

# Conclusion: Toward a More Comprehensive and Community-based Approach to Public Security

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As Mexico continues to struggle with the twin problems of organized crime-related violence and the imposition of the rule of law, the government of President Enrique Peña Nieto has continued to employ similar tactics to that of his predecessor, Felipe Calderón. Tackling surges of violence head-on, the Mexican government has used security forces to eliminate or capture leading figures in the organized crime world. The most dramatic of these was, of course, the arrest of drug trafficker and fugitive Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán in February of 2014. It follows other high-level arrests, including that of Miguel Angel Treviño (aka Z-40) the year before; the Peña Nieto administration is conveying that the targeted disruption of organized crime groups remains a central axis of the government’s strategy.

At the same time, despite such spectacular law enforcement successes, it is ever clearer that this tactic will not be enough. In addition, community-based approaches are of critical importance in securing a long-term solution to the challenge. In the short-term, the effective exercise of legitimate force by the state may be needed to stabilize a given situation and address immediate threats to public security. But in the long term, a more integrated and comprehensive approach to making society more resistant to crime and violence and better able to react to spikes in criminal activity is essential to ensuring the enduring rule of law.

These two points were made abundantly clear in early 2014 with the outbreak of violence in Michoacán, brought on by the activities of self-defense groups (*grupos de autodefensa*) in response to a collapse in the state-level security apparatus and the rising power of the Caballeros Templarios, or “Knights Templar,” organized crime group. In the absence of an adequate state response, communities in Michoacán felt that they had little choice but to arm themselves and take on organized crime directly. The crisis highlighted not only the weakness of state- and local-level institutions in Michoacán, but also the fact that society has been seriously weakened through migration, poverty, lack of investment in infrastructure, education, and social services, and by a generalized anomie. The continuing breakdown of law and order in the state of Michoacán and several other parts of the country highlights both the problem of organized crime and the need for a strong government that is supported by resilient communities.

## COMMUNITIES IN SEARCH OF SECURITY

As security expert Phil Williams noted at a security roundtable hosted by the United Nations Office of Drug Control Policy in Mexico City in the fall of 2013, politicians and the public approach matters of “security” with divergent objectives because the concept of security varies depending on one’s point of view. When we address the question at the global level, for international organizations and great powers the matter of security often hinges on topics like reducing nuclear proliferation or other forms of conflict among states, such as cyberspying or defending territorial waters. Such threats violate the basic notions of state sovereignty that have governed the international system since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648.

At the national level, a country’s leaders are typically more concerned with internal threats against the state, which the great sociologist Max Weber described as threats to a state’s “monopoly on the legitimate use of force,” such as the powerful organized crime groups that Mexico has faced in recent years, or insurgent forces that seek to topple the government.

Yet, while the above issues occupy much of the real estate on the front pages, they often have little meaning or importance for ordinary people and communities. As bad as rates of violent crime have become in Mexico, the average person is still more likely to die from car accidents or preventable illnesses—particularly self-inflicted diseases such as cardiovascular disease, cirrhosis, or diabetes—than a bullet from a drug trafficker. From a “human security” or “citizen security” perspective, then, most Mexicans (and U.S. citizens, as well) should be more afraid of a cheeseburger and a soda than organized crime groups.

Yet, for a significant segment of the population—for certain communities—this is certainly not the case. Those sitting comfortably at the chic restaurant tables of the Condesa-Roma District in Mexico City face far fewer threats to their immediate existence than those living in Mexico’s most marginalized communities, where crime and violence is too often the most proximate cause of death. This is one of the most important aspects of violence in Mexico. As is made clear by several authors in this collection, while there are certainly random victims of violence, in the aggregate the violence is not randomly distributed.

For example, violent crime has become *the* major security threat for men aged 18–40 over the last decade, as illustrated by the Mexico Health Atlas unveiled recently at the UCSD Center for U.S.–Mexican Studies by Alberto Díaz Cayeros, Melissa Floca, and Micah Gell-Redman.<sup>1</sup> As a result, far too many young, poor Mexican men will not have the “luxury” of death by disease because their lives will be cut short by violence. As posited in another study by José Merino, Jessica

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It would be foolhardy for the Mexican state to ignore the problem of violent crime, and especially the community-based roots and societal factors that shape this problem. As the authors in this volume have clearly illustrated, the state is not enough, and a greater focus on civil society and communities is needed to turn the tide.

