The New Zealand Government's Efforts in Social Recognition of Motorcycle Gangs as a Social Community in Order to Maintain National Security

Dian Anggraini1, Arifuddin Uksan2, Kusuma3, Pujo Widodo4
1,2,3,4) Peace and Conflict Resolution, National Security Faculty, Republic Indonesia Defense University, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author
Email: dianaanggrn98@gmail.com

Abstract

New Zealand faces challenges related to motorcycle gang activities that can threaten national security. In addressing this issue, the New Zealand government has made efforts to recognize motorcycle gangs as social communities to uphold national security. The method used in this research is qualitative research, and new findings regarding the research object will be supported by data collection techniques, such as structured interviews and group discussion with the Director of The Toda Peace Institute - Professor Kevin Paul Clements. This approach aims to change the negative perception of motorcycle gangs and involve them in more positive activities. In the government's efforts of social recognition towards motorcycle gangs as social communities, a softer policy approach is adopted. In this context, the government acknowledges the existence of motorcycle gangs as communities within society. This step aims to strengthen the social identity of motorcycle gangs and provide recognition to the community. The presence of motorcycle gangs in New Zealand poses significant security challenges. By enhancing their connection with the wider community, it can help maintain national security by engaging this community in positive and constructive endeavors. With this research, it is also hoped to contribute insights and recommendations to the Indonesian government on appropriate and suitable approaches to tackle the issue of motorbike gangs in Indonesia.

Keywords: Effort of Government; Gangster; National Security; New Zealand.

INTRODUCTION

New Zealand is a country that offers incredible natural beauty, a rich cultural heritage, and a high quality of life. With its friendly population and opportunities to explore stunning landscapes, the country has become an appealing destination for travelers from around the world. It also has a democratic government and a stable economy. New Zealand is known as an innovative country, particularly in the fields of technology and renewable energy. The country's approach to environmental protection is also renowned, with a strong commitment to preserving nature's sustainability and reducing negative impacts on the environment.

According to a survey conducted by the Institute for Economics and Peace (2022) in the Global Peace Index Survey, New Zealand ranked second as the most peaceful country globally in terms of public safety and security. There are several factors that contribute to New Zealand's prominence in terms of peace and harmony within the nation. One of the most prominent factors is New Zealand's renowned strong commitment to democracy. The country ranked fourth in the Democracy Index 2019 (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2020), which takes into account factors such as free and fair elections and the influence of foreign powers. The country also achieved a high score in political rights and civil liberties, scoring 97 out of 100 in the World Freedom Index 2020 (Freedom House, 2020). This commitment to democratic values fosters stability and peaceful governance.

Transparency International (2022) has also ranked New Zealand as one of the least corrupt countries in the world. The country shares the top rankings (alongside Denmark and Finland) in terms of freedom from corruption. This transparency and minimal corruption contribute to a peaceful and fair society where the rule of law is highly upheld. The Index of

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Economic Freedom in 2020, which evaluates factors such as property rights and financial freedom, also placed New Zealand as the third freest country (The Heritage Foundation, 2020). In this regard, strong economic factors and economic freedom contribute to the stability and social well-being that create a peaceful environment.

Moreover, New Zealand's justice system is highly respected worldwide. In the Rule of Law Index in 2020 (World Justice Project, 2020), New Zealand ranked seventh best in the world. The country's commitment to upholding the rule of law and providing equal access to justice fosters a sense of security and trust in the legal system. The low crime rate in New Zealand plays a significant role in its reputation as a peaceful and safe country. With a homicide rate of only 0.7 per 100,000 population in 2017 (The World Bank, 2019) in intentional homicides, the country has a relatively low level of violent crime. Strong community values and a tightly-knit society contribute to a sense of safety and security within local communities (Gilbert, 2010).

The low crime rate in New Zealand plays an important role in its reputation as a peaceful and safe country. With a murder rate of only 0.7 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2017 (The World Bank, 2019) in intentional homicides, the country has a relatively low level of violent crime. Strong community values and the interconnected nature of society contribute to a sense of safety and security within local communities (Gilbert, 2010).

