



Civil Society, the Government and the Development of Citizen Security

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Brief Project Description

This Working Paper is the product of a joint project on civic engagement and public security in Mexico coordinated by the Mexico Institute at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and the University of San Diego. As part of the project, a number of research papers have been commissioned that analyze the range of civic engagement experiences taking place in Mexico to strengthen the rule of law and increase security in the face of organized crime violence. Together the commissioned papers will form the basis of a future edited volume. All papers, along with other background information and analysis, can be accessed online at the webpage of the Mexico Institute and are copyrighted to the author.

The views of the author do not represent an official position of the Woodrow Wilson Center or of the University of San Diego. For questions related to the project, for media inquiries, or if you would like to contact the author, please contact Duncan Wood at 202-691-4086 or via email at duncan.wood@wilsoncenter.org.

Abstract

This paper dissects the attempts, with varying degrees of success, of civil society and business associations to interact with authorities on security issues in four Mexican cities: Juarez, Monterrey, Nuevo Laredo and Tijuana.

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Executive Summary

This paper explores how civil society organizations have interacted with government authorities and security forces in four Mexican cities where violence and organized crime have been on the rise. The four cities – Ciudad Juárez, Monterrey, Nuevo Laredo and Tijuana – have many shared characteristics, the most important of which are that they are all border cities, and that they are all facing down extremely violent criminal organizations.

Despite these similarities, civil society's ability to interact effectively with the government and security forces has varied widely. The paper is broken down by city in order to better assess each attempt individually. In each section, the authors give background to the problem, a profile of the civil society organizations present, a description of their attempts to interact with the government and security forces, and an assessment of the successes and failures of those attempts.

These attempts are ongoing, but to advance the discussion, the authors offer the following key observations from their research:

- Civil society organizations are strongest when they combine various sectors of society, stretch across political parties and have solid, independent voices.
- Local authorities are the key to more security, but civil society actors need the support of federal level politicians to achieve the highest levels of interaction and effectiveness.
- It is necessary to involve security forces directly in these interactions in order for there to be any broad, long-term security gains for the civilian populace.
- Civil society works best with government when its role is clearly defined at the earliest stages with the government and security force interlocutors.

Introduction

In 1995, the Mexican government passed the National Security law. In it, the government stipulated that the “authorities will establish efficient mechanisms so society may participate in the planning and supervision of public security.”¹ The law has gone through some alterations since, but it has essentially maintained its integrity over the years. What’s more, state governments have mandated similar interactions with civil society.

The law predated much of the violence the country is currently experiencing and was supposed to open the way for more direct citizen participation in matters of security. This law, however, largely failed to promote citizen participation. There are few areas in which there are so-called “security councils,” the mechanism created to channel civil society’s views on these matters; even fewer where they are functioning well. In short, the citizens, if they would like to interact with governments, have had to tackle these matters by combining the power of non-governmental and business organizations and pressuring for a voice via public displays of dissatisfaction.

This paper is designed to explore how citizens have fared in their efforts and how governments have responded to them, especially in times of great stress. In the broadest sense, the paper is designed to give an overview of the interactions on security issues between Mexican civil society and the various levels of government. Specifically, it will explore civic engagement on security issues in four cities: Ciudad Juárez, Tijuana, Nuevo Laredo and Monterrey.

These cities are vital economic motors. They are also “border cities,” deriving much of their economic activity from their geography. Nuevo Laredo has the most commercial traffic on the U.S.-Mexico border; Tijuana is the most dynamic, with more people crossing than any other place. Monterrey is the country’s industrial capital; Juárez remains the epicenter of Mexico’s maquiladora industry.

In the last six years, these cities have each faced rapidly rising violence and crime. Homicide rates reflect this dynamic but only scratch the surface of the problem. In all four cities, there was a steady rise in car theft, armed robberies, kidnappings and extortion. In Juárez and Tijuana, this trend has ebbed somewhat, but remains a persistent problem, and there are worries that recent security gains may not be sustainable. It is less clear whether Monterrey and Nuevo Laredo have yet reached their peaks in terms of criminal activity and violence.

The causes of this spike in crime are numerous. However, crime watchers, public officials and criminal investigators say it is mostly related to disputes amongst the various factions of organized crime groups. Among them are traditional “cartels” such as the Sinaloa, Juárez, Gulf and Tijuana organizations; non-traditional organizations such as the Zetas and La Línea; and well-organized street gangs such as the Aztecas. Deciphering the reasons behind this fighting is not the subject of this paper. The authors, however, will break down the dynamics in each city in an attempt to understand how these dynamics may affect civil society engagement with the government on citizen security issues.