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Zarkin, and Eduardo Fierro, young Mexican men—and a growing number of Mexican women—are three times more likely to die a violent death than in Honduras, the most violent country in the hemisphere.<sup>2</sup>

In short, as illustrated by numerous studies and analyses, including the Mexico Peace Index published recently by Vision of Humanity, Mexico's security situation has seriously deteriorated on a wide range of measures over the last decade, especially those which affect the vulnerable populations noted above.<sup>3</sup> As a result, it would be foolhardy for the Mexican state to ignore the problem of violent crime, and especially the community-based roots and societal factors that shape this problem. As the authors in this volume have clearly illustrated, the state is not enough, and a greater focus on civil society and communities is needed to turn the tide.

## TURNING TO COMMUNITY RESILIENCE IN THE PEÑA NIETO ADMINISTRATION

With Mexico's transition to a new administration under Peña Nieto in December 2012, many watched and wondered whether the return of the former ruling party to the presidency could improve Mexico's security situation. While it would be naive to think that a change in administration could reverse long-term trends in just a few hundred days, the situation was widely considered urgent and expectations were extremely high at the outset of his term. Peña Nieto had made several bold promises while on the campaign trail in 2012, including the claim that his administration would cut violence by 50 percent during his first year in office.<sup>4</sup>

To be sure, it would have been much wiser to temper expectations. Mexico's elevated rates of violent crime started rising well before Calderón took office in December 2006. In an effort to address the problem, Calderón launched

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2 José Merino, Jessica Zarkin, and Eduardo Fierro, "Marcado para morir." Nexos. July 1, 2013. <http://www.nexos.com.mx/?p=15375>

3 *Mexico Peace Index*. New York: Institute for Economics & Peace, 2013. <http://visionofhumanity.org/sites/default/files/Mexico%20Peace%20Index%202013.pdf>

4 "Peña Nieto quiere reducir en un 50% el número de homicidios," ADNPolítico, <http://www.adnpolitico.com/gobierno/2012/10/13/pena-nieto-quiere-reducir-en-un-50-el-numero-de-homicidios>.

an all-out war on drugs that many security experts believe exacerbated the violence by splintering Mexico's cartels into smaller, less predictable, and more dangerous organized crime groups. As a result, Peña Nieto inherited a country with a serious security threat or, really, dual security threats—both in terms of national security and citizen security.

Among the flashy policy measures Peña Nieto announced at the start of his term—a National gendarmerie and a consultancy for Colombia's top cop—there was little in the way of substance. Indeed, for most of the last year, it has seemed as though Peña Nieto has had no security strategy. Yet, there are, in fact, some very perceptible and consequential shifts in his approach. As Alejandro Hope has pointed out in a recent article in *Nexos* magazine, the Peña Nieto administration has made a deliberate effort to shift the narrative away from problems of crime and violence. An important part of this effort has been to limit commentary and access to public information on security matters. Whereas the Calderón administration was obsessed with security, Peña Nieto has been obsessed with *not* being obsessed with security. An aggressive media campaign has tried to make Mexico the new darling of international investors, as the BRIC countries have begun to lose their luster.

In addition to his efforts to change the narrative, Peña Nieto has also made an effort to re-centralize control over security policy. When he came into office, the president promised more coordination of security matters with state governors than under his predecessor. With two-thirds of Mexican governors coming from his Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), that was an easy promise to keep. The question that many have posited is whether that coordination implied a return to the “bad old days” when PRI governors coddled drug traffickers and “controlled” organized crime by lining their own pockets with bribes. It may be too soon to tell, but a 2013 U.S. indictment of former PRI Gov. Tomás Yarrington underscores this question.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, greater centralization could also play the role of enhancing accountability and ensuring coherence in security strategies, something that is sorely needed.