Although New Zealand has garnered a reputation for being a peaceful and safe country, it is important to acknowledge that no country is free from challenges. One challenge in New Zealand is the presence of motorcycle gangs, which can have an impact on the security, peace, and safety of the community. According to various reports, the number of gang members in New Zealand is significant and a concern for authorities, leading to the establishment of the Gang Harm Insights Centre (GHIC) and the National Gang List (New Zealand Police, 2023). The number of gang members in the country is indeed substantial and has surpassed the count of active military personnel (The Economist, 2018).

These gangs contribute to criminal activities such as drug trafficking, violence, robbery, and murder. They also serve as suppliers of illegal firearms and have interests in legitimate businesses such as nightclubs, massage parlors, prostitution, and motorcycle spare parts shops. Some gangs are even involved in efforts to implement corporate and internationalization strategies to maximize their profits. Additionally, gangs in New Zealand often engage in criminal activities in collaboration with other organized crime groups, such as Asian organized crime groups. This undoubtedly has the potential to disrupt community harmony and significantly threaten public safety. While New Zealand maintains a relatively low overall crime rate, it is possible that the criminal activities carried out by these gangs can impact the community and contribute to a sense of insecurity (Gilbert, 2010; New Zealand Police, 2023).

Therefore, the New Zealand government and law enforcement agencies need to address this challenge and continue their efforts to combat illegal activities associated with gangs. By focusing on crime prevention, community engagement, and robust law enforcement measures, New Zealand can work to reduce potential disruptions to peace caused by these gangs. While New Zealand has many factors contributing to its reputation as a peaceful and safe country, the presence of gangs and their potential impact on community security and safety must be acknowledged. Therefore, effective strategies to address the illegal activities associated with gang-related criminal activities are necessary for New Zealand to further enhance its peaceful environment and maintain its status as one of the safest countries in the world.
RESEARCH METHODS

This research utilizes qualitative research method aimed at understanding and explaining the phenomena experienced by the research subjects. This method is also used to investigate aspects related to the behaviors, motivations, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and actions of individuals or groups towards something.

According to Sugiyono (2013:15), qualitative research is a research method based on the post-positivist philosophy, used to study natural object conditions (as opposed to experiments), where the researcher serves as the key instrument in data collection and interpretation. This method is also known as an artistic method because the research process is more artistic in nature (less structured), and it is called an interpretive method because the research data is more focused on data interpretation.

In particular, in qualitative research, the subjects and objects of the study become the focal point for researchers to answer research questions. In this study, New Zealand serves as the research subject, examining the issues surrounding a community, specifically the motorcycle gangs in New Zealand and their various criminal activities that can have negative impacts on society. New findings regarding the research object will be supported by data collection techniques, such as structured interviews and group discussion with the Director of The Toda Peace Institute - Professor Kevin Paul Clements. Additionally, documentation data collection approaches will be used, including presentation materials, meeting minutes, decrees, journals, and official news delivered during the interview or accessed through the internet.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The History of Gang Development in New Zealand

For over fifty years, gangs have played a significant role in criminal activities in New Zealand, starting with the Bodgies and Widgies gangs in the 1950s (Gilbert, J., 2013). Based on a decade – long research on gangs, it is documented that Hell's Angels and other motorcycle gangs emerged in the 1960s, followed by the growth of Mongrel Mob and Black Power in the 1970s, and the rise of organized crime in the past decade (Gilbert, J., 2013).

The emergence of these gangs is closely tied to the history of their formation. The new gangs that arise can be described as groups of young people, often coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. They have loosely structured organizations, minimal formal rules, and activities that mostly involve minor offenses rather than serious crimes. They perceive themselves as gangs and are also accepted as such by the community. Additionally, gangs can be characterized as structured groups with a minimum of five members, maintaining exclusive membership and marked by the use of common identifiers and the presence of formal rules that replace state regulations.

The emergence of motorcycle gangs, which is currently a problem, can be traced back to the history of the formation of gangs in New Zealand. The following is a chronological sequence or history of gang development in New Zealand:

1. 1950-1960 Teenage Rebellion
   In the late 1950s, a group of young teenagers began gathering around the Majestic Cinema on Queen Street, Auckland. Over time, they continued to meet regularly, inspired by the lyrics of a popular song from 1955 titled "Black Denim Trousers and Motorcycle Boots."
Eventually, this group adopted the name "Auckland Outcast" and proudly sported their distinctive appearance that involved motorcycles (Gilbert, J., 2013).