The social and economic impacts of this criminal activity are enormous. The violence has led hundreds of professionals to flee these areas. Housing prices have collapsed as entire areas have

¹ “General Law that establishes the Bases for Coordination of the National Security System,” from the Diario Oficial, December 11, 1995. (http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/abro/lgbcnsnp/LGBCNSNP_orig_11dic95.pdf)

been abandoned. Unemployment has risen to more than 6 percent in Chihuahua, Tamaulipas and Baja California, turning those states into the three national leaders of unemployment.²

Yet the relationship between these cities and criminal activity is also complex. Some of the same reasons that make these areas appealing to legitimate businesses have made them strategic areas of operation for the illicit actors as well. The mass movements of people and cargo across the borders, for instance, provide ready camouflage for illicit goods moving north, and cash and weapons moving south. Licit and illicit businesses have run parallel and have regularly overlapped, complicating, at times, civic engagement on the issue of security and dividing some communities.

The result has been an uneven response to the violence by civil society groups in all of these cities. In the broadest sense – and with varying degrees of success – these “civilian” actors have pushed for more “security.” In some cases, they have achieved some direct interaction, which has led to quantifiable results. In many cases, however, they have remained on the margins, either because of their own inability to effectively organize themselves into a coherent, collective voice, or because of the various governments’ unwillingness to open the communications channels and work directly with them.

There is, to be frank, limited organized civic engagement on the issue of security. And most of what there is appears to happen because of personal and political contacts. Institutional engagement is rare. Institutional commitment is rarer still. The engagement, it seems, is more often dependent on the whims of the political leaders than the effectiveness of the civilian actors.

This paper is not meant to be a comprehensive study but rather an overview of these cities’ attempts to create channels of communication between civil society and government actors that lead to more citizen security. Other papers in this series will delve deeper into some of these areas. With this in mind, the paper is divided by city and broken down to include: (1) background on the area and the criminal dynamic; (2) profile of the civil society actors involved and their means of engagement; (3) a brief assessment of the effectiveness of this engagement. The paper concludes with some general thoughts on how to create more effective, participative and deeper engagement on the part of civil society and the government.

² Statistics retrieved from website of the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI), March 15, 2013. (<http://www.inegi.org.mx>)

Ciudad Juárez

Background

Ciudad Juárez is Mexico's maquiladora capital. Three in every ten maquiladora workers lives in Juárez.³ It has experienced several booms in economic activity, the most recent occurring in the 2000s in which close to 300 maquiladora factories established operations. Between 1990 and 2000, the city's population grew from 798,499 to more than 1.1 million. Juárez was not prepared for the boom. The city's social services could not keep pace with the explosion in population. Schools became overcrowded. Health services collapsed. Street gangs emerged en masse. As many 300 were identified in the 1990s. That number is now closer to 900.⁴

Criminal organizations have long sought to take advantage of Juárez's strategic position along the border, its burgeoning economic activity and its fertile recruiting ground. Its sister city in the US, El Paso, sits at the crossroads between the Eastern and Western United States: a 10-hour drive to Los Angeles; a 20-hour drive to Chicago; a 30-hour drive to New York.

The most famous of these criminal groups was the Carrillo Fuentes organization, aka the Juárez Cartel (Cartel de Juárez – CDJ). The CDJ was comprised of mostly transplanted Sinaloans who had arrived in the 1980s while drug trafficking organizations in Mexico were still relatively small. The CDJ helped change that: using commercial, governmental and private aircraft, the CDJ made Juárez a key transit point for cocaine from South America to cross into the United States.

Following the death of its founder in 1997, the CDJ has gone through various stages, the most recent of which included the integration of an armed wing of current and ex-police known as La Línea, and a sophisticated prison gang known as the Aztecas.⁵ The use of these two armed factions came as a result of increased competition for control of the proverbial "plaza" – a reference to the territory used for transiting illicit goods, and providing illicit services and items on a local level – by its rivals from the Sinaloa Cartel.⁶ The Sinaloa Cartel also employed local gangs, specifically the Mexicles and the Artistas Asesinos.

Beginning in 2008, the battle between these organizations played out on various levels. On one level, the CDJ and the Sinaloa Cartel were fighting to move large loads of cocaine across the border. On another level, they were trying to control the local drug and extortion markets, which had emerged to play an important role in financing the gangs who were being used as soldiers in this larger battle. Other criminal activities, such as kidnapping, exploded for some of the same reasons, and middle class areas found themselves the target of small and large criminal groups. The resulting chaos soon enmeshed small businesses, professionals, journalists and students. The victims ran the gamut. According to the government's statistical agency, INEGI, there were 227 homicides in 2006; 192 in 2007; 1,589 in 2008; 2,399 in 2009; 3,766 in 2010; and 2,282 in 2011.⁷

³ Arzaluz Solano, Cutberto, "Ciudad Juárez antes y después de la maquiladora: una visión antropológica," lecture, Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez, September 2005.

⁴ Intelligence officer from Mexican government, on condition of anonymity, interviewed by authors, September 28, 2012.

⁵ This integration appears to have begun around 2003.

⁶ Juárez and Sinaloa Cartel members share much of the same roots and for years worked together. However, in 2004, a dispute led Sinaloa to assassinate Rodolfo Carrillo Fuentes, the younger brother of CDJ head Vicente Carrillo Fuentes. The CDJ responded by killing Arturo Guzmán, the brother of Joaquín Guzmán, Sinaloa Cartel's leader.