This points to another, perhaps unexpected change under Peña Nieto: continuity in the U.S.-Mexican security relationship across administrations. Over the last year, U.S.-Mexico security cooperation has experienced significant setbacks. At the outset, the Peña Nieto administration insisted that Mexico's cooperation with the United States on security matters would be reined back and managed through the single “ticket window” (*ventanilla única*) of Mexico's Interior Ministry. Yet, over the last year, pressure from other federal and state-level agencies has seemingly led to a softening of this policy of centralization. Many aspects of cooperation have continued, in part because of the close ties and tremendous interdependence

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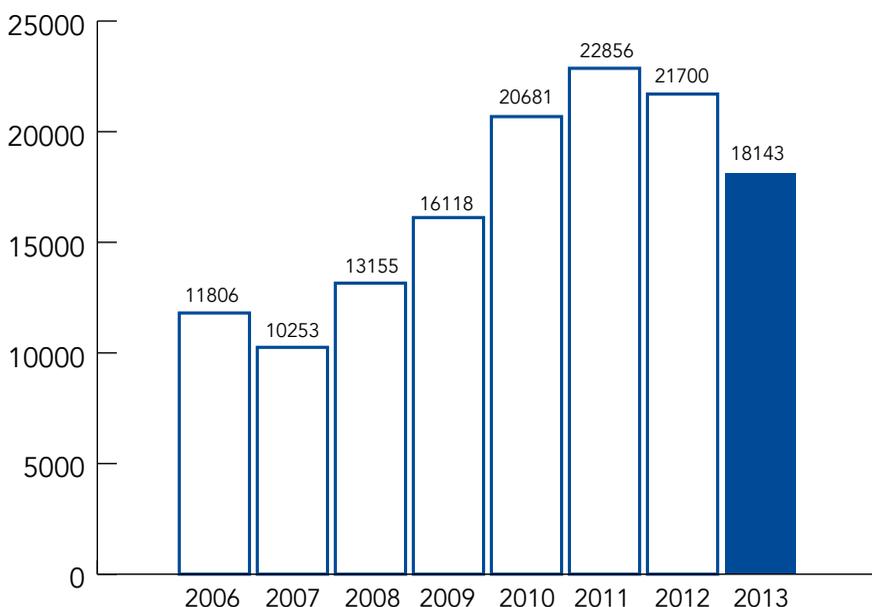
5 Cory Molzahn, Octavio Rodriguez Ferreira, and David A. Shirk, *Drug Violence in Mexico: Data and Analysis Through 2012*, Justice in Mexico Project (San Diego: University of San Diego Trans-Border Institute 2013), <http://justiceinmexico.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/130206-dvm-2013-final.pdf>.

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that has developed between U.S. and Mexican law enforcement agencies working toward common objectives. Indeed, such cooperation helped Peña Nieto take down the head of the Zetas, Mexico's most notorious and violent drug cartel, as well as key leaders in the Gulf Cartel.

Ultimately, the key question is whether the current government's efforts have actually been accompanied by a decrease in violence. The answer is a qualified "yes." While violence appears to have declined somewhat under Peña Nieto, it definitely did not go away. Last year, the Justice in Mexico Project's annual report on drug violence in Mexico found that violent homicides probably reached a peak in 2010 and 2011, and began to decline significantly in 2012.<sup>6</sup> Thanks to a significant drop in violence in places like Tijuana, Monterrey, and Ciudad Juárez, the number of homicides in Mexico dropped by the thousands. This trend has continued in 2013, and in the final analysis will likely result in a slight reduction in Mexico's overall homicide rate compared with the previous year, perhaps as much as 20 percent, but not quite what Peña Nieto had hoped for (See Figure 1).

**FIGURE 1: OFFICIALLY REGISTERED INTENTIONAL HOMICIDES 2006–2013**



Source: Data from Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública (SNSP) compiled by Justice in Mexico ([www.justiceinmexico.org](http://www.justiceinmexico.org)).

<sup>6</sup> "Mexico ex-governor Tomas Yarrington faces cartel charges," BBC, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-25198417>.