2. Hells Angels Gang Arrives in New Zealand in the 1960s

Since the 1950s, there have been gang groups consisting of young individuals in New Zealand. They came from working-class backgrounds and were part of a subculture movement that had existed since that time. The phenomenon of troubled youth groups or gangs is not something new in New Zealand. Even in 1842 and 1843, 128 youths transferred from Parkhurst Prison in England caused chaos on the streets of Auckland and were accused of being the cause of problems and spreading moral diseases. At that time, these youths engaged in unlawful activities in Auckland (Gilbert, J., 2010).

In the early 1960s, a new chapter unfolded with the formation of the Hells Angels group in Auckland. This group had an established organizational structure with leadership, group rules, and group insignia that became their identity. The presence of this group drew attention from the authorities and the wider community (Gilbert, J., 2013).

Hells Angels became increasingly involved in various legal business sectors, particularly in the entertainment industry, real estate, currency trading, as well as online gambling and the pornography industry. They have expanded their presence in these fields and engaged in increasingly extensive business activities (Alex, C., 2014).

3. Rise of Street Gangs in the 1960s to 1970s

During the same period, Hells Angels underwent a transformation from a group of young individuals to a motorcycle gang in New Zealand known as the Mongrel Mob. There is no clear record of the establishment date of the Mongrel Mob. However, in his 2010 thesis titled "The Rise and Development of Gangs in New Zealand," Jarrod Gilbert revealed that by 1971, this gang already existed and was active on the streets of New Zealand.

The majority of Mongrel Mob gang members come from Polynesian communities. The gang’s membership is spread throughout the country. In the 1970s, conflicts involving this gang occurred, causing concerns and criminal activities among gang members, as well as rivalries between different gang groups (Gilbert, J., 2013).

4. Development and Turmoil of Gangs from the 1980s to 1990s

Previous research has indicated that gang members generally come from socially disorganized environments. However, it is still unknown whether members from different gang types emerge from the same environment. In New Zealand, there are two distinct types of gangs: Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs and New Zealand Adult Gangs. Overall, there are some consistencies in spatial risk factors associated with gang membership based on their types in New Zealand (Breetzke, et al., 2022).

However, in the 1980s and 1990s, motorcycle gangs in New Zealand were involved in various criminal activities and clashes with other gangs. Conflicts and rivalries often occurred between different gangs, and criminal activities such as drug trafficking, street violence, and gang warfare became serious issues (Breetzke, et al., 2022).
One group that experienced rapid growth during this period was the Black Power, which initially formed as a Polynesian gang in the 1970s. By the 1980s, Black Power became one of the largest and most influential motorcycle gangs in New Zealand. They were involved in criminal activities such as drug trafficking, violence, and organized crime (Dowling & Morgan, 2021).

Additionally, in the 1980s, a motorcycle gang called the Nomads emerged. This group gained notoriety for their involvement in criminal activities and conflicts with other motorcycle gangs. They were known for their distinctive appearance, often wearing leather jackets with their gang symbols and names (Brantingham et al., 2012).

During this period, there was turmoil and competition among various motorcycle gangs in New Zealand. Conflicts between these gangs often escalated to violence and murder. Many areas in the country became battlegrounds between competing motorcycle gangs vying for control over territories and illegal businesses. The government and law enforcement authorities also made efforts to combat motorcycle gang activities and organized crime. Enforcement operations were carried out with the aim of dismantling motorcycle gang networks and apprehending members involved in criminal activities (Gilbert, J., 2013).

Thus, from ancient times to the present, the presence of motorcycle gangs in New Zealand has been a focal point of attention and has become a part of the country's social history.

The Reason Gangs Have Become an "Inherited Tradition" for New Zealanders

The membership of gangs in New Zealand increased from the 1980s until the late 1990s before experiencing a decline until around 2010 (Gilbert, 2010). Since then, motorcycle gang membership appears to have been on the rise. The New Zealand Police's National Gang List (NGL) is considered the most reliable indication of gang membership that has been formally identified, although it has some limitations, it provides an insight into the grim situation in New Zealand as gang membership continues to increase steadily (New Zealand Police, 2023).

