

The struggle against mexicos drug cartels



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A vacation to Cabo San Lucas, Mexico followed the New Year of 2009. I had spent time with locals, purchased their handcrafted souvenirs, and visited monumental tourist attractions. My travel led me to believe that Mexico is a country of warm weather and beautiful sightseeing; at the time of my vacation I had been ignorant to the reality of Mexico's stance on the global spectrum of corruption. Unbeknownst 783 miles northwest to Tijuana from Cabo, numerous drug cartels were organizing the importation of narcotics from the South and exported to countries North of Mexico. Tijuana is a city controlled by organized crime and more specifically, infiltrated by The Tijuana Cartel (Witkin and Robinson 1997: 38). The Tijuana Cartel is responsible for the transportation, importation, and distribution of massive quantities of cocaine and marijuana, as well as large quantities of heroin and methamphetamine (Guzman 1993: 40). Yet, the issue of Mexico's drug trade is not specific to the notorious city, there are over seven cartels that clandestinely function throughout the state. The power of drug cartels have proven to be well connected, trained, armed, and manipulative toward the masses. Mass drug trafficking in Mexico is threatening to turn itself into a 'Narco' state, notably, a 'Narco' state is considered to be an area that has been taken over and is controlled and corrupted by drug cartels (ibid).

The rising count of gruesome drug-related murders seems as though the government is being passively effective. This is where the supremacy of drug lords that lead the drug cartels serve as highly influential bodies; whom can often overthrow the power of authorities and government officials through bribery. This is evident over the last three decades when the Mexican Drug War originally commenced. However, the Drug War was re-initiated between

the government and drug cartels when Felipe Calderon took presidency in 2006 (Campos 2010).

The nation of Mexico is facing a difficult state of affairs to meet drug trade demands that has dishonored the justice system. Countless lives have been taken since the commencement of the Mexican Drug War on either side of its borders and will only continue to overthrow the power of the government officials. This essay will analyze how the Mexican drug trade has infiltrated northern borders to the United States and Canada-while domestically placing vulnerable civilians at risk of sex trafficking in an impoverished state, resulting in violence.

The drug trade is a global black market, where the insufficiency of borders has proven to be the prime target of drug transportation. According to the Toronto Star (2009), Tijuana is home to the world's busiest border crossing with about 300, 000 people crossing the border everyday. These perimeters separate two distinct worlds divided by a militarized border in the North and a more advantageous smuggle from the South, however the movement of people and narcotics illicitly make their way past northern border patrol. The North American Free Trade agreement addresses concerns regarding insufficient borders where there is an unrestricted movement of people, goods and services between Mexico, the United States and Canada (Cottam and Otwin 2005). The inadequacy of border security, has led to the expansion of Mexican drug cartels and their control over the drug supply chain surpassing the United States to Canada. This is where the transportation, importation, and distribution of massive quantities of cocaine, marijuana, as well as large quantities of heroin and

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methamphetamine have primarily washed up on Canada's West coast (Falco 1999: 8). Furthermore, the growth of Mexico's drug cartels is a question of security, where the illegal importation of illicit drugs into fast, developing westernized nations will only lead to unsafe corruption.

This mass production of drugs infiltrated by Mexico into the United States and Canada is a detriment to the globalization efforts set out by capitalist nations. These northern nations have made initiatives to expand the integration of countries in the global network of communication, transportation and trade. However, the global networking strategies of these bordering nations have negotiated an illegal trade that has created a steady flow of trafficked narcotics. The trafficking of drugs is highly motivated by the demands that exist in consumer countries such as the United States and Canada's West Coast of British Columbia. In 2001, Mexico was the point of transit where 55 percent of cocaine entered the United States (Chabat 2002: 142).

Illicit drugs cultivated in drug trade are majorly supplied by strong Colombian drug trafficking ties and become Canada and US-bound through Mexico. The narcotics used to fuel the Mexican Drug War are primarily extracted from countries in South America, specifically Colombia. This is where the primary trafficked narcotic includes cocaine, in exchange for the steady drug flow heading north from South America guns, cash and prostitutes serve as collateral (Bagely 1988: 72). However, the United States has created a campaign of prohibition and foreign military aid to reduce the illegal drug trade, this campaign is called the War on Drugs. The approaches of The War on Drugs have undertaken tasks such as The Merida Initiative. This initiative <https://assignbuster.com/the-struggle-against-mexicos-drug-cartels/>

is a security cooperation between the United States and the government of Mexico and the countries of Central America with the aim of combating the threats of drug trafficking and transnational crime (Cottam and Marenin 2005: 32). Such strategies are aimed to also eliminate illegal immigrants into Canada and the United States as means to transport and distribute drugs. Other contributions to The War on Drugs involve the U. S Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), identifying the need to increase financial and migration investigations relating to the movement of illegal drugs to Mexico. The DEA states that attacking the financial infrastructure of drug cartels has to play a key role in any viable drug enforcement strategy (Toro 1999: 633).

The effects of contraband being imported past the Northern borders serves for inadequacy of borders as well as harm toward their political and economical statuses. Restricted substances that enter northern borders are consequential toward the political stance of the laws, rules and regulations set forth by government officials. The enigmatic transportation of these illegal narcotics is especially subversive and become difficult for officials to track en route. The money laundering exchange from Mexico into the United States and Canada annually generates millions of dollars as a significant contributor to their economies. In the United States, wholesale illicit drug sale earnings estimates range from \$13. 6 to \$48. 4 billion annually (ibid).

