highway personnel may signal a distrustful relationship between state agents and the population more likely to join the Deacons. Both proximity to security stations and county size seem to not be related to the rise of the Deacons. Model 4, Table D.6, suggests that state induced weaknesses, measured by lynch count, may not be a sufficient condition.

Model three, Table 5.1, includes a different measure of inequality. Mean persons per unit, like median family income, is linked to militia formation. This suggest that like the *autodefensas* in Mexico, grievance, as defined by inequality, might be a motivating factor for civilians taking up arms in the United States. However, unlike in Mexico, the greater the inequality, the least likely the Deacons will form. It is unclear why this might be the case, though, it is possible that the poorer the person the less resources they have to form a militia.

In model four, Table 5.1, I use another measure for crime, larceny per 1,000 residents. Theft of personal property has been cited as one of the main factors driving civilians into armed resistance (Starn 1999). Surprisingly, larceny decreases the probability of the Deacons emerging. In the appendix, Table D.7 shows that the negative relationship holds for other types of crime such as rape and the total level of crime (homicide, larceny, assault, rape, robbery, burglary, and auto theft). The findings push back against the idea that crime is a prime motivating factor. To a greater degree than in present day Mexico, local governance, not crime, give rise to militias, as the findings in Table 5.1 show. In the case of the

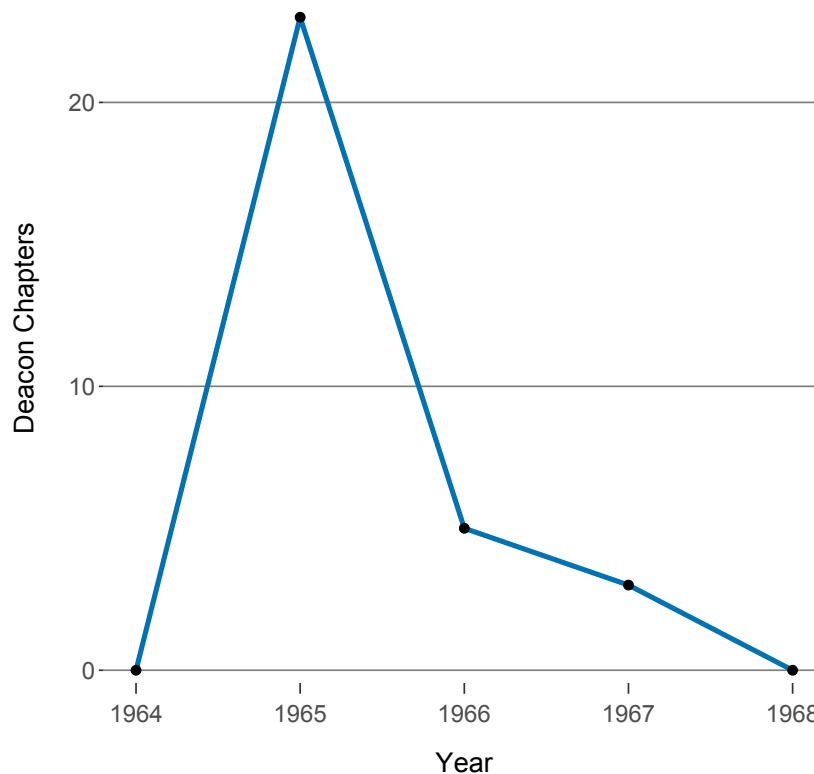
US, black citizens took up arms to protect against the Klan that sought to destroy wealth and subjugate those that resisted their ideology of white supremacy as the guiding principle to govern the South.

### **5.6.1 Time Series Cross Sectional Analysis**

I also conduct a time-series cross-sectional analysis at the county level examining the years between 1964 and 1967. However, the data is more limited than that of the cross sectional analysis. For example, the US government did not release annual population reports for counties prior to 1985. However, the FBI does list counties with less than 25,000 residents in their annual Uniform Crime Report. Using this information I created a binary variable which takes the value of 1 if a county has a population above 25,000 and zero otherwise. I use declassified FBI records on the Deacons to track the growth of the organization from 1965 to 1968, see Figure 5.6. The FBI would track the location of possible Deacon chapters through informants and surveillance, documenting whether there was a confirmed chapter or just rumors. I develop a binary variable with 1 indicating the presence of a chapter in a county. Klan activity is obtained from the UHAC report on the Klan, which documents the Klan from 1964 to 1967. Rate of homicide differs slightly from that of the cross sectional analysis. Since population is not available I do not calculate the homicide rate per 1,000 residents, instead I include the absolute number of homicides for rural and urban counties. Repertoire, measured by slave rebellion, state capacity, measured by elevation, and stalemate, measured by percentage vote for the leading presidential party, are the same as those from the cross sectional analysis since they are consistent across the temporal span. I do not include a measure of black population since it is not available, instead I rely on historical experience to capture local institutions. I measure historical experience through past slave rebellions (Aptheker 1937). Arjona (2016), Kaplan (2017), Osorio, Schubiger, and Weintraub (2016) argue that previous community collective action, violent and non-violent, increases the probability of resistance.

The results are similar to the above cross sectional analysis. Table 5.2 suggests that White or Original Klans increase the probability of Deacons forming in a county from 1964 to 1967. Looking at Figure 5.7 we can see that civilian militias are more likely in counties where the White or Original Knights are located. White and Original Knights counties are predicted to have a two percent probability of experiencing a civilian militia in a given year. Also relevant are the elevation and presidential vote share, suggesting that state capacity and stalemates also influence the emergence of civilian militias. Elevation is in the opposite predicted direction but this may be due to the fact that the Deacons emerged

**Figure 5.6:** Number of Deacon Chapters by Year, 1964-1968



in the low lands of Mississippi and Louisiana. The time-series cross-sectional analysis further supports the theory that violent predatory actors are a key factor in explaining why civilians take up arms.

It is worth considering the homicide measurement. The crime hypothesis argues that high levels of crime act as a motivation for community defense. I find that crime, as measured by homicide, is less supported than the theory I suggest. However, it is still possible that violent crime is the main motivation. The measurement of homicide, an aggregate of homicides regardless of perpetrator, may obscure its effect. Therefore, I examine crimes committed by the Klan against black Americans.

It is difficult to measure Klan violence. For one, there were countless crimes that were not recorded. Black Southerners, rather than report a cross burning or a beating, chose not to out of fear of retaliation and knowing it would not make a difference. Skogan (1994) finds that citizens who experience a negative encounter with the police are less likely to report crime in subsequent episodes of victimization. Police may also refused to investigate crimes due to Klan affiliation, sympathy, or fear. In addition, as much as the Klan was a

**Table 5.2:** Emergence of Deacons, 1964-1967

	1
White and Original Knights	2.152*** (0.722)
UKA	-0.143 (0.611)
Slave rebellion	0.962*** (0.324)
Population	-0.121 (0.610)
Elevation	-0.004*** (0.001)
Vote for leading president party (%)	0.081** (0.036)
Homicide	-0.048 (0.042)
Constant	-7.699*** (2.671)
Observations	12,020

*Note:*

\*p&lt;0.1; \*\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*\*p&lt;0.01

Robust standard errors in parentheses

way of life for many members, being associated with the Klan and its violence could be detrimental. Klan members feared being outed since it could cause them to lose their job or other social consequences (Nelson 2016). This makes it difficult to know if the Klan was involved. The murder of Clarence Triggs, a bricklayer from Bogalusa, Louisiana, shows the difficulty in obtaining an accurate number of Klan related murders. Triggs, who had attended civil rights meetings sponsored by CORE, was found dead on a roadside, shot through the head (SPLC 2014). It is unknown who killed him but many suspect the Original Knights.

There is no civil rights era Klan violence database, instead I use Nelson (2016) to

identify the type and location of Klan violence.<sup>21</sup> I create a count variable of the number of murders and assaults in Louisiana and Mississippi, the states covered in Nelson's book, from 1964 to 1967. The Klan killed its victims through bombings, shootings, beatings, and drownings. Assaults include beatings, whippings, and mutilating victims. If the person died as a result of their injuries it is included within the murder count. In total, the Klan killed 17 and assaulted 31 people from 1964 to 1967 within the states of Louisiana and Mississippi, a count that only captures some of the violence committed against blacks during this period.<sup>22</sup> While Klan murders may be low when compared to the total number of murders for the entire state — in Mississippi alone there were 233 murders in 1964, 7 were attributed to the Klan — the killings are important since they were a systemic response to a perceived threat to the white caste system. The results, presented in Table D.8, suggest that murders, assaults, or the aggregation of the two are less relevant to the formation of the Deacons than the type of Klan organization.

Another possibility is that only those communities with a collective action capacity to address klan violence will form militias (Arjona 2016; Kaplan 2017; La Serna 2012; Osorio, Schubiger, and Weintraub 2016). To test the idea that community action capacity and its interaction with crime motivates militia formation I interact civil rights organization and Klan violence.<sup>23</sup> There are two ways the presence of a civil rights organization could suggest potential collective action capacity. First, civil rights organizations may select themselves into locations they believe have the capacity to organize (Crosby 2011). Due to previous efforts to desegregate, civil rights groups targeted communities that had a higher likelihood of achieving civil rights victories. Second, civil rights organizations can build the organizational capacity of communities. Organizations set up freedom schools, trained civilians in non-violent resistance, and acted as an example of collective action (Chong 2014). The findings are reported in Table D.9. The results suggest that the interaction between collective action capacity and Klan violence is not as critical as the type of Klan organization.

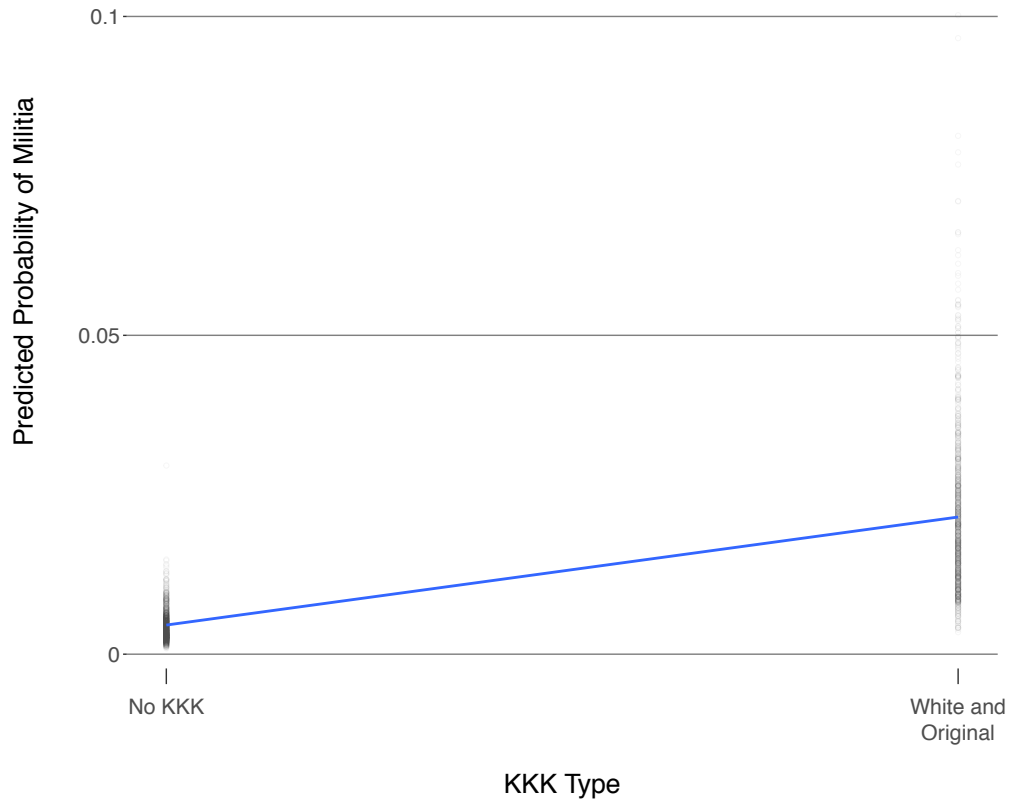
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<sup>21</sup>Nelson, editor of the Concordia Sentinel, leads the cold case project on civil rights murders which have resulted in the prosecution of klan members decades later.