In this regard, the phenomenon of family members and descendants joining gangs following their parents or other family members is also a complex issue with various contributing factors to the increase in gang membership in New Zealand. Understanding these factors is crucial for comprehending the complexity of gang membership and developing effective strategies to address and mitigate its impact on individuals and society.

Citing an article titled "The Mongrel Mob or Head Hunters? The Association Between Neighborhood-level Factors on Different Types of Gang Membership in Aotearoa/New Zealand" by Breetzke, Curtis-Ham, Gilbert, & Tibby (2022), which discusses the increase in gang membership in New Zealand, the historical study on the rise and fall of gangs in New Zealand from the doctoral thesis (Gilbert, 2010), and various perspectives on Māori people and gangs in New Zealand from the works of Taonui & Newbold (2016), we find that:

First, one of the main reasons why family members and descendants are drawn to join gangs is the sense of identity and camaraderie provided by these groups. For individuals coming from marginalized or disadvantaged backgrounds, gangs offer a clear sense of purpose and a feeling of belonging to a community or family. In societies where they may feel marginalized or excluded, joining a gang allows them to find acceptance, relationships, and a
shared identity with others who have experienced similar hardships. Gangs often become support systems, providing social networks and a source of validation for individuals who feel overlooked or marginalized.

**Second**, social and economic factors also play a significant role in driving individuals to become gang members. Gangs can offer economic opportunities through involvement in illegal activities that provide financial benefits. For individuals facing limited job prospects, poverty, or systemic barriers, joining a gang may seem like a viable choice to improve their financial situation and gain access to resources they would otherwise be denied. The allure of quick money, material gain, and the promise of a better life can be tempting for those trapped in cycles of poverty and lack of opportunity.

**Third**, intergenerational transmission of gang membership perpetuates the cycle. When parents or other family members are involved in gangs, their lifestyle, values, and social relationships heavily influence the character formation of their descendants. Growing up in an environment where gang involvement is seen as normal, young individuals are exposed to the ideologies and practices associated with gangs from an early age. This exposure can shape their worldview and socialization, making gang membership appear as a natural path to follow. The influence and example set by family members contribute to the mistaken understanding that being a gang member is normal, and the intergenerational cycle continues.

**Fourth**, joining a gang is seen as a way to protect and safeguard one's family and lineage. In certain environments, the presence of a gang can deter external threats, provide a collective response against rival groups, or foster a sense of unity among members, cultivating a feeling of security that they may otherwise lack in their daily lives.

**Fifth**, peer pressure and social influence also play a significant role in the decision to join a gang. Growing up in an environment where gang membership is common, individuals may face intense pressure from their peers to conform and join in order to gain acceptance or avoid social exclusion. The fear of isolation and the desire to be part of a group can be strong motivators, guiding young individuals to make choices they might not otherwise consider.

**The Potential Security Disruption by Motorcycle Gangs in New Zealand.**

The criminal activities carried out by certain groups or gangs in New Zealand are a cause for concern, as these gangs are involved in various criminal acts. Some gangs involved in organized crime in New Zealand include Mongrel Mob, Black Power, Road Knights, Hell's Angels, Outlaws, Bandidos, and Nomads. These motorcycle gangs engage in activities such as drug trafficking, violence, robbery, intimidation, and murder. They also serve as suppliers of illegal firearms and have interests in legitimate businesses such as nightclubs, massage parlors, prostitution, and motorcycle spare parts shops. Some motorcycle gangs also engage in efforts to implement corporate strategies and internationalize to maximize their profits. Additionally, gangs in New Zealand often collaborate in criminal activities with other organized crime groups, such as Asian organized crime groups (Newbold, G., 1997).

These activities have a significant impact on New Zealand society and the government. The criminal activities carried out by these gangs result in financial and social losses for the community and pose a threat to public safety and order. The impact of gang-related criminal activities in New Zealand also includes an increase in crime rates, drug use, and a decline in the quality of life for the community (Broadhurst, et al., 2013).
These impacts can become a source of instability when the two largest gangs in New Zealand, such as Mongrel Mob and Black Power, are involved in inter-group violence, similar to the Yakuza violence in Japan. This is not exempt from happening to the Mongrel Mob and Black Power gangs. Conflicts between Mongrel Mob and Black Power can lead to serious security disruptions. Both gangs are involved in street violence, assaults, and extortion, which can potentially cause injuries or even deaths. This creates a sense of insecurity and concern within the community. Moreover, conflicts between these gangs can also create social instability in the affected areas. Territory and power rivalries between Mongrel Mob and Black Power often result in violence and riots (Kumparan, 2019). This can disrupt the daily lives of the community, hinder community development, and create conflicts between individuals or groups.