Regardless, now is certainly not the time to celebrate. As Eduardo Guerrero has made clear, violence remains a persistent problem in Mexico.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, violence has increased dramatically in certain categories and especially in certain parts of the country. Kidnapping and extortion are a growing concern, and rising crime and violence from organized crime groups and self-defense forces in Michoacán and Guerrero have become a mounting preoccupation in the Peña Nieto era.

Also, while Peña Nieto has tried earnestly to shift the narrative away from drugs and organized crime, there is no getting around these issues. The best available estimates suggest that organized crime accounts for between 45 percent and 60 percent of all homicides in Mexico.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, even if the global drug prohibition regime were to collapse entirely over the coming years—as both activists and world leaders have increasingly called for—Mexico’s organized crime groups will continue to present a serious threat through kidnapping, racketeering, and other violent forms of organized crime.

## WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

One area where the Mexican government faces an immediate challenge is in bolstering the limited capacity of the Mexican state to address the security threats it presently faces. While economic development and education are needed to move Mexico forward in the long run, the country faces a real and present danger in the form of organized crime. Unfortunately, Mexico’s judicial sector is exceedingly weak. Police salaries of \$7,000 to \$8,000 a year are below the average for public sector employees, and Mexico largely gets what it pays for: police that are under-trained, poorly motivated, and highly corruptible. In the fall of 2013, the Peña Nieto administration made an important start by channeling millions of dollars into state and local police forces through federal grant programs. However, further monitoring and analysis will be needed to ensure that these funds are being used properly and effectively to improve crime prevention and police response capability.

Also, Mexico’s courts remain woefully inefficient in processing criminal cases, and the slow pace of reforms passed in 2008 means that only 633 of Mexico’s 2,400-plus municipalities have adopted new procedures that will help to modernize the criminal justice system. With a constitutionally imposed deadline to implement these reforms by 2016, Peña Nieto pushed forward an initiative in early 2013 to introduce a uniform code of criminal procedure in all 31 states and the Federal District. This measure was approved in the Mexican Congress in February 2014, though there are many aspects of the secondary legislation that need to be resolved before the new code can be implemented, as well as lingering questions about whether a single code is the best approach to deal with Mexico’s widely

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7 Eduardo Guerrero, “Después de la Guerra,” *Nexos*, December 1, 2013.

8 Molzahn, Rodriguez, Shirk, *Drug Violence*.

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varying state and local legal contexts. What no one has quite figured out is how to effectively monitor and measure the impact of judicial sector reform in Mexico, since there are few good metrics, almost no baseline indicators, and many different variables at play.

Nonetheless, in the long run, a more comprehensive approach to addressing the macro-level causes of crime and violence—such as promoting job growth, investing in education, and fostering social development programs (e.g., after school sports programs)—will go a long way toward reducing the threats to both the Mexican state and ordinary Mexicans. Improving security in Mexico—security for all Mexicans—requires action on addressing the long-term socioeconomic problems that keep nearly half of its people living in poverty and create incentives to enter the informal economy and illicit markets.

In its first year in office, the Peña Nieto government pushed forward a wide range of long-languishing reforms to fiscal, energy, and education policy that even his political opposition believes are necessary to move Mexico forward. Better education and more jobs are both key to keeping people out of the illicit economy that sustains Mexico's criminal underworld. More government revenue, properly collected and expended, will bring Mexico better police, courts, and—ultimately—security. The devil is, of course, in the details, and many knowledgeable observers rightly claim that the government's reforms have been too diluted by the legislative process to provide the medicine that Mexico urgently needs to cure its woes on these fronts. Whether he has the right solutions to Mexico's security crisis, Peña Nieto has at least begun to refocus the country's efforts on fixing the macro-level problems that contribute to the un-rule of law in Mexico.

Increased investment, higher employment levels, and greater prosperity will clearly be crucial in building a more secure Mexico, but it will not be enough in the short- to medium-term. Engaging with society, and harnessing the insights, knowledge, and capacities of the Mexican population, particularly those directly affected by organized crime, will be essential to achieve success by any meaningful measure. The government of Enrique Peña Nieto has explicitly recognized this through the creation of the Department of Crime Prevention and Citizen Participation within the Interior Ministry. The undersecretary in charge of the ministry, Roberto Campa, is a well-respected academic who has been able to effectively convey the government's message that preventing crime and violence is just as important as addressing the phenomena once they have occurred.

However, as might be expected, there were significant start-up challenges for the new agency. During the first year of the government, the SubSecretaría de Prevención y Participación Ciudadana (Department of Crime Prevention and Citizen Participation) spent only a fraction of its assigned budget, and appeared to lack any rigorous methodology for choosing projects or for evaluating impact. While it is extremely important that Campa's Programa Nacional para la Prevención Social de la Violencia y la Delincuencia (National Program for the Social Prevention of Violence and Crime, or PNPSVD) evolve into a more significant element in the government's strategy, at the time of writing it remained underdeveloped and has yet to make a real impact. If it is to be successful promoting community resilience, the Peña Nieto administration will need to work to sustain its focus on and support for prevention, and should work to develop a more clearly articulated strategy of community engagement in this area.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN PUBLIC SECURITY STRATEGY

A priority of this work has been to help to understand the interaction between society and public security. In many parts of Mexico, and on many occasions over the past seven years, a weak social fabric has been identified as a major contributing factor in the breakdown of public security and rising levels of violence. The most commonly cited case of this is, of course, Ciudad Juárez, and the breakdown of law and order that preceded even the narco-battles of recent years. While this principle has been widely discussed by scholars of Mexican public security, the definition of "community resilience" has not been a central feature of the focus on Mexico, nor has attention centered on the relationship between community resilience and their reaction to breakdowns of public security.

As we explain in the introduction, drawing on the literature from sociology and ecology, the concept of resilience goes beyond the notion of "strength" insofar as it refers not only to preventing stresses, breakdown, and harm but, more important, to the capacity to adapt to stress and adversity, and return to health. In this sense we treat communities in an organic fashion, viewing them as capable of adaptation and evolution. Drawing on the work of Godschalk (2003), several dimensions of resilience are identified, including strength, self-sufficiency, inner-dependence, redundancy, perceptivity, diffusivity, diversity, and flexibility. Based on the evidence in this book, of these elements self-sufficiency, inner-dependence, perceptivity, diffusivity, and flexibility appear to be especially important.

However, it is clear that communities do not develop these qualities in isolation from public authorities. Although civil society and the private sector mobilization is crucial in building community resilience, it can rarely be successful in the absence of either a government that facilitates their activities, or one that responds

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to their initiatives. Throughout this volume the accounts of community resilience emphasize that a responsive government is needed to maximize the positive effects of civic activism. By the same token, the collection of accounts in this book show that civic engagement is a key function for government, and that government strategy enacted in the absence of engagement with the community is unlikely to solve public security challenges beyond the short term.

Continuing in this vein, Matthew Ingram's chapter draws on literature from the disciplines of public health, sociology, and criminology to examine how some municipalities and neighborhoods may be better able to prevent and reduce violence. His emphasis on education and prosperity is put in comparative perspective, showing that each community exists not in a vacuum but rather in a local context that is defined by relative prosperity and unemployment levels. This is a significant contribution of the book, establishing concrete policy implications for decision-makers. In addition to strengthening local programs aimed at improving employment levels and educational standards, Ingram's work points to the importance of studying conditions in neighboring communities. Rather than solely focusing on the problems of the community or neighborhood that is afflicted by violence, therefore, a more organic understanding of the relationship between communities and those that surround them is required. Whereas improved education is a positive factor for all communities, improving prosperity and employment levels in one community may actually be counterproductive if similar programs are not enacted in surrounding municipalities.

Specifically, Ingram argues that when income and prosperity increases in surrounding communities, violence decreases in the central community. Inversely, deteriorating economic conditions in neighboring communities may generate higher levels of violence in the central community. Taken together, these insights have two main policy implications. First, adjacent communities have "a mutual interest in growing economically, and in doing so at relatively the same rate." Second, public policies should be mixed in nature, both aimed at the regional, rather than merely the local level, and targeted at specific communities.