<sup>22</sup>There are a number of people who died at the hands of authorities under circumstances suggesting they were the victims of racially motivated violence. There are also many who were killed by other white supremacist groups. The SLPC reports 74 men and women who died between 1952 and 1968 under these circumstances.

<sup>23</sup>I do not use rebellion as a measurement of historic collective capacity since there are no counties in Louisiana or Mississippi that experienced both slave rebellions and Klan violence, a perhaps telling observation.

**Figure 5.7:** Expected Probability of Civilian Militia, 1964-1967



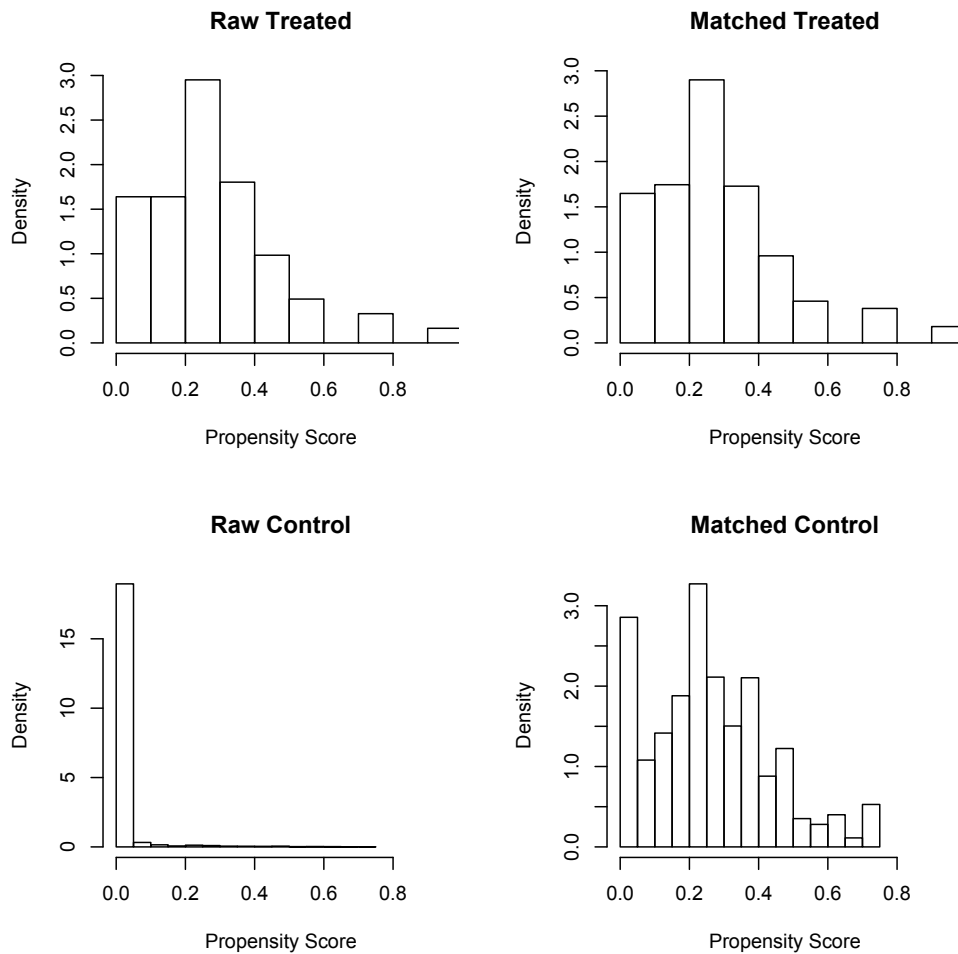
### 5.6.2 Robustness Test

To test the robustness of the results, I perform an additional analysis using a matched dataset. Pairs are identified using genetic matching with replacement (Diamond and Sekhon 2013). Using genetic matching a dataset of 74 control and 61 treated units were created. I also take the advise of Abadie and Imbens (2006) and match with replacement to obtain the highest degree of variable balance and lowest conditional bias. The results are matched with replacement so that no control observation was used more than two times.

To assess overlap, I examine the distribution of propensity scores. Figure 5.8 shows the overall distribution of propensity scores in the treated and control groups. It illustrates that before matching, the propensity score for the treated population (top left) tended to cluster towards the center-left, while the control population (bottom left) skewed left. This indicates there is only some overlap before matching. After matching, the propensity score



**Figure 5.8:** Distribution of Propensity Scores



distributions for both the treated and control units are closer, however, while distribution improves overall there is still a lack of complete overlap. Therefore, any inferences regarding these observations would have to rely on modeling assumptions in place of direct support from the data.

Table 5.3 reports the closeness of the matched groups and reveals that there are imbalances between cases with White or Original Klan organizations and those without before matching. The White and Original Knights are located in counties with a greater black population (37.95) while counties without either organization have a lower black population (9.223). In addition, the counties occupied by both Klan organizations tend to be poorer and small in size as measured by the median family income and square miles than those without these organizations. As a consequence, the median family income is lower

**Table 5.3: Balance Summary Statistics**

	Mean treated	Mean control	Mean difference	% improvement mean diff.	K-S test
<i>Prematching</i>					
Black pop. (%)	37.95	9.223	0.26	—	0.772
Population (log)	10.25	9.223	0.32	—	0.248
Police per 10,000	9.67	9.837	0.32	—	0.060
Median fam. income	3020.11	4190.096	-1169.98	—	0.673
Vote for leading president party (%)	82.02	61.961	20.05	—	0.174
Homicide per 1,000	4.61	3.432	0.34	—	0.479
Elevation	217.33	997.478	-780.15	—	0.555
Mean persons per unit	3.77	3.432	0.34	—	0.555
Total crime per 1,000	8.65	8.83	-0.18	—	0.322
Square miles	659.18	967.540	-308.36	—	0.168
Pop. other than white (%)	38.21	10.058	28.15	—	0.759
Rural pop. (%)	22.44	22.758	-0.32	—	0.153
NAACP chapter count	0.46	0.301	0.16	—	0.147
<i>Postmatching</i>					
Black pop. (%)	37.95	37.51	0.11	95.70	0.114
Population (log)	10.25	10.17	0.440	98.47	0.131
Police per 10,000	9.67	9.623	0.04	70.25	0.163
Median fam. income	3020.11	2972.19	47.926	95.9	0.163
Vote for leading president party (%)	82.02	80.89	1.129	94.37	0.147
Homicide per 1,000	4.61	4.72	-0.113	88.78	0.131
Elevation	217.33	208.77	8.557	98.90	0.147
Mean persons per unit	3.77	3.80	-0.029	91.45	0.147
Total crime per 1,000	8.65	8.65	0	99.95	0.131
Square miles	659.18	628.48	30.705	90.04	0.114
Pop. other than white (%)	38.21	37.64	0.566	97.99	0.114
Rural pop. (%)	22.44	22.20	0.237	26	0.163
NAACP chapter count	0.46	0.39	0.066	58.58	0.016

for counties with the White and Original Knights. These differences, especially lower income, may push individuals to join the Klan while at the same time the pulling in recruits through potential rewards.

I assess balance using several measures including the mean for treated and control populations, mean differences between treated and control, improvement in balance, and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov equality of distribution tests for continuous variables (Table 5.3). After matching, the balance — for the most part — improves. All of the mean differences reduce after pairing observations. For the Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests,  $\leq .1$  suggest that the distribution of means is highly dissimilar, whereas values closer to 1 signify increasing similar distributions (Sekhon 2009). Greater balance among the matched subset suggests a

**Table 5.4:** Emergence of Deacons, 1965 - Matched

	Treatment Only	All Covariates
White and Original Knights	1.900*** (0.680)	3.400** (1.400)
Observations	154	154

*Note:* \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01  
Robust standard errors in parentheses

minimizing difference across the sample.

I use the matched sample to conduct a rare logit regression. The results of the matched sample, presented in Table 5.4, suggest that the White and Original Knights play a crucial role in explaining the emergence of the Deacons. Both matched models support the idea that the type of non-state armed actors influence whether civilians form militias. The limited model shows that the Original and White Knights increase the probability of civilian militias forming. The full rare logit regression also suggests that the White and Original Klans are positive and associated with the emergence of the Deacons.<sup>24</sup> The predicted probability, based on the full covariate model, suggests a 18% increase in the probability of a Deacon chapter forming when the White and Original Klan organization control a county, see Figure 5.9.<sup>25</sup>

## 5.7 Conclusion

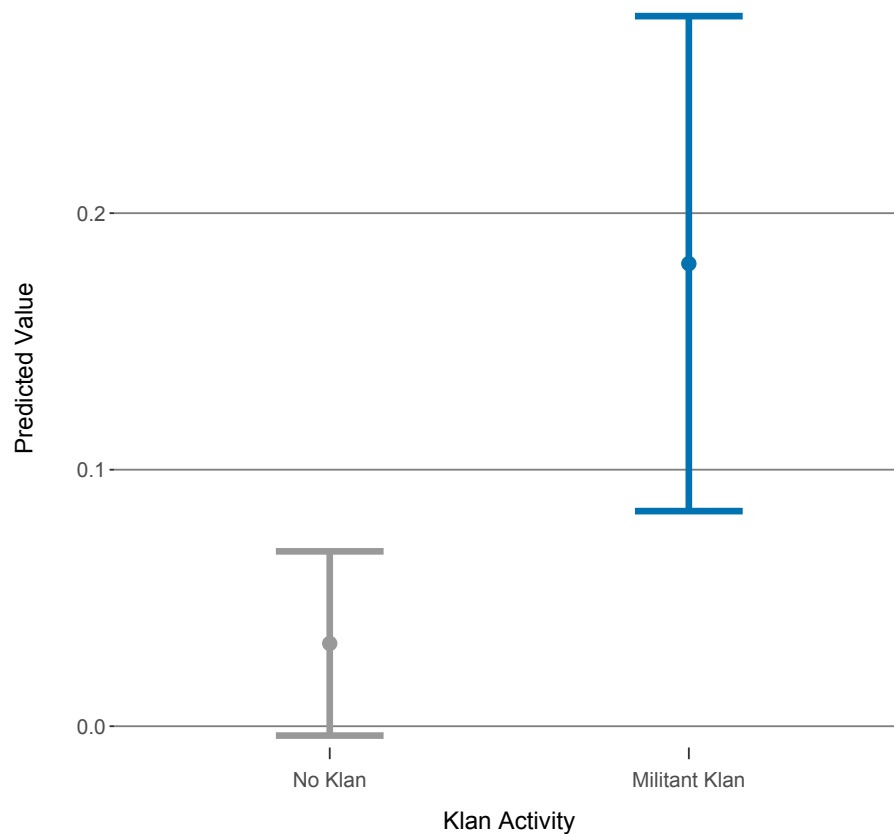
“You are in the heart of Klan country. Welcome to North Carolina. Join the United Klans of America, Inc. Help fight integration and communism!” This billboard greeted those driving North Carolina roads in the mid-1960s. The state had long been considered the most progressive state in the South but puzzling the UKA’s largest membership was found within the Tar Heel State. Over 10,000 UKA members called North Carolina home, more than all other Southern states combined (Cunningham 2013).

Yet, the Deacons never formed a chapter within North Carolina. Instead they were concentrated within the states of Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi. What explains why the Deacons did not form a chapter in the state with the most Klan membership? If the Deacons formed to protect civil rights workers and black communities against the Klan and its supporters, why didn’t they fight the Klan in its stronghold? I argue that the Deacons did

<sup>24</sup>I only report the main variable of interest, the full model is located in Table E.2 in the appendix.

<sup>25</sup>The predicted probability is about the same for both models.

**Figure 5.9:** Predicted Probability with 95% Confidence Intervals, matched



not form in North Carolina because the UKA, the largest and only Klan organization in the state, was “moderate”. It was “moderate” not in terms of its policy on racial segregation, racist beliefs, and white supremacy, it shared this with every other Klan organization, but it was “moderate” in its militancy. The difference in militancy between the UKA and the White and Original Knights is what prompted black residents in towns like Jonesboro, LA., and Natchez, MS., to move from consumers to producers of security, while black residents in Leland, NC, did not (Leland was located in what was termed “Klansville”). The militancy of the White and Original Knights was prompted by the civil rights campaign, which shortened the time horizon of these organizations while at the same time increasing the time horizons of rural Black Americans. The civil rights movement opened a window of opportunity for Klan leaders to recruit and radicalize a much larger pool of those who felt an impending racial change, prompting Klan militancy in those areas most affected by the movement. This is in contrast to North Carolina. The civil rights movement and the state’s modern stance on race relations enlarged the ranks of the Klan, pushing the

state to have the largest membership anywhere in the United States. However, while North Carolina's moderate stance on race relations both signaled a need for the Klan — defend the white caste system when officials would not — it also signaled that the state would not tolerate violence (Cunningham 2013). This is in contrast to Deep Southern states, where state governments did not enforce federal civil rights laws and fought any change to the status quo.

As my data and tests show, the Deacons were more likely to form in counties where the White and Original Knights organizations were active than in otherwise similar counties. The Klan organizations resisted desegregation and therefore resisted the threat to their white caste privilege through murdering, bombings, and beatings challengers. Defending segregation ensured whites would continue to have access to the best jobs, housing, and government services. The closing of the labor market to Black Americans ensured that they remained as tenant labors or second class workers at factories for white owners. Effectively, maintaining the privileged economic, political, and social position of Southern Whites. While all Klan organizations fought for segregation, it was the Original and White Knights that turned to horrific violence to keep the South under white dominance as civil rights activists campaigned for the end of segregation.

The Klan did not disappear after its third wave in the 1960s. Like a treacherous ocean, it is always there and its waves have the potential to crush upon the shore. It festered upon the shore in 1970s under the leadership of David Duke. Again in 1981, with the killing of Michael Donald in Mobile, Alabama by the Klan. Again in 1995, with the burning of Mount Zion AME, a historically black church in Greeleyville, SC, by the Klan. Again in 2014, when three were killed in a Kansas Jewish retirement center by a former Klan member. Like Emmett Till, Carolinage Edward Aaron, Willie Edwards, Medgar Evers, Viola Liuzzo, Henry Hezekiah Dee, Charles Eddie Moore, James Earl Chaney, Andrew Goodman, Michael Henry Schwerner, and Lt. Col. Lemuel Penn, they were killed by the Klan. In 2017, an estimated 72 Klan groups operate across the US, along with hundreds of other hate groups such as neo-Nazis and white nationalists (Southern Poverty Law Center 2018). If the Klan or other white supremacist groups are active and the state does nothing, there is a potential for civilian militias. Already, a self-described community organization with a mission to educate and train the black community in self-defense formed in Texas called Guerrilla Mainframe (Levin 2018). If white supremacist groups are again permitted to use large-scale violence to push for racist policies that threaten life and livelihood, as they did in the 1960s, the black community and other communities of color, may again fire back.

## CHAPTER 6

### Conclusion

“There is that *kind* of State. But then again...”

— Pynchon, *Gravity’s Rainbow*

In many parts of the world civilians are deprived of security and in fear of state and other state-like actors. Important advances have been made in the study of intrastate armed conflict, especially in the field of civil war. Outside well defined types of conflict less has been written. It is understandable. Whether it is the lack of data collection, assignment of importance, or visibility, conflicts that do not meet a clear definition have been left to others to study. A tight focus has allowed conflict outside traditional forms of war to slip through unexamined even as they burst through.

In the 20th and 21st century, civilians have taken it upon themselves to create their own security. Whether through taking up arms, negotiating with armed groups, or both, civilians are far from passive actors. Civilian militias formed in the US and in Mexico but they also have taken shape in Northern Ireland, Peru, and Nigeria. Especially puzzling is that civilians have taken up arms against groups that are more powerful and have the tacit, if not outright support, of the state. In Mexico, cartels were targeted by the Marines, Navy, and Army, but it is a different story when it comes to the police force. The cartels used a “plata o plomo” strategy to control local police forces, not to mention payment of bribes to mayors, governors, and even presidents (BBC 2019). In the US, the Klan infiltrated local and state government. It fielded police officers, intimidated others, and received support from all levels of government. Still, this daunting challenge did not dissuade civilians from forming the Deacons or the autodefensas.

As our understanding of why civilians rebel has quickly advanced, why civilians resist through other channels outside rebellion remains static. This is a first attempt to understand this puzzle and position it within the wider ongoing process of state building. There are limits to this study: aggregated data, too few cases, and unobservable but critical variables,

such as state induced weakness and even knowing the exact count of militias. However, expansion of militias across a country justifies an attempt to understand why they form. In the case of Mexico, autodefensas formed in 14 states, of 32 federal entities. In addition, the impact of civilian militias on state policy is another reason to study them even with the present limitations. After the formation of the autodefensas in Michoacán the federal government, citing their stated beliefs for why militias formed, launched Plan Michoacán which promoted the economic and social development of the state.

Why do civilians form militias knowing they will face strong opposition? I argue that militias emerge not when there is a lack of state security but instead when violence specialists behave as predatory actors. Violence specialists turn towards predation due to falling time horizons. Having two options of violence, productive and destructive, violence specialists weigh the cost and benefits of each. The cost of productive violence is incurred up front while the costs of destruction violence occurs later, leading specialists to opt for the latter and trade-off future returns for short term gains under a high discount factor. However, discounting the future is self-defeating. Predatory actors lower the cost of forming militias by appropriating or destroying wealth to a point where subjects search for an alternative source of order. Local incentives shift towards forming militias when civilians' discount factors remain above that of the specialist. These findings, and the theory surrounding them, have important implications for scholarship within world and comparative politics. The following sections outline these contributions. After, I outline limits of the study and qualify findings. I then conclude by closing the cycle, examining the collapse of civilian militias.

## **6.1 Theoretical Implications**

This project draws upon different research areas such as bargaining, civil war studies, and state building literature to develop an understanding of militia formation. Yet, it also contributes to on going debates. This section surveys the relevant literature as well as paths for future research.

### **6.1.1 State-making in a Competitive Market**

Most of the discussion on statehood revolves around the template set by Weber's notion of the state. The ideal-type state is defined in minimal terms as a compulsory association with a territorial base claiming a monopoly over the legitimate use of force (Weber 1947). Tilly also emphasizes this aspect of statehood, noting that states are "relatively centralized,

differentiated organizations the officials of which more or less successfully claim control over the chief concentrated means of violence within a population inhabiting a large, contiguous territory” (1985). The state is regarded as “legitimate by members and is run by an impersonal bureaucratic staff, in the context of a legal-administrative order regulated and limited by legislation and representative government” (Leftwich 2000). This has been the applied benchmark for studies of state formation in the developed and developing world.

Many have observed that some states in the developing world fail this test of statehood as governments cannot claim to hold a monopoly on violence over all the territory under their assumed control. Developing states have been a laboratory for testing different pathways of state formation. The connection between war-making and state-making drawn by Tilly suggest that forces involved in making war develop an increasingly centralized and extensive system of revenue generation and collection (Tilly 1975). The further war-makers penetrate society, the more they are forced to strike bargains or contracts with subjects, pushing an extortion rackets into more accountable and institutionalized political entities (Tilly 1985).

Scholars have challenged both the definition of a state and the trajectory of development casted by Tilly and Weber. Barkey (1994), studying state formation in the Ottoman Empire, argues that the process of state centralization in the empire was different than in Europe. The Ottoman experience, contrary to Europe, was characterized more by incorporation and accommodation than conflict between state-makers and local forces. Rather than defeat local forces, the Ottomans allowed for a coexistence of the political center with those in the periphery of the empire.

In a similar argument, Lopez-Alves (2000) suggests that Tilly’s model of state formation only applies somewhat to Latin America. Instead of a conflict based process of state formation, Lopez-Alves argues that it varied within Latin America and featured a combination of conflict and incorporation. In a more open ended model, he highlights the importance of studying social and political forces as well as distinguishing between types of conflict and their effect on state formation.

Herbst (2000) views state formation as neither dominated by conflict or incorporation, instead he argues that African states were shaped by geography. The “daunting nature of Africa’s geography” was a barrier to establishing links between the city and the surrounding areas, leading to a relatively unincorporated political system. Limited state centralization is a constant feature of state formation in Africa whether it’s precolonial, colonial, or post-colonial.

The implications of the debates on state and state formation has raised questions about the underlying processes directing the relationship between the state and substate chal-



lengers. If according to the Tilly/Weber model there are substates — units within the larger state that effectively control a territory — conflict will eventually generate and push these entities towards state-like features resulting in a zero-sum game. Other scholars like Barkey and Lopez-Alves suggest a more accommodating result, one in which there is an uneasy mutual coexistence between the state and substates.

Rather than continuing to examine developing states I turn towards the US, further calling into question the idea of a monopoly or even dominant actor especially when viewed at the subnational level. While this study has focused on Klan organizations, many violence specialists occupied a space in 1960s America. That space could be illegal businesses, prisons, or neighborhoods. The American Mafia operated under secrecy for much of the 19th and 20th century, providing protection and applying violence to settle disputes (Schelling 1971). At the same time prison gangs such as La Eme, Black Guerilla Family, and the Aryan Brotherhood operated across US correctional facilities. The Mexican Mafia (La Eme) extorted drug dealers, giving them an incentive to provide institutions that prevented market failures among associated Latino drug-dealing street gangs (Skarbek 2011). In addition, there were local street gangs across the US extorting businesses (Short and Moland 1976). Even in the wealthiest state it is difficult to have a more or less claim of control over the means of violence within a society.

By examining the United States the competitive nature of the modern state-making process comes into view in a manner under examined before. Almost every piece of land is claimed by some state — sometimes more than one. The state is usually the dominant violence specialist in a claimed territory but it is not the only one. Society still holds the means of coercion (Bates, Greif, and Singh 2002). The state is an actor among many in a territory it claims, in cities, rural towns, and border areas. The problem facing states as Tilly observed when discussing Sicily and the Mafia, is “not a shortage, by a surfeit, of government”. The mafia is not lawlessness or disorder and it is not a reflection of anarchism or a tradition of Sicilians. Instead the mafia was created by the process of state-formation and that same process will eventually help destroy it. It is a process of consolidation of control of the use of force, elimination of rivals, formation of coalitions, extension of protection, and routinized extraction of resources (Tilly 1975).

However, the strengthening of government as the solution to combat the mafia has not always had the intended effect, one only needs to look at the effects of the policy known as *mano dura* in Central American countries (Holland 2013). The state building process is more than elimination and coalition building, it is containment and collusion. At other times it’s abandonment. The mafia continues to exist in Sicily, and in the US, despite resource investment and the passage of time. Instead it remains because state building

is a competition that involves elimination, coalition, and collusion. Subnational violence specialists live and survive due to their strength, knowledge, support, services, and violence but also because they are part of the state and the state formation process.

### **6.1.2 Civilian Militias as a State**

Within a year of the autodefensas forming, the Mexican state deployed troops, co-opted certain groups, and arrested leaders who did not join them. Why did Mexico respond to the autodefensas so quickly compared to their decades slow response to the drug cartels? Part of the answer is clear: cartels paid off the state while the autodefensas did not. Cartels paid off everyone including prison officers, police officers, prosecutors, tax assessors, customs, and military personnel, even presidents across Latin America (Feuer 2018). Joaquin Guzmán, “El Chapo”, had the chief of Mexico City’s federal police, Guillermo González Calderoni, on his payroll. In exchange for millions of dollars, Calderoni provided Guzmán with secret information on an almost daily basis, allowing him to avoid law enforcement (ibid). There is evidence that the Mexican state colludes with and protects the Sinaloa cartel, affording them the opportunity to operate with near-total impunity. The selective fight against cartels comes into view when examining the percentage of persons arrested, prosecuted or sentenced who were associated with a major drug cartel. Only 12% of all cartel defendants were associated the Sinaloa cartel, compared to 44% associated with the Zetas and Gulf cartels (the main rivals of Sinaloa) (Burnett, Penalzoza, and Benincasa 2010). It is alleged that certain government officials assisted Guzmán in defeating other cartels as a way to restore balance and reduce violence (ibid).

The state did not hesitate to confront the autodefensas. Within a year of forming, autodefensas experienced state repression. On 27 January 2014, an agreement was signed between the state and autodefensa leaders that allowed them to be incorporated into the Army, municipal police, or rural corps (Hale 2014). Under the agreement, members of the autodefensas had to register their arms with the Ministry of Defense and meet the requirements to join local police, in exchange the Federal Police would provide communication, transportation and operation support (ibid). Those that refused were force to disarm. Jose Manuel Mireles, a prominent leader of the autodefensa movement in Michoacán, refused to lay down his arms and fold into the rural forces, accusing the government of corruption and collusion with the Knights Templar. In response, the Mexican state during a heavy federal and military operation arrested him and 82 other dissident militia members under drug and weapons charges (Castillo 2014). Armed confrontation between authorities and groups that chose not to disarm ensued. In Tepalcatepec, Michoacán two men were killed

amid a tense standoff with federal security forces (BBC 2014). In January 2014 the federal government sent thousands of troops to disarm an autodefensa group in Nueva Italia but members refused. Troops opened fire on protestors and killed four people, including an 11-year-old girl (Castillo 2014). In response autodefensas blocked 27 highways to prevent military convoys from entering certain areas (Fausset and Sanchez 2014).

Corruption is part of the explanation for why drug cartels, especially the Sinaloa cartel, avoided overt state repression for decades while the autodefensas did not. The service provided by militias suggests another explanation. Security and protection are fundamental goods provided by the state (Locke 1988; Hobbs 2016; Tilly 1985). The state had long been absent from Guerrero and Michoacán, ground-zero for autodefensas. Both states have a long-standing history of state absence, severe repression, underdevelopment, militarization, and abuse of political power (Felbab-Brown 2019). When the state does intervene it illustrates the weaknesses of its judicial system. On May 26, 2009, Mexican federal authorities unveiled an operation that arrested a total of 38 state and local officials' including ten mayors' from all three of the country's major political parties (Heinle, Molzahn, and Shirk 2015). However, over the next two years, each of the detainees was released due to a lack of sufficient evidence of illicit activities. The ineffectiveness of the criminal justice system was viewed as a failure of prosecutors to build adequate cases for the operation. The massive federal crackdown in Michoacán also impacted human rights. During the Calderón administration, Michoacán, after Chihuahua, had the second highest number of cases of military human rights abuse investigated by Mexico's National Human Rights Commission. These included cases of forced entry, unlawful detention, torture and physical abuse, and even loss of life (ibid). Institutional weakness, a lack of societal trust in authorities, kinship ties with organized crime figures helped create an antipathy toward the federal government's intervention. The effect was that of being simultaneously under protected and over policed, a common experience among people of color in the US (Smith 2018).

The absent-present state and the clear alternative found within the autodefensas challenged the state in a manner that drug cartels did not. It is easier to demonize and delegitimize drug cartels than autodefensas. The civilian militias were an emerging alternative to the state and one residents viewed as a successful one. One resident in Guerrero told reporters that "the regular police and the military are all being used by organized criminal groups to carry out their activities. They're not stopping crime. Now we have our own community police, everything is much quieter. In the last couple of months organized crime has begun to disappear," (Pressly 2013). The autodefensas managed to reclaim properties, businesses, and agricultural lands from cartels and returned them to their former owners (Macías 2014). They took control of the Apatzingán municipality from the Knights

Templar, their strong hold. They also recovered the state's lucrative fruit industry, which had been heavily infiltrated by the Templar cartel (Heinle, Molzahn, and Shirk 2015). The autodefensas did this with old hunting rifles, home made guns, and farming trucks.

Their success occurred against the backdrop of the Mexican state's, at the time, seven year war against cartels. A war that involved the deployment of the Army, Navy, and Marines, armed with US supplied arms, equipment, and intelligence under the Merida Initiative. The program in the first two years between 2008 and 2010 appropriated \$1.5 billion for the purchase of equipment, including aircraft and helicopters to support Mexico's federal security forces (Seelke 2018). US intelligence also supported Mexico's strategy of arresting kingpins. The state's approach to the war was hard to justify as violence increased. The success of the autodefensas popped against the contrast of the inadequacies of the state, leaving many residents to support the militias.

The autodefensas are not states but they do share qualities. They provided protection, administered their form of justice, and collected payment for their services (Castillo 2014; Pressly 2013).<sup>1</sup> They behaved as nascent states, attempting to eliminate rivals, cartels, local police, and other militia groups alike (Pérez and Carlos) 2013. Those it could not eliminate it struck deals with including the Mexican federal state (Felbab-Brown 2015). Within a year the autodefensas had attained an organization that was comparable with other armed forces, as well as organized criminal groups (Heinle, Molzahn, and Shirk 2015). Some groups had an accountant charged with purchasing supplies and, in some cases, paying members (Muédano 2014). At the village and municipality level, autodefensas came closer to satisfying the Weberian definition of statehood than the Mexican state. Though it is unlikely, given the international system in the 21st century and economies of scale, for political entities like the autodefensas to make the transition to statehood. This leaves them and similar entities as indeterminate forms.

Autodefensas and the Deacons highlight features of modern statehood and state-building. Civilian militias are a rupture. A burst on the leviathan emerging from deep below. It is a narrow burst. The autodefensas are still active in Mexico but they reached their peak in terms of capacity, territory, and numbers by the end of 2014, lasting about 18 months (Heinle, Molzahn, and Shirk 2015). The Deacons' duration was similar, enduring from 1965 to 1968. The space they occupied is just as limited. The autodefensas were active in about half the states but only 133 of 2,438 municipalities. The Deacons were only active in three states and 27 of 3,007 counties.

Even occupying territory is not a requirement for state building. Prison gangs operate in one of the most secure areas of a state yet they still have power. Their power derives

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<sup>1</sup>A foreign mining company agreed to pay \$3-\$4 per ton of iron it extracts to autodefensas (AFP 2014).

from their control of the illegal drug market and other unregulated markets, an ungoverned economic space claimed and fought for by the gangs.

The capacity needed to narrowly occupy time and space is minimal. The Deacons received no support from local, state, or the federal government (Hill 2004). Nor were they equipped by an outside party. Relying solely on community resources, local knowledge, and former military training, they set up a militia that reduced Klan violence, confronted local police forces, and, in part, prompted the federal government to intervene (Umoja 2013). State building can be fleeting, lasting only in certain locations for a limited duration.

### **6.1.3 Lessons from the US and Mexico**

The militias' attempts at state building occurred outside a civil war. Much has been gained from the civil war literature. There is fuller understanding of duration (Cunningham 2006; De Rouen and Sobek 2004; Walter 2015), onset (Fearon, Kasara, and Laitin 2007; Hegre and Sambanis 2006; Muchlinski et al. 2016), outcome (Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2009; Walter 2004), and severity (Lacina 2006; Costelli and Moro 2012; Prorok 2016). However, a focus on a specific type of conflict has overshadowed others and their implications for the overall understanding of conflict and state building.

If the implication of this study is that the state building process is continuing in both developed and developing states and that the process is characterized by burst of competition between the state and other violence specialists than civil wars are just one type of competition occurring within a state. Other types of competition to supply violence and obtain the benefits of being the state — local or national — are street gang battles, prison riots, mafia wars, indigenous uprisings, secession movements, and militia takeovers. The scope can range from that of a rebel group taking over the whole state such as the Sandinista National Liberation Front's struggle against the Somoza dictatorship of Nicaragua or street gangs battling over a park in downtown Los Angeles.

Some conflicts involve the state while others do not. What unites them is a struggle to be a state. The violence specialist that expels rivals and protects subjects from other specialists and/or itself in exchange for the normalization of resource extraction, whether on the streets of Los Angeles or the whole of Nicaragua, is part of the process of state building.

## 6.2 Limits and Future Empirical Research

This study is one of the first to examine the formation of civilian militias. Yet there are limits that curtail external validity.

Internal validity is less of a concern since the quantitative analyses establishes the hypothesis advanced here as correct with respect to the sample and against alternative explanations. By working subnationally and quantitatively, I control for a range of factors that could influence militias onset in the US and Mexico. In the context of both cases, the quantitative evidence in support of the theoretical argument that predatory violence specialists prompt the emergence of civilian militias provides a more accurate explanation than alternative explanations such as crime, institutions, or state capacity. I theorize and demonstrate that in both case studies local violence specialists facing falling time horizons incentivize civilians to protect themselves as their horizons' increase.

External validity is of greater concern. Issues of generalizability are somewhat tampered given that the settings and conflicts examined here are wide in their characteristics: drug war vs. guerrilla campaign, Knights Templar vs. White Knights, and Mexico vs. US. Yet both cases are somewhat similar. The countries share a border, history, and are limited to North America. In addition, parts of the governments protected the groups (Klan and cartels) that prompted the formation of militias. Given that the cases may not be representative of the sample, the hypothesis may not be correct with respect to cases not studied (Gerring 2007). Inferential robustness may not be there (*ibid*).

One potential way to increase the external validity of this study is to examine an out-of-sample, positive case. The Northern Ireland conflict, particularly the Irish Republican Army (IRA) during the first few years of the conflict may be a suitable outside sample case. There are several advantages in studying the Northern Ireland case. First, I can take the theoretical basis and apply it to a civil war. The Northern Ireland conflict meets the definition of a civil war for most of the years it lasted between 1969 to 1998 according to the (Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP)) definition of a civil war (Gleditsch et al. 2002). This makes it an ideal case to test the theory developed here in one of the most important conflicts in the 20th century.

Unlike the Deacons and the autodefensas, the IRA moved from a civilian militia towards a rebel organization. This affords the possibility to trace the connection and movement from protection to rebellion. The IRA of the 1960s formed to provide protection against a discriminatory state and non-state sponsored armed group in the context of a civil rights campaign (Coogan 2002). Most of the security forces were recruited from the loyalist population, raiding homes of Catholics and alleged nationalist, destroying their place of

residence in the process and taking valuables under the pretext of security (English 2004). The IRA fits the role of a civilian militia during the first couple of years of the conflict. It was organized, private, armed, community initiated, and formed to provide security. However, after 1970 the IRA, especially the PIRA, operated as a rebel group as defined by UCPD. It moved from mainly protecting Catholic Nationalist neighborhoods to bombings and assassinating in a push for unification with the Republic of Ireland.

Third, the Northern Ireland conflict is one of the most studied conflicts of the 21st century. There are many databases that track the conflict throughout its history. Of particular importance is the Northern Ireland Research Initiative (NIRI), which records lesser reported events such as destruction of property and forced eviction by actor types including state and paramilitary forces.

Another possible extension is a counterfactual case. A counterfactual is necessary and fundamental to assess hypotheses about the causes of a phenomena (Fearon 1991). This study attempts to evaluate the causal hypotheses by matching similar counties with and without predatory groups. While matching provides some reassurance, there maybe issues of contamination from one county to another (King, Keohane, and Verba. 1994).

It would be helpful to consider negative cases where there is state induced weakness, a violence specialist operating other than the state, armed conflict, insecurity, but nevertheless did not experience civilian militias. The case of the ISIL) may fill these requirements. ISIL is similar to cartels and the Klan. All three terrorized communities. Yet there is a critical difference between ISIL on the one hand and the White Knights and the Knights Templar on the other. ISIL was an effectively brutal state.

The Islamic State is well know for funding its operation through selling oil on the black market. At its peak, ISIL had revenues as high as \$50 million a month from oil production (Fancis 2017). Yet, oil was not the main source of revenue for the group. Instead the group's main source of funding was taxing the approximate 7 to 8 million people that lived under its rule during the height of its power (Kenner 2019). The Islamic State kept meticulous records of those under its rule. Using its record keeping, it knew its subjects' income and raised over \$800 million a year, more than six times the amount it raised from stealing oil and more than from kidnapping (Fernholz 2018). ISIL also required businesses, including farmers and shopkeepers in their territory, to pay a percentage of their profits to the group. For example, pharmacies were taxed between 10 and 35 percent of the value of drugs sold (Callimachi 2018). The group seized about 40% of Iraq's wheat production including 16 silos, forcing farmers to pay taxes either in cash or in wheat, at a rate much higher than the price at which they sold their product (ibid). ISIL also collected \$20 every two months from business owners in exchange for electricity, water, and protection services (ibid).

In return, ISIL provided brutal but effective governance. It built a network of governance that includes religious, educational, judicial, security, humanitarian, and infrastructure projects (Callimachi 2018). It divided governance into two broad categories: administrative and service-oriented. Administrative offices were responsible for managing religious outreach and enforcement, courts and punishments, educational programming, and public relations. The service-oriented offices manage humanitarian aid, bakeries, and key infrastructure such as water and electricity lines. Households were taxed about \$2 per month for garbage collection and \$8 for electricity and for water (ibid). It was a proto-state that effectively collected taxes and in the process racked up large bills for the transportation of wheat from town to town. Documents captured after pushing out ISIL and interviews of people who lived under their rule show that the group at times offered better services and proved itself more capable than the government it had replaced (ibid).

ISIL killed its enemies in the thousands but it was mostly not interested in predation. It had long term interest of establishing a state and running it according to their strict interpretation of Islam. It taxed and provided services, unlike the Klan or cartels which captured or destroyed wealth but did not provide security. ISIL acted more as a stationary bandit than a roving one. There is little to anything positive to say about the group, except for the services they provided such as fixing a power grid that civilians had long complained about or cleaning up the streets.

The key difference between the cases studied here and ISIL is the predatory nature of the violence specialist. In all three cases the violence specialist captured wealth but unlike the Klan and cartels, ISIL also provided services to its subjects. The exchange of taxes for services is more state like than the extraction of resources characterized by the Klan or cartels. In exchange for taxes ISIL provided garbage collection, electricity, water, and transportation. Compliance was carried out under the credible threat of violence, however, even under the threat of violence some civilians preferred the services of ISIL. This is in contrast to the Klan and cartels. The Iraq case, on a subnational level, resembles the other cases in significant respects except that in the Iraq case predation has a different value. The difference in value, according to my theory, explains why certain communities formed militias in the Southern US and Mexico but not against ISIL.<sup>2</sup>

There is the question of whether the cases are comparable. There are clear differences

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<sup>2</sup>The Sons of Iraq militia did form in Iraq, however, the group was closely linked to Iraq and Coalition security forces from its start (Admed 2008). In addition, the group mostly functioned as a neighborhood watch, establishing checkpoints and providing tips on suspected insurgents as well as the locations of improvised explosive devices. They are subordinate to local Iraqi or Coalition units and not authorized to carry out their own offensive operations (Gordon 2007). Members receive about \$300 in U.S. currency a month for the security services they provide (Bruno 2008). This places them closer to state sponsored militia groups rather than a civilian militia. In addition, they did not form to fight ISIL



that distinguish each case in important ways that obscure a comparison. Each case unfolds in a unique conflict (drug war, racial terrorism, and insurgency). The conflicts have different origins and processes and comparing them might obscure the logic of violence within each one (Lessing 2018). There are also varying levels of state weakness. The Iraqi state was the least capable, operating under the full pressure of a civil war and little experience.

The cases are different but that does not mean they are not similar. They share critical qualities. The US, Mexico, and Iraq feature a specialist in violence at the subnational level: the Klan in the US, cartels in Mexico, and ISIL in Iraq. Not only are there violence specialists but each imposed its own rule over subjects. Second, the state abdicated its role as security provider, to varying degrees. In the US, the federal government, due to political reasons, limited its presence in the South while some state and local governments aligned themselves with the Klan. In Mexico, corruption and state weakness limited the state's footprint in many parts of the country. In Iraq, anti-sunni policies, inexperience, and weakness, curtailed the state's power. Similarities with respect to significant factors, except for the absence of predation, makes the case comparisons suitable.

### **6.3 The Fall**

Predatory violence specialists create a demand for security that can be supplied by civilian militias, however, the opportunity prompts other specialists, especially the state, to close the opening. Which strategy is employed depends on the acceptability and actions of the organization (Tilly 1978). Challenging a state on its most basic function of security provision, civilian militias act as a substitute for the state, if only for a time. The state in turn marks their activities as disorder and illegitimate, responding to assert itself through force and rhetoric. It is unremarkable that an established specialist would want to keep potential challengers from countering their dominant control over the political, economic, and social structure. Authorities prefer to keep goals of the challenger moderate, nonviolent, and small (Davenport 2014). Should the challenger switch to radical, violent, and large, authorities deem them a threat to their political order. A threat entails a challenge to authorities since it removes taxable subjects and jeopardizes subjects within the state's "valid" zones.

The Deacons and autodefensas both experienced a forceful state response. Unlike cartels or the Klan, both operating for decades with limited repression, the Deacons and autodefensas were quickly repressed. In Mexico, wide spread corruption along with violence afforded cartels the ability to collude with the state. At the trial of El Chapo, a witness alleged that former President Peña Nieto requested \$250 million before settling on \$100

million (BBC 2019). In the US, ideological fit and intimidation formed the basis of the invisible empire. The Klan operated freely in the civil rights era for more than a decade before the federal government intervened. In contrast, within a year the Deacons and autodefensas experienced formal and informal state repression.

The speed at which both organizations were targeted may suggest a state's decision to allow certain violence specialists to operate and share power — due to wealth or ideological fit — while at the same time denying a share to other potential specialists. This points towards a conclusion that the state chooses which violence specialists to support, repress, contain, co-opt, or ignore. The ungoverned space does not remain ungoverned. Even in the most secure state areas such as prisons, there remain ungoverned areas that are filled by other specialist. Civilian militias are no different. The state under protects and over polices many communities for various reasons affording other specialists the opportunity to govern the abandoned spaces. Civilian militias step into an under protected space when a predatory violence specialist roams the streets.

If Charles Tilly accurately describes state formation, militias might gradually evolve into modern states. A process that can be painful for those under its control (Schubert 2015). However, they provide the closest thing to stable governance in some parts of a country, starting the process of state building from the bottom up. Yet, this is not medieval Europe. States developed in Europe for centuries outside the modern day international context, a setting that creates challenges for nascent states (Grzymala-Busse and Luong 2002). They also have to confront established states that may leave them alone or repress them or both.

Militias help the state by providing local stability but they also challenge the state in their production of security. The state can incorporate, compete, collude, contain, or ignore militias. Militias could one day form into something more stable in Mexico and around the world.

Beyond militias there are warlords, terrorist groups, and organized crime that compete with each other and the state. There are various violence specialists that differ in type and quality. The state may neutralize a competitor in any number of ways but there still remain ungoverned territory, political, and economic spaces. A network will fuse in these spaces and a new specialist will grow. The state is not the state there. The process of state building is complete in the sense that many states have filled those spaces.

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## APPENDIX A

# History of KKK

Below I outline the UKA.

### **Less Militant Klan**

#### *UKA*

The UKA was headquartered in Tuscaloosa, Alabama under the leadership of Robert M. Shelton. At their peak of power in 1967, the organization had at least 556 klaverns in 18 states including Northern states (HUAC 1967). It is estimated that it possessed a membership of 15,000 (FBI 1964). The UKA started as a splinter from the US Klans, the most powerful group during the 1950s but it quickly expanded under the slogan of white supremacy and exploiting sentiment against integration (ibid).

The UKA, like most other klan organizations, is modeled after the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan formed by William Simmons in 1915. All realm (State) headquarters and other klan subdivisions are governed by the imperial wizard (president). A realm, largest subdivision of the invisible empire, consists of a state. A "province," consists of a congressional district within a State. A klanton is the territory of the klavern, which is the local chapter and smallest unit.

At the top of the hierarchy is the imperial wizard, who is surrounded by a klonsilium (cabinet) of 15 imperial officers known as genii.<sup>1</sup> Formally, the imperial wizard only has supremacy in administrative matters but in practice he exercises absolute power. Each local klavern is headed by an exalted cyclops, aided by 12 terrors.<sup>2</sup> Klaverns vary in numerical strength. Some only have a handful of members, while others have as many as 200. Their constitution states that a klavern must have at least 25 members before it is chartered, however, in many cases this requirement was waived and a group of four or five established a chapter. Within the klavern, a secret intelligence committee was established to gather information on enemies both within and outside the organization. In addition, a propaganda committee disseminated information in the community.

The UKA used the issue of desegregation, particularly the 1964 Civil Rights Act, to attract recruits under the threatening message of the beginning of the extinction of the white

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<sup>1</sup>The following information was obtained from the Hearing before the Committee on Un-American Activities (1966).

<sup>2</sup>The 12 terrors are: Klaliff (vice president), klokard (teacher), kludd (chaplain), kligrapp (secretary), klabee (secretary), kladd (conductor), klarogo (inner guard), klexter (outer guard), klokan (investigator), and night hawk (custodian of the free cross).

race and the start of black domination in the South (Chalmers 1981). Though the UKA emphasized the role of political activists, actual recruiting practices accepted fanatical and violent-proned individuals. Membership within the klan has been described as “the very bottom of the social ladder, of fanatics with limited education who have spent most their lives in rural areas or small towns in the South” (Forster and Epstein 1965). However, Cunningham (2013) finds that the North Carolina realm of the UKA did not look substantially different from the overall white population.

## APPENDIX B

# History of Cartels

Below I outline national and toll cartels.

### National Cartels

#### *Sinaloa*

The Sinaloa Cartel, one of the largest and most powerful drug trafficking organization in the world, is comprised of a network of smaller organizations and alliances. It is thought to control between 40% and 60% of the country's drug trade (Keefe 2016). Estimates place Sinaloa's annual revenue at around \$3 billion (Jennings 2014). It is reported to have a presence in 50 countries, including the Americas, Europe, West Africa, and Southeast Asia. It controls crime in at least five Mexican states, Baja California, Chihuahua, Durango, Sinaloa, and Sonora (Beittel 2017). The DEA finds that Sinaloa controls much of the US west coast using crossing points within California, Arizona, New Mexico, and West Texas to smuggle drugs.

It is known for its organizational expertise and innovative strategies for eluding law enforcement. These inventive methods include tunnels, catapults, submarines, boats, and semi-submersibles (Keefe 2012). This is in contrast to the more traditional techniques such as air transport and container ships. The cartel's innovative techniques and ruthless violence have enabled it to expand operations into Mexico City, Durango, Guerrero, Michoacán while also pushing more into Baja California and Chihuahua previously controlled by Tijuana and the Juárez cartel. In addition to violence, they rely on connections at the highest levels and corruption of the federal police and military to maintain the upper hand against rivals.

Sinaloa was headed by one of the most well known drug lords, Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzmán Loera<sup>1</sup> Forbes magazine ranked Guzmán as one of the most powerful people in the world, and the second most powerful man in Mexico behind Carlos Slim. He is reported to be the 10th richest man in Mexico with a net worth of about \$1 billion (Vardi 2011). Chapo's greatest contribution to the evolving tradecraft of drug trafficking was that of the tunnel (Keefe 2012). The first passage ran from the border town of Agua Prieta for more than 200 feet beneath the border and emerged inside a cartel controlled warehouse in Douglas, Arizona. More than 90 such passages between Mexico and the United States were build (Ahmed 2016). Guzmán has been arrested three times since 1993 and escaped

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<sup>1</sup>El Chapo is almost a mythical figure in Mexico. There are several narco corridos, or narco ballads, that narrate some of his exploits. In addition, there is a television series titled *El Chapo*, about the life of Guzmán.

twice, once from the most secure prison in Mexico through a tunnel in 2015. After his third capture in 2016 he was extradited to the US.

Sinaloa did not face the internal violence that is often associated with captures of other DTO kingpins after the arrest of Guzmán (Gurney 2014). This may have to do with the horizontal leadership structure and decentralized network of bosses who undertake business and violence through partnerships with local gangs. This permitted the organization to maintain hegemony in the region. It may have also been exposed to less enforcement efforts (ibid). It is one of the few DTOs that has not diversified into extractive crimes such as extortion and kidnapping (Thompson 2015).

### *Los Zetas*

Los Zetas were originally composed of former elite members of the Mexican Army who defected to the Gulf cartel to work as their hired hit squad in the late 1990s. While Los Zetas engage in drug trafficking their main asset is organized violence. Their military skills and access to sophisticated arms enables them to wield significant power to run an extractive business focusing on fuel theft, human smuggling, and kidnapping (Bailey 2014).<sup>2</sup>

Los Zetas are based in the Gulf side of Mexico but they have expanded to Ciudad Juárez and parts of the Pacific states (Beittel 2017). They have also set up operations in Central and South America. The group relies heavily on the strategy of intimidation to maintain control of territory. They are especially skilled at using social media to highlight their violence as a way of sending messages to security forces, civilians, and rival groups, often publicly displaying corpses and body parts.

While other DTOs attempt to build public support, Los Zetas undertakes violent actions against the civilian population. They have been linked to many massacres, including the 2011 killing of dozens, possibly hundreds, of men, women, and children in the town of Allende, a quiet town in the northern Mexican state of Coahuila, about 40 minutes from the U.S. border (Thompson 2017). The massacre occurred after DEA agents passed information to a Mexican federal police unit, known for leaking information to the cartel, of an informant. Gunmen stormed through the suspected informant's town, killing, kidnapping, and destroying buildings (ibid).

The organization has been weakened after a sustained campaign against its leadership. Mexican marines killed its long time leader Heriberto Lazcano, also known as "El Lazca", who headed the organization since 2002 after the killing of its first leader, Arturo Guzman Decena (Grayson 2014). After the elimination of its leadership and internal splits, Los Zetas fragmented into independent cells. Adjusting to the internal crisis, it reformulated itself by franchising its name to local gangs (Beittel 2017). This has made the organization more resilient to government enforcement, however, it has forfeited its organizational capability, which enabled it to reach the height of its power in 2012.

### *Cartel Jalisco-New Generation (CJNG)*

Cartel Jalisco-New Generation (CJNG) was originally based in the Western state of Jalisco

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<sup>2</sup>Fuel theft is a large problem in Mexico. Pemex, Mexico's state oil company, reported a loss of more than \$1.15 billion in 2014 due to oil tapping (Lohmuller 2015). In 2017, an estimated \$1 billion of oil revenue is lost annually in Mexico, with Los Zetas controlling about 40% of the market in stolen oil (Ralby 2017).

with operations in the central states of Colima, Guanajuato Guerrero, Mexico State, and Michoacán (Beittel 2017). In 2011, it announced itself with the roadside display of 35 bodies of alleged members of Los Zetas, found bound and tortured in the streets of Veracruz (Wells 2013). Since its brutal entry, it has established a reputation as one of the country's fastest-growing and most aggressive groups, prepared to confront both rival DTOs and security forces (Agren 2016).<sup>3</sup>

CJNG emerged from a subsidiary of the Sinaloa cartel, known as Milenio, under the leadership of Ignacio "Nacho" Coronel, a Sinaloa co-founder (Eells 2017). After Coronel was killed in an army raid in Guadalajara in 2011, an ambitious lieutenant within Milenio, named Rubén Oseguera Cervantes, known as "El Mencho", broke off and started his own splinter group (ibid). Mencho is a former Jalisco state policeman who once served three years in a U.S. prison for selling heroin (ibid). In 2014, Mencho fought a turf war with both Milenio and Sinaloa over Jalisco, forcing both out. It was the beginning of a rapid rise (ibid).

In 2015, the Mexican government declared CJNG one of the most dangerous cartels in the country (Lohmuller 2015). The cartel has established trafficking routes in dozens of countries on six continents and controls territory spanning half of Mexico, including both coasts and borders (Eells 2017). It is present in 14 states throughout Mexico and has pushed outside its stronghold from Jalisco into Aguascalientes, San Luis Potosi, Zacatecas, Tabasco, Veracruz, and Guanajuato. It specializes in the production of methamphetamine but also produces heroin and marijuana (Agren 2016). The lucrative foreign markets in Europe and Asia has created a massive treasury that some experts estimate is worth \$20 billion (Eells 2017). It is able to command a powerful position due to its control over key ports on both the Pacific and Gulf Coasts, dominating important parts of the supply chain (Beittel 2017). It controls the ports of Veracruz, Manzanillo, and Lazaro Cardenas, giving it access to imported chemicals from Asia, especially India and China, for the production of methamphetamine, and the smuggling out of the finished product (Agren 2016).

CJNG's expansion has led to high levels of violence as it clashes with rival DTOs. It has challenged the Sinaloa cartel for the lucrative heroin trade and smuggling routes in Ciudad Juárez and Tijuana (Bonello 2017). In Tijuana, a valuable plaza, the murder rate has reached an all time high. In 2016 the city's murder rate increased by 36% with 910 homicides.<sup>4</sup>

Since El Chapo's arrest in January 2016, the country's homicide rate has increased more than 20%, with 20,000 murders in 2016 alone, higher than in Iraq or Afghanistan (Linthicum 2017). In the first half of 2017, the homicide rate jumped another 30% (ibid). Thousands of these killings are attributed to CJNG's campaign for more territory. The confrontation between CJNG and Sinaloa is most visible in Colima. The once peaceful region

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<sup>3</sup>CJNG tactics have been compared to ISIS. In 2013, it raped, killed, and set fire to a 10-year girl whom they mistakenly believed was a rival's daughter (Eells 2017). In 2015, it executed a man and his young son by detonating sticks of dynamite attached to their bodies, while filming the scene (ibid). It is also not afraid to confront security forces. In 2015, CJNG gunman ambushed an elite police convoy, killing 15 officers, it was the deadliest attack on security forces since President Pena Nieto took office in 2012 (Agren 2016). It also shot down an army helicopter, killing three (ibid). A first in the Mexican drug war.