Therefore, the impacts that would be felt if these two gangs or other gangs in New Zealand were involved in turmoil can also extend to the economic sector originating from criminal activities, such as drug trafficking and robberies, which can damage the investment and tourism climate. It can create a negative perception of New Zealand, both nationally and internationally. This can affect the country's image, tourism, and future investments (Muhammad, R., 2017).

In addition to the series of criminal activities carried out by gangs in New Zealand, it cannot be denied that there are positive aspects associated with these gangs. It is important to remember that not all motorcycle gang members are involved in criminal activities, and there is variation in the activities and goals of motorcycle gangs in New Zealand. For example, during the most dangerous motorcycle gang in New Zealand, Mongrel Mob, condemned the terrorist shooting incident in Christchurch. Additionally, there are motorcycle gangs in New Zealand that focus on ensuring the safety and security of their members. They promote safe driving awareness through road safety campaigns and responsible rider training programs. In some cases, motorcycle gangs in New Zealand also provide a sense of belonging for individuals who may feel marginalized or lonely. They form supportive communities, offering camaraderie and a sense of ownership that can provide a sense of identity and strength.

The New Zealand Government's Efforts in Social Recognition of Motorcycle Gangs as A Social Community in Order to Maintain National Security

In order to maintain national security in New Zealand, there are three recommended stages for the New Zealand government to address the phenomenon of motorcycle gangs in implementing efforts towards social recognition. These stages include monitoring and assurance, recognition, and integration.

The first stage involves strengthening the intelligence body of New Zealand to comprehensively monitor and ensure the activities of all gang members in the country. However, this does not mean monitoring each individual gang member, but rather focusing on the majority of activities, especially socio-economic aspects, starting from the highest levels such as gang leaders down to the lower hierarchical levels, while also not neglecting the social and economic activities of their immediate and extended families. Therefore, the establishment of a larger, multi-sector and multi-dimensional intelligence body is necessary, beyond the scope of The Gang Harm Insights Centre (GHIC) currently owned by the police.
In this regard, intelligence cooperation among sectors, including the police, military, and various relevant civilian institutions, is crucial. Collaboration from all sectors and dimensions to monitor these gangs is of utmost importance, as only by prioritizing cooperation among all sectors and setting aside sectoral ego can comprehensive monitoring and control of various issues related to these gangs be effectively addressed.

Once the government can ensure that the activities carried out by these gangs are adequately monitored and deemed safe or sufficient according to agreed-upon indicators, or at a level where, after a risk analysis, better policies towards these gang groups can be implemented, the second suggested step is to adopt softer policies that recognize the presence of motorcycle gangs as social communities or organizations within New Zealand society. This recognition will strengthen the social identity of these motorcycle gangs. However, it should be noted that the approach taken by the government in this regard is done legally and indirectly aims to encourage motorcycle gangs towards positive directions.

In the Theory of Social Ecology proposed by Robert E. Park (Park & Burgess, 1925), groups or communities are seen as entities that exist within specific physical and social environments. The existence of a group can be observed through their interaction with the surrounding environment. If the group interacts regularly and has an impact on their environment, it can be concluded that the community or group indeed exists. In this context, the recognition by the New Zealand government of motorcycle gangs as communities is not excessive, as there is evidence showing more dominant positive impacts than negative ones, as will be explained further. However, it should be emphasized that the prerequisite to be met is that in the first suggestion, all indicators must convincingly assure the New Zealand government before recognition can be granted.

The policy of recognizing gangs as communities is believed to contribute significantly to national security in New Zealand. First, with this policy, gangs will receive recognition of their identity and acknowledgment as a community, which can provide dignity and pride for gang members. This can also strengthen their internal solidarity and reduce internal conflicts of interest. Furthermore, this policy will foster closer relationships between gangs and the broader community, enhancing their integration into society.

Second, with this policy, gangs will have the opportunity to actively participate in the activities and decision-making processes of the larger community in a legal and respected manner. They will gain access to the resources, support, and opportunities needed to build, grow, and advance their interests. This provides an opportunity for gangs to contribute positively to community development and allows them to access legal and respected pathways. Therefore, the policy of recognizing gangs as communities is expected to have a positive impact on strengthening national security and providing gangs with the opportunity to play a constructive role in society.

The final stage is for the New Zealand government to embrace gang members. In relation to this approach, we recommend a five-stage approach based on the consideration of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. In this hierarchy, there are five human needs that serve as motivations: physiological needs, safety and security, love and belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943).

Below are the photos of the interview and group discussion conducted via a Zoom meeting with the Director of The Toda Peace Institute - Professor Kevin Paul Clements.
From these five needs, it can be quoted that the physiological, safety and security, and love and belongingness needs have been fulfilled for gang members through their membership and activities within the gang (Gilbert, 2010; Taonui & Newbold, 2016; Breetzke, Curtis-Ham, Gilbert, & Tibby, 2022). However, concerning the need for self-esteem (particularly self-respect), this need is not fully met. Although gang members have confidence and receive respect from fellow gang members that they take pride in, it all dissipates when they are compared to ordinary members of society who are seen as accomplished. From the beginning, except for a few individuals with exceptional mental strength, they are aware that as gang members, they are no longer seen as normal New Zealand citizens, and in the eyes of law enforcement, they will be considered prime culprits regardless of whether they are involved in illegal activities or not.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the presence of motorcycle gangs in New Zealand poses significant security challenges. These gangs engage in various criminal activities, including drug trafficking, violence, robbery, intimidation, and murder. They also contribute to the illegal arms trade and have interests in legitimate businesses such as nightclubs, massage parlors, prostitution, and motorcycle spare parts shops.

The impact of these gangs on New Zealand society and the government is significant. Their criminal activities cause financial and social losses to the community and threaten public safety and order. Moreover, they often collaborate with other organized crime groups, further exacerbating the security situation. Although motorcycle gangs have garnered negative stigma, it is important to highlight their involvement in protecting mosques during the Christchurch conflict, showcasing a different side of these gangs. Therefore, this article provides three stages of recommendations to the New Zealand government: surveillance and assurance, recognition, and engagement. These stages aim to harness the presence of motorcycle gangs while ensuring national security in New Zealand.

Therefore, this article suggests three stages for the New Zealand government to consider in order to harness the presence of motorcycle gangs while ensuring national security in New Zealand. The first stage is supervision and assurance, where the government should implement robust monitoring and oversight mechanisms to keep track of gang activities. This can involve increased law enforcement efforts, intelligence gathering, and surveillance to identify and prevent criminal actions. The second stage is recognition, where the government acknowledges the positive contributions and potential of motorcycle gangs. This can include engaging in dialogue with gang leaders and members, understanding their motivations and goals, and identifying areas where collaboration can be beneficial. Recognizing the efforts of responsible motorcycle gangs and promoting their positive initiatives can help channel their energy towards constructive activities. The third stage is integration, where the government works towards integrating motorcycle gangs into society in a productive and lawful manner. This can involve providing support and resources for rehabilitation programs, education and
vocational training, and community development initiatives. By offering opportunities for gang members to transition into legal employment and contribute positively to their communities, the government can help reduce the influence of criminal activities and promote social cohesion. By implementing these three stages, the New Zealand government can navigate the complex dynamics of motorcycle gangs, utilizing their potential while ensuring national security. It requires a balanced approach that addresses both the negative aspects of gang activities and the potential for positive change within these groups.

In addition, the government needs to enhance law enforcement efforts to tackle criminal gangs. This includes increasing the number of police officers, providing adequate equipment, and allocating resources for effective investigations. Additionally, the government can adopt a preventive approach by improving education and awareness about the dangers and consequences of involvement in criminal gang activities. This can be done through public campaigns, school programs, and collaborations with educational institutions and communities. By doing so, the security and well-being of New Zealand will continue to be upheld.

It is expected that this research will be beneficial for Indonesia in addressing similar phenomena that occur in the country, such as the motorbike mugging (begal motor) which currently troubles Indonesian society. With this research, it is also hoped to contribute insights and recommendations to the Indonesian government on appropriate and suitable approaches to tackle the issue of motorbike gangs in Indonesia

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