⁷ Statistics retrieved from website of the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI), March 15, 2013. (<http://www.inegi.org.mx>)

Civil Society Responses

It was in this context that civil society groups began clamoring for more security. They organized around their professions and their industry. Some were successful businessmen, but they were not the wealthiest Juarenses, an element that may have contributed to their more direct participation. Put simply, the wealthiest could and did leave the area, extracting their families and maintaining their businesses from afar. The most prominent groups were Juarenses por la Paz (JPP) and the Comité de Médicos Ciudadanos. JPP began meeting every Monday as early as 2008. From the start, they saw themselves as interlocutors with the government. In part, this was due to their contacts. One of the leaders of the group leading the interaction, for instance, was the then-mayor's cousin.⁸

The Committee, meanwhile, was trying to organize a more public stance, searching for ways to shame authorities into taking action. It spearheaded a march in late 2009. The groups also tried to formalize programs in concert with the government, specifically the program "Crime Stoppers," which they later tried unsuccessfully to implement with the municipal government. In the end, little was actually achieved in that first phase.

The turning point for Juárez civil society-government interaction came via a tragedy and a president's gaffe. On January 31, 2010, gunmen burst into a private party in the Villas de Salvarcar neighborhood of Juárez, killed 15 young people and injured another 10. In response to the event, President Felipe Calderón said the murdered youths must have been a rival gang. The president's misstep led to a visit in early February during which a mother of one of the victims famously told Calderón that he was not welcome in the city.

The exchange was a spark. Calderón committed resources in the name of what the government deemed "Todos Somos Juárez," or, "We are all Juárez." Other disparate pieces coalesced around various social issues that the program would entail. These so-called "Mesas" or "Working Groups," included health, education and security groups, among others. Over time, the "Mesa de Seguridad" would become the most effective civil society engagement with the government in all of Mexico. Their efforts are now considered a model, and some of the first participants travel the country to tell their story in an effort to help replicate their actions and, they hope, some of their results.⁹

At the heart of the Mesa are businesspeople and white-collar professionals. The chambers of commerce and other academic and professional associations also take part in meetings. Specific examples of members include entrepreneurs such as Miguel Fernández and Jorge Contreras; medical professionals Arturo Valenzuela and Leticia Chavarría; the human rights lawyer and former prison director Gustavo de la Rosa Hickerson; and the Political Science Professor Hugo Almada. Nearly all of the Mesa's participants had previous experience in civic and business groups. Fernández and Contreras were founding members of Juarenses por la paz. Valenzuela is now a member as well. In addition, Valenzuela and Chavarría helped create the Comité Medico Ciudadano.

⁸ Miguel Fernández Iturriza, interviewed by the authors, September 24, 2012.

⁹ Arturo Valenzuela, interviewed by the authors, September 25, 2012.

Their reasons for joining the Mesa varied, with some of the Mesa's participants motivated by an economic rationale. "We got involved in the issue because we thought that there would be no development without security," Juárez businessman Jorge Contreras explained.¹⁰

Contreras is also the public safety commissioner of a group called Economic Development and one of the most active members in the Mesa, but his and numerous others involvement with these issues began with Juarenses por la Paz.

The genesis of Juarenses por la Paz pre-dates the Mesa (and the most violent period) and serves to illustrate an important point about personal contacts in these matters. In 2006, a local businesswoman introduced Contreras, Fernández and Pablo Cuarón to Alejandro Gertz Manero, a former head of the Federal Police in the Vicente Fox administration. Gertz Manero later introduced the group to Luis Cárdenas Palomino, the number two at the Public Safety Secretary's (Secretario de Seguridad Pública or SSP, an entity that has since been absorbed by the Interior Ministry) office. Cárdenas Palomino became the direct contact of this nascent organization when it needed to deal with kidnapping and extortion cases.

"Back then, we were in contact with several victims of extortion in the Pronaf area [a commercial, retail and tourist sector], and the instruction of Luis (Cárdenas Palomino) was to not pay," Contreras recounted. "Instead, they sent an intelligence officer and then arrested the gang, and this gave us more confidence in the federal government."

When the violence accelerated, these three would form the core of Juarenses por la Paz, which would later form the core of the Mesa.

Others became involved for personal reasons. Their friends and colleagues were victims of kidnapping, extortion and their professional space was being violated regularly.

"There was all kinds of violence, even in private clinics, where armed groups would come to look for their victims," Chavarría explained to the authors. "That's when we formed the Comité de Medicos Ciudadanos, and we demanded that the authorities deal with the problem."

The Comité and Juarenses por la Paz converged in 2009, at the insistence of Oscar Cantú, the owner of the city's most prominent newspaper El Norte. Cantú also called for a series of meetings with the Autonomous University of Ciudad Juárez, churches and business leaders.

"We began to gather in the AMAC (Asociación de Maquiladoras) and started talking about the problem of violence in early 2009, and began looking at the Palermo (Italy) case, the case of Colombia, and began to see what ideas they had," Valenzuela said.

(Cantú later left the group he'd help create because, according to Valenzuela, he had close ties to the former Chihuahua governor and the state prosecutor, neither of whom