<sup>4</sup>For comparison, Chicago had 762 homicides in 2016 but has twice the population of Tijuana (Eells 2017).

has claimed the title of the murder capital of Mexico (Agren 2016). According to federal figures, Colima registered over 500 homicides in 2016, of a population of just 700,000. The high homicide rate is a result of a bitter struggle to control the port of Manzanillo (ibid). CJNG has even pushed into El Chapo's home state of Sinaloa.

### *Gulf*

The Gulf cartel is based in the city of Matamoros, Tamaulipas, with a presence in other Mexican states along the Gulf coast. It is a transnational smuggling operation that spans from Mexico to South America. It is one of the oldest and most powerful cartels, with origins dating back to the bootlegging era of the 1920s (Grillo 2012). It was once considered the main competitor against the Sinaloa cartel for smuggling routes in the early 2000s, however, it has since lost territory against its former enforcers, Los Zetas.

Its leader in the 1980s, Juan Garcia Abrego, developed ties to the Colombian Cali cartel as well as the Mexican federal police. The deal with the Cali Cartel was brokered after US law enforcement increased pressure on the Caribbean route used by the Colombians. Under him the Gulf cartel built a wide reaching trafficking network across the United States, including Houston, Atlanta, New York, and Los Angeles (InSight Crime 2017). Following the arrest and extradition to the US of Garcia Abrego in 1996, Osiel Cárdenas Guillén, took control of the cartel and developed a brutal new tool in the cartel kit. Cárdenas successfully corrupted elite Mexican military forces to act as his enforcers (Beittel 2017). Those corrupted military personnel became known as Los Zetas.<sup>5</sup> They were expert sharpshooters, trained in powerful military weaponry and capable of rapid deployment operations (ibid). With his hired assassins, Cárdenas built his cartel into one of the most powerful Mexican DTOs in the early 2000s.

However, it did not last. In 2010, the Gulf DTO and Los Zetas split. It is not known why the Zetas and Gulf split but the strength of the paramilitary group and its leadership was seen as a factor.<sup>6</sup> The hired military discipline and sophisticated firepower used to pull in billions in revenue each year and eliminate rivals turned against the Gulf cartel. Fighting between the Gulf cartel and Los Zetas, along with law enforcement pressure, has reduced their strength. Both organizations mostly operate as fragmented cells that do not cooperate with each other (Grayson 2014).

### **Toll-Collector Cartels**

#### *Tijuana/Arellano Felix Organization (AFO)*

For much of the 1980s and 1990s, the Arellano-Felix brothers controlled the profitable drug trade along the US-Mexico border from their base in Tijuana (Bailey 2014). During this period the "aretas", as the Arellano-Felix brothers are informally called in Tijuana, were the most violent DTOs in Mexico. AFO shipped for decades tons of cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine into the US each year. According to the FBI, annual revenues were into the hundreds of millions of dollars, laundering the profits in both countries. The founder of the organization Miguel Angel Felix Gallardo, a former police officer from Sinaloa,

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<sup>5</sup>Los Zetas was named after its first commander, Arturo Guzmán Decena, whose Federal Judicial Police radio code was "Z1", a code given to high-ranking officers (Grayson 2014).

<sup>6</sup>Some analysts say the Zetas blamed the Gulf DTO for the murder of a Zeta close to its leader, which sparked the rift (Grayson 2014).

created a network that included the Arellano Felix family and numerous other DTO leaders (Beittel 2017). After his arrest in 1989 for the murder of DEA Special Agent Enrique “Kiki” Camarena, seven Arellano Felix brothers and four sisters inherited the AFO from their uncle.<sup>7</sup>

The AFO was once one of the two dominant DTOs in Mexico, controlling the drug smuggling route between Baja California and Southern California. The other was the Jurez DTO or the Carrillo Fuentes Organization. The family’s most visible leaders, brothers Benjamin and Ramon Arellano, eluded authorities on both side of the border for years. The Mexican government and US authorities took forceful action against the AFO in the early years of the 2000s, arresting and killing five brothers involved in the drug trade.

In 2008, the AFO split into two competing factions when Eduardo Teodoro “El Teo” Garcia Simental, a former AFO lieutenant, broke from Fernando “El Ingeniero” Sanchez Arellano (Beittel 2017). That year, Tijuana became one of the most violent cities in Mexico. Garcia Simental formed a rival faction of the AFO that allied itself with Sinaloa (Dudley 2011). After the fragmentation, other DTOs sought to gain control of the Tijuana San Diego plaza in the wake of the power vacuum left by the earlier arrests of the AFO’s key players.

After the arrest of Sanchez Arellano in 2014, his mother Enedina Arellano Felix, took charge of the organization (Grillo 2015). Enedina, known as La Jefa, or the boss, could be the first woman to head an entire cartel. Trained as an accountant, Enedina rose through the organization, running its money laundering operations by creating front businesses such as pharmacies (ibid). AFO has managed to maintain control of the plaza through an agreement with the Sinaloa cartel, in which Sinaloa pays a fee to use the plaza (Stratfor 2013). Violence in Tijuana rose to more than 100 murders a month in December 2016 and January and February 2017. The increase in violence has been attributed to Sinaloa battling the new challenger, Cartel Jalisco-New Generation (CJNG), which seeks to control trafficking routes into the United States (Woody 2017).

#### *Juárez/Carrillo Fuentes Organization*

The Juárez cartel is based in the border city of Ciudad Juárez in the central northern state of Chihuahua. Formed in 1970, the Juárez cartel became one of the principal DTOs in central northern Mexico, moving drugs across the border from Ciudad Juárez into El Paso before a struggle erupted with the Sinaloa cartel for control of the key trafficking point to the US (Chaparro 2014). In the 1980s and 1990s, Juárez cartel controlled at least half of all Mexican narcotic trafficking under the leadership of its founder, Amado Carrillo Fuentes (Bailey 2014). The Juarez cartel enjoyed a golden era, using a fleet of small aircrafts to move drugs from Mexico to the US, leading to Amado’s nickname, “El Seor de los Cielos” or “Lord of the Skies.” Vicente Carrillo Fuentes, Amado’s brother, took control of the cartel after Amado died during plastic surgery in 1997 and led the organization until his arrest in October 2014 (Beittel 2017).

In the early 2000s, the Juárez and Sinaloa formed an alliance. However, the federation between them did not last. In 2004, the alliance frayed after “El Chapo” order the killing of Vincente’s brother (Ainslie 2013). By 2005, the Sinaloa cartel increased its footprint

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<sup>7</sup>Special Agent Camarena was an undercover DEA agent working in Mexico who was kidnapped, tortured, and killed in 1985.



in Ciudad Juárez, and by 2008, open warfare had erupted between the cartels. The rivalry between Juárez and Sinaloa turned Ciudad Juárez into one of the most violent cities in the world. From 2008 to 2011, Sinaloa and the Juárez fought a turf war that involved the deaths of more than 10,000 people (ibid). During this period, Ciudad Juárez experienced a wave of violence. At the height of the violence the city was experiencing 10 murders a day (Dudley 2012). More than 15% of the population displaced by drug-related violence inside Mexico between 2006 to 2010 came from Juárez but contained only slightly more than 1% of Mexico's population (Rios 2014).

After 2012, the homicide rate in Ciudad Juárez dropped compared to earlier years. The decrease has been attributed to police enforcement and President Calderón's socioeconomic program, "Todos Somos Juárez", or We Are All Juarez (Heiskanen 2016). It has also been suggested that Sinaloa's successful campaign against Juárez is a reason for the new found peace (Cave 2013). Sinaloa's dominance, with the assistance of local authorities, has secured a relatively peaceful city even though the Juárez cartel still operates in Chihuahua (ibid).

## **APPENDIX C**

# **Geographical Models**

## C.1 Autodefensas

**Table C.1:** Emergence of Autodefensas, Spatial Probit Model

	1
Regional	0.756*** (0.275)
National	-0.041 (0.313)
Toll	0.190 (0.810)
Indigenous population (%)	-0.216 (0.444)
Cristeros	0.176 (0.242)
Population (log)	0.285*** (0.089)
GDP per capita	-0.020 (0.005)
Poverty	-0.393*** (0.018)
DTO count	0.045 (1.083)
Homicide rate	0.000 (0.000)
Constant	-4.292*** (1.359)
Observations	2,442

*Note:*

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01  
Robust standard errors in parentheses

## C.2 Deacons

**Table C.2:** Emergence of Deacons, Spatial Probit Model

	1
White and Original Knights	0.970*** (0.647)
UKA	-0.411 (0.553)
Black pop. (%)	0.041*** (0.023)
Slave rebellion	0.519 (0.531)
Population	-0.092 (0.467)
Police per 10,000	0.020 (0.055)
Median fam. income	0.001 (0.0004)
Vote for leading president party (%)	0.035*** (0.033)
Homicide	-0.026** (0.057)
Constant	-6.212*** (4.800)
Observations	2,977

*Note:* \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01  
Robust standard errors in parentheses

## C.2.1 Deep South Counties

**Table C.3:** Emergence of Deacons, only Southern Counties

	1
White and Original Knights	1.332** (0.647)
UKA	-0.732 (0.553)
Black pop. (%)	0.089*** (0.023)
Slave rebellion	0.534 (0.531)
Population	0.091* (0.467)
Police per 10,000	3.114*** (0.055)
Median fam. income	0.001*** (0.0004)
Vote for leading president party (%)	0.078** (0.033)
Homicide	-0.068 (0.057)
Constant	-12.303** (4.800)
Observations	1,004

*Note:*

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01  
Robust standard errors in parentheses

## **APPENDIX D**

# **Additional Variables Models**

## D.1 Autodefensas

**Table D.1:** Alternative Measures of Social Capital, Autodefensas

	1
Regional	2.372*** (0.253)
National	-0.245 (0.290)
Toll	-0.453 (0.635)
Indigenous population (%)	-0.650 (0.480)
Rebellions	1.051 (0.568)
Population (log)	0.746*** (0.118)
GDP per capita	-0.064 (0.077)
Poverty	0.949*** (0.148)
DTO count	0.035 (0.091)
Homicide rate	-0.001 (0.003)
Constant	-10.984*** (1.146)
Observations	2,442

*Note:*

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01  
Robust standard errors in parentheses

**Table D.2: Alternative Measures of State Capacity, Autodefensas**

	1	2	3	4	5
Regional	1.300*** (0.310)	1.700*** (0.360)	1.400*** (0.300)	1.600*** (0.360)	1.500*** (0.310)
National	-0.011 (0.340)	0.340 (0.390)	-0.033 (0.340)	0.340 (0.390)	0.029 (0.340)
Toll	-0.012 (0.640)	0.630 (0.850)	-0.068 (0.640)	0.420 (0.890)	0.170 (0.660)
Indigenous population (%)	-0.050 (0.530)	-0.039 (0.560)	0.160 (0.540)	-0.240 (0.570)	-0.060 (0.510)
Cristeros	0.450 (0.350)	0.450 (0.380)	0.470 (0.350)	0.580 (0.380)	0.440 (0.350)
Population (log)	0.720*** (0.130)	0.810*** (0.160)	0.640*** (0.140)	0.860*** (0.160)	0.860*** (0.140)
GDP per capita	-0.021 (0.048)	-0.020 (0.048)	-0.020 (0.005)	-0.032 (0.064)	-0.020 (0.048)
Poverty	0.770*** (0.160)	0.600*** (0.170)	0.670*** (0.160)	0.720*** (0.170)	0.340 (0.230)
DTO count	0.120 (0.100)	0.093 (0.120)	0.110 (0.100)	0.100 (0.110)	0.150 (0.097)
Homicide rate	0.001 (0.003)	-0.0003 (0.004)	0.0005 (0.003)	-0.0005 (0.004)	0.0005 (0.003)
Coordination	-0.350 (0.240)				
Ruggedness		0.002** (0.001)			
Road density			-1,021.000* (592.000)		
Distance to security station (log)				0.007 (0.008)	
Corruption					-0.430** (0.180)
Constant	-12.000*** (1.400)	-13.000*** (1.600)	-11.000*** (1.500)	-14.000*** (1.600)	-11.000*** (1.400)
Observations	2,442	2,298	2,442	2,298	2,442

*Note:*\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01  
Robust standard errors in parentheses



**Table D.3:** Alternative Measures of Crime, Autodefensas

	1
Regional	1.700*** (0.330)
National	0.210 (0.370)
Toll	1.100 (0.710)
Indigenous population (%)	-0.200 (0.550)
Cristeros	0.510 (0.370)
Population (log)	0.770*** (0.140)
GDP per capita	-0.021 (0.048)
Poverty	0.740*** (0.150)
DTO count	0.073 (0.100)
Kidnapping rate	-0.005 (0.010)
Constant	-12.000*** (1.400)
Observations	2,351

*Note:*

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01  
Robust standard errors in parentheses

**Table D.4:** Alternative Measures of Battlefield Dynamics, Autodefensas

	1
Regional	1.400*** (0.300)
National	-0.024 (0.340)
Toll	-0.180 (0.690)
Indigenous population (%)	-0.110 (0.530)
Cristeros	0.460 (0.350)
Population (log)	0.780*** (0.120)
Homicide rate	0.002 (0.003)
GDP per capita	-0.032 (0.064)
Poverty	0.730*** (0.160)
DTO homicide rate	0.001 (0.002)
Constant	-12.000*** (1.300)
Observations	2,442

*Note:*

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01  
Robust standard errors in parentheses

## D.2 Deacons

**Table D.5:** Alternative Measures of Social Capital, Deacons

	1	2	3	4	5
White and Original Knights	1.620** (0.687)	1.492** (0.654)	1.492** (0.656)	1.551** (0.660)	1.870*** (0.644)
UKA	-0.208 (0.646)	-0.106 (0.625)	-0.094 (0.624)	-0.171 (0.629)	-0.538 (0.599)
Black pop. (%)					0.101*** (0.018)
Slave rebellion	1.732*** (0.564)	1.629*** (0.574)	1.651*** (0.565)	1.697*** (0.564)	
Population (log)	0.009 (0.307)	0.267 (0.303)	0.284 (0.287)	0.218 (0.285)	-0.320 (0.290)
Police per 10,000	0.054 (0.039)	0.074** (0.037)	0.073** (0.037)	0.074** (0.037)	0.059 (0.038)
Median fam. income	-0.0005* (0.0003)	-0.0005* (0.0003)	-0.0005* (0.0003)	-0.0005* (0.0003)	0.001** (0.0003)
Vote for leading president party (%)	0.095*** (0.022)	0.096*** (0.021)	0.096*** (0.021)	0.091*** (0.022)	0.077*** (0.022)
Homicide per 1,000	-0.037 (0.047)	-0.030 (0.046)	-0.029 (0.046)	-0.026 (0.044)	-0.081 (0.056)
CORE	2.106*** (0.787)				
NAACP		0.096 (0.548)			
SCLC			0.047 (1.191)		
SNCC				0.611 (0.573)	
Uprising					0.149 (1.399)
Constant	-10.512*** (2.930)	-13.185*** (2.929)	-13.337*** (2.796)	-12.528*** (2.838)	-12.984*** (3.070)
Observations	3,050	3,050	3,050	3,050	3,050

Note:

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01  
Robust standard errors in parentheses

**Table D.6:** Alternative Measures of State Capacity, Deacons

	1	2	3	4
White and Original Knights	1.669** (0.748)	1.660** (0.746)	1.764** (0.762)	1.727*** (0.460)
UKA	-0.909 (0.636)	-0.906 (0.637)	-0.934 (0.672)	-0.490 (0.537)
Black pop. (%)	0.093*** (0.020)	0.091*** (0.021)	0.098*** (0.022)	0.093*** (0.460)
Population (log)	0.208 (0.237)	0.221 (0.245)	0.182 (0.226)	-0.223 (0.170)
Median fam. income	0.001* (0.0003)	0.001* (0.0003)	0.001** (0.0003)	0.001*** (0.0001)
Vote for leading president party (%)	0.042 (0.028)	0.043 (0.028)	0.037 (0.026)	0.067 (0.045)
Homicide rate	-0.215 (0.255)	-0.224 (0.261)	-0.163 (0.250)	-0.055 (0.046)
Slave rebellion	0.689 (0.566)	0.705 (0.564)	0.811 (0.575)	0.876 (0.553)
Security station	0.208 (0.245)			
Square miles		-0.0002 (0.0003)		
Highway per 10,000			0.016*** (0.005)	
Lynches				0.014 (0.023)
Constant	-11.262*** (2.121)	-11.110*** (2.160)	-12.083*** (2.155)	-11.548*** (2.548)
Observations	3,060	3,060	2,950	3,060

*Note:*

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01  
Robust standard errors in parentheses

**Table D.7: Alternative Measures of Crime, Deacons**

	1	2	3
White and Original Knights	1.590** (0.736)	1.552** (0.736)	1.489** (0.724)
UKA	-0.875 (0.641)	-0.918 (0.642)	-0.890 (0.637)
Black pop. (%)	0.093*** (0.021)	0.092*** (0.019)	0.093*** (0.020)
Population (log)	0.207 (0.226)	0.348 (0.217)	0.274 (0.235)
Police per 10,000	0.041* (0.023)	0.044* (0.025)	0.038 (0.027)
Median fam. income	0.0005 (0.0003)	0.001* (0.0003)	0.0004 (0.0003)
Vote for leading president party (%)	0.047 (0.028)	0.045 (0.027)	0.0481 (0.028)
Slave rebellion	0.691 (0.562)	0.681 (0.568)	0.639 (0.583)
Assault per 1,000	-0.264 (0.251)		
Rape per 1,000		-0.500** (0.254)	
Total per 1,000			-0.584** (0.253)
Constant	-10.454*** (1.976)	-10.483*** (2.482)	-8.705*** (2.262)
Observations	3,073	3,073	3,072

*Note:*

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01  
Robust standard errors in parentheses

**Table D.8:** Klan Violence, 1964-1967

	1	2	3
White and Original Knights	0.488* (0.480)	0.429* (0.485)	0.425* (0.485)
UKA	-1.091 (0.671)	-1.110 (0.675)	-1.108* (0.673)
Slave rebellion	0.181 (0.506)	0.183 (0.510)	0.187 (0.511)
Population	0.721 (0.543)	0.775 (0.552)	0.775 (0.549)
Elevation	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.001 (0.002)	-0.001 (0.002)
Vote for leading president party (%)	0.025 (0.019)	0.026 (0.018)	0.025 (0.018)
Murder	0.568 (0.484)		
Assault		0.202 (0.142)	
Violence			0.183 (0.123)
Constant	-4.875*** (1.366)	-4.913*** (1.370)	-4.898*** (1.368)
Observations	583	583	583

*Note:*

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01  
Robust standard errors in parentheses

**Table D.9:** Klan Violence and Community Organization, 1964-1967

	1	2	3
White and Original Knights	0.461* (0.507)	0.377* (0.520)	0.363* (0.521)
UKA	-1.217* (0.675)	-1.248* (0.676)	-1.258* (0.678)
Population	0.197 (0.588)	0.247 (0.597)	0.247 (0.595)
Elevation	-0.001 (0.002)	-0.001 (0.002)	-0.001 (0.002)
Vote for leading president party (%)	0.017 (0.020)	0.015 (0.020)	0.015 (0.020)
Civil Rights org.	1.104** (0.450)	1.170** (0.467)	1.184** (0.468)
Murders	1.052 (0.677)		
Assaults		0.230 (0.153)	
Violence			0.343** (0.133)
Civil Rights org* Murder	-0.475 (0.925)		
Civil Rights org* Assaults		0.325 (0.205)	
Civil Rights org* Violence			-0.032 (0.180)
Constant	-4.701*** (1.400)	-4.652*** (1.406)	-4.632*** (1.411)
Observations	583	583	583

*Note:*

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01  
Robust standard errors in parentheses

## **APPENDIX E**

### **Full Match Models**



## E.1 Autodefensas

**Table E.1:** Emergence of Autodefensas, 2013 - Matched

	All Covariates
Regional	1.200*** (0.430)
National	-35.000 (2,043.000)
Toll	21.000 (1,094.000)
Indigenous population (%)	0.012 (0.840)
Cristeros	17.000 (1,094.000)
Population (log)	0.580*** (0.220)
GDP per capita	-0.015 (0.160)
Poverty	0.570*** (0.200)
DTO count	0.120 (0.130)
Homicide rate	0.010* (0.005)
Constant	-26.000 (1,094.000)
Observations	460

*Note:*

\* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$   
Robust standard errors in parentheses

## E.2 Deacons

**Table E.2:** Emergence of Deacons, 1965 - Matched

	All Covariates
White and Original Knights	3.400** (1.400)
UKA	-1.900 (1.300)
Black pop. (%)	0.044 (0.030)
Population (log)	-0.650 (0.720)
Police per 10,000	0.035 (0.090)
Median fam. income	0.001 (0.001)
Vote for leading president party (%)	0.041 (0.029)
Homicide rate	-0.660 (0.530)
Slave rebellion	-0.310 (1.000)
Constant	1.500 (6.400)
Observations	154

*Note:*

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01