These general observations about the importance of community-based approaches to address public security challenges are supremely helpful when placed alongside the remaining chapters of this volume. Steven Dudley and Sandra Rodríguez Nieto suggest five specific policy implications in Chapter 3. First, they argue, it is important to involve multiple stakeholders in society in the security process. As they point out,

“the larger the combination of actors, the greater the chance of mobilizing enough political force and will to gain access” to the policy-making process. Second, they make the point that, in order for civil society to have an impact, it must first exist and be strong enough to interact effectively with government. Third, a strong and active civil society must be matched by political will from the highest levels of government, or its potential to help public security will remain untapped. Fourth, there should be a dynamic interaction between the official security forces and civil society, for information exchange, confidence building, and effectiveness. Lastly, the role for civil society must be defined clearly. As the authors emphasize, there will be some topics that remain outside of the purview of civil society, but sensitive issues such as human rights and police behavior should be addressed openly.

Building on these observations and proposals, Nathan Jones argues in Chapter 4 that the Mexican government must address the socioeconomic causes of youth gang involvement. This can be done, he argues, by investing in economic development, employment training, and education. In addition, drawing on the experience of Central America, Jones argues that increased positive government engagement with gangs is required to both better understand the phenomenon and to provide nonviolent options for conflict resolution. Facilitating dialogue between gangs, between gangs and civil society, and between youth and police would greatly help this effort.

Beyond these general observations about the causes of public insecurity, it is clear that civil society mobilization has been a key component in shaping the response of Mexican society to the violence that has afflicted it over the past eight years. In Chapter 5, Lauren Villagran examines the role that victims’ movements have played in Mexico in raising the profile of and consciousness of unreported crimes. Villagran points out that the victims’ movement is impressively diverse, employing a wide variety of tools to raise public awareness of violent crime and to pressure the government to respond. Of central importance in this story is the development, approval of, and reform to a General Law of Victims in Mexico. The active engagement of different victims’ groups was crucial to the writing, passage, and reform of the law and, just as important, to changing public perceptions of the victims of crime. Ending the stigmatization of victims in Mexico has been a major achievement for the victims’ movement, and radically alters the ways in which they are viewed by their peers and by the authorities.

The policy lessons from Villagran’s account center on the need to consult with society and to directly involve those affected by crime in the design of legislation aimed at helping them. Though this may appear to be stating the obvious, it is still a novel

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concept in Mexico. The traditionally paternalistic attitude of Mexican governments has meant that public policy has been made without meaningful input from society.

Emily Edmonds-Poli's chapter highlights the multiple challenges to freedom of expression encountered by journalists covering drug-related violence in Mexico. Focusing on the need for coordination between media owners, journalists, and government, Edmonds-Poli offers a number of concrete policy proposals. First she calls on the government to take the issue of threats against journalists seriously, and to devote sufficient resources and attention to existing mechanism for their protection. Second, she calls on the media industry to take measures to ensure a more secure working environment for journalists and to pressure the government more effectively to ensure that authorities pay attention. The role of civil society groups as watchdogs is fundamental here, to complement and bolster government efforts. Last, Edmonds-Poli recognizes the importance of pressure from foreign governments, international media, and global civil society in pressuring the Mexican government to do more to ensure journalist protection.

One of the most important actors in mobilizing public and governmental responses to organized crime has been private enterprise. Lucy Conger's account of the role of the private sector in both Ciudad Juárez and Monterrey highlights its crucial role in financing and coordinating crime prevention strategies. One of the most important elements has been the capacity of top CEOs to speak directly with senior government officials and to call on them for support. If such support is not forthcoming, business can employ a strategy of shaming government (particularly at the local and state level), through public campaigns denouncing corruption and shady practices to force its hand. Conger's chapter also points to the central importance of the private sector as an alternative to the government in engaging with communities and mobilizing civil society groups. In particular, the "Consejo Cívico" and "Mesa de Seguridad" models have been instrumental in coordinating diverse interests and points of view. The clear implication here is for government to consult more closely with business throughout the country, and for business to actively engage with civil society.

Octavio Rodríguez's contribution to this volume centers on the role of civil society in pushing and shaping the justice reform process. Rodríguez suggests constructive directions for both civil society and government, as well as for international actors. Civil society must adopt a more proactive approach, engaging with policy makers preemptively rather than waiting to be consulted and must directly address the shortcomings of the reform as it stands today. Civil society

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groups must also work harder to raise social awareness of the reform process so that those who come into contact with the justice system are conscious of their options, and what is lacking in the current system. For government, Rodríguez proposes promoting civic engagement, welcoming dialogue with those critics and opponents of the reform, and the strengthening of civil society as an essential bolster to government efforts. At the international level, Rodríguez recognizes the importance for both civil society and government to engage with foreign governments and nongovernmental organizations, but calls on those actors to be aware of Mexican sensibilities and to respect national efforts while at the same time pushing for their improvement.

The final substantive chapter of this work focuses on the interaction between the police and civil society groups. Daniel Sabet emphasizes the importance of community engagement and the “co-production” of security in society. A central concept here is building trust in the police by closer consultation with society and greater transparency. At the same time, Sabet argues that citizen observatories, although there are only a handful of successful examples to date, should be strengthened and spread throughout the country as a check on police abuse, incompetence, and corruption.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Understanding public insecurity as a result not only of the breakdown of law and order due to organized crime, but also due to a weakened social fabric and lack of economic opportunities, has become a mainstream idea in Mexico. This book, while embracing this perspective, argues that resilient communities are not only better able to prevent the breakdown of security but also to react more effectively when that happens. Thanks to insights drawn from the social and environmental sciences, we have argued that stronger communities will be more effective allies for the authorities in trying to maintain or re-establish the rule of law.

A call for the strengthening of civil society is a common factor throughout the chapters in this volume. Whether victims' movements, journalist protection groups, civic councils, private sector associations or citizen observatories, government efforts to counter organized crime will benefit from closer collaboration with fortified community-based organizations. This consultation, however, will not be easy or smooth. Governments, whether municipal, state or federal, will come in for criticism

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from these groups, and will need to work hard to establish trust in their relations.

Transparency and a willingness to accept errors and criticism will assist greatly, but ultimately it will be the reduction of corruption and collusion with organized crime by authorities and the effective reduction of crime that will convince civil society that the government is a reliable partner. The successful implementation of judicial reform across the length and breadth of the country by 2016 would be a major step in the right direction, as would the reform of police forces. A closer dialogue with the military is not an issue that has been addressed in this book, but the increase in human rights complaints against the armed forces during the Calderón presidency points to the need to consider this option, as difficult as it may be given the military's traditionally closed attitude.

International actors have a clear role to play in encouraging this process of civic engagement. Sponsoring studies, training both public officials and citizens groups, and encouraging forums for dialogue are some ways in which foreign actors may constructively engage in Mexico. However, the openness of the Calderón years to diverse foreign interaction has been replaced with a desire on the part of the Enrique Peña Nieto administration to centralize control of public security and of engagement with foreign governments. The single window for security assistance may be a useful tool in making such aid more effective; however, it will limit the ability of agencies such as USAID to work with a wide variety of government actors at multiple levels. Fortunately, the Peña Nieto administration has shown some appreciation for the need to take a more open approach and to be adaptive in response to complex and dynamic problems. In part because of the important role that international cooperation has played for officials, agencies, and community organizations working at the subnational level, it seems likely that any bilateral effort to foster resilient communities necessarily requires a fairly decentralized, locally inclusive approach.

Ultimately, the explicit recognition by the current Mexican government of the need to strengthen the fabric of society to improve crime and violence prevention is an encouraging sign. What is now needed is a more dynamic interaction with society and stakeholders to improve that process and to help heal communities already affected by the breakdown of the rule of law. Ultimately, the key to resilience is to empower communities to demand more from their representatives. We hope that the insights drawn from the research in this book will serve to inform future efforts to promote the development and strengthening of resilient communities both in terms of U.S.-Mexico efforts and in other contexts.

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