The longstanding issue of poverty in many areas of Mexico is also a contributing factor involving the illegal drug trade. Kellner and Piptone's article " Inside Mexico's Drug war" (2010: 32) states that due to high levels of poverty within the Mexican nation and easy access across the northern borders, individuals with minimal opportunities and are economically

unstable, resort to drug exchange. Poverty provides minimal opportunities for those in need of providing for their families, and as a result of Mexico's escalating rates of poverty, people often look for the fastest alternative, often resorting to money laundering of illegal drugs. The participation of Mexican civilians in the drug war often proposes the sacrifices of their lives as well as leaving their families behind. The willingness of many residences to partake in the drug trade is also contributing to Mexico's generation of fraudulent currency, where according to Chabat (2002: 137) as of 2009, sat between \$6-\$15 billion annually representing 3 percent of Mexico's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). As the growth of these numbers amplifies due to organized drug crime, the public continues to pursue the implementation of justice and change by government officials.

Within Mexico's impoverished state, the vulnerability of Mexican women and children are at risk with the pursuit of innocence set forth by drug lords. The involvement of women in drug trafficking in recent years has expanded dramatically. Campbell (2008: 251) explains that women within Mexican society that are often associated with the drug cartels are typically led to incarceration at various ages; this also leads to high extortion, torture and rape. Sex trafficking has become more common as a part of the drug war where most often women and girls are pimped by leaders of drug cartels and sent to brothels throughout Mexico (Castillo, Gomez and Delgado 1999: 394). The demands within the brothels instill fear within these trafficked women, without compliance they jeopardize seeing their families again or even their lives. Specifically in Tijuana, Mexico where the infiltration of black market

drugs originates within Central America, women are used as drug smugglers and prostitutes to generate another source of monetary income.

Moreover, Rojas (2008: 1082) argues that children have also become prime targets involving the illegal exchange of drugs. Drug lords often seek them out as a symbol of inexperience and uncontroversial tactic when crossing borders, much of the time they too have been induced by drugs to obey drug lord commands. Many children involved in the drug trade are without any family due to the violent nature of the trade or come from families below the poverty line. In 2009 alone, 10, 000 children were orphaned due to the Mexican Drug War (ibid). With initiatives to keep the adolescents off of the streets, President Felipe Calderón recently opened 75 new universities and 330 drug rehabilitation centers to curb the impoverishment and gang violence (Corchado 2009: 21).

The violent nature of the Mexican Drug War has led to high rates of drug violence within Mexico. This is further examined by Newman (2009: 23), in which he explains that the drug cartels imported and exported out of Tijuana make their way toward the U. S border city of Ciudad Juárez, which now has the distinction of being the most violent in Mexico. Due to organized crime, border violence includes 90% of drug related killings (ibid). The competition of cartels trying to out due each other in savagery is discussed in Hoar's article " Mexican violence, Gun Controls" (2009: 42) where bodies are mutilated, and heads are tossed on busy streets.

The struggle for human rights and progression away from drug violence is an unpredictable issue; the direction in which it is headed is at a high rate of

inconsistency. Violent acts of decapitation, torture and rape are common tactics amongst drug lords. Drug lords have become so powerful that some of their leaders, even when in prison, can continue their operations from the inside. Anderson (2007: 18) explains that a drug kingpin can order the murder of rival cartel members on the street, along with others perceived as standing in the way of their lucrative enterprises. Those killed have included officials, judges and journalists whose writings offended the cartels (ibid). As a terror tactic, beheadings have become a favored form of execution. The power of organized crime such as drug cartels, easily preside over the violence. According to Campos (2010: 402), more than 34, 000 people have died in drug-related violence during the four years that President Felipe Calderon has been in power and within the last year there were 15, 273 deaths.

Many civilians are too often paying the price of Mexico's drug war with their liberty and livelihood at the hands of drug cartel hit men. High rates of violence are a result of suppressed human rights with many implications facing Mexican authorities and residences. Communities often too cannot trust those in a position of power such as police, this is due to the corruption within the police force. Corruption within Mexican law enforcement institutions is a relentless struggle of organized crime growing and spreading to new territories. More specifically, numerous drug cartels propose bribes to officers for their co-operation in return. The co-operation of these officers under cartel command often include violent acts against civilians as well as tourists and government officials, ultimately creating an elite group of hit men (Bailey and Paras 2006: 78). Officers enticed by this lucrative

organization are often regularly paid poorly and would rather succumb to the influence of Mexico's deep-pocketed drug traffickers and gangs. This law enforcement dishonesty is becoming a significant challenge confronting democratic governability and defeating the purpose of ending the Mexican Drug War. Although violence between drug cartels had been occurring for at least three decades, the Mexican government had held a generally passive stance regarding cartel violence. Now, President Felipe Calderón has continued to escalate his anti-drug campaign, there are now about 45,000 troops involved along with state and federal police forces. (Felson 2009: 7)

In conclusion, the Mexican drug trade is a ruthless battlefield in which many aspects reflect the hardships and corruption within Mexican society, and its effects on its neighboring countries. The efforts set out by President Felipe Calderon to end the drug war in Mexico is seeing inadequate results, inevitably progressing toward a 'Narco' state status. Presently, the development of Mexico is at risk with plummeting death tolls of civilians, corruption of law enforcement and drug money stabilizing the country's GDP. The Mexican Drug War is often presented publicly as a government issue that will evaporate overtime with the right prime leadership. However, the cause of the battle on drugs in the southern-most part of North America is much more than the government's burden. The powers of drug cartels seem to be unstoppable and over taking the Mexico's livelihood all together and are now nothing short of entrenched in supremacy. The infiltration of northern borders to the United States and Canada by the Mexican drug trade has domestically placed vulnerable civilians at risk of sex trafficking in an impoverished state, resulting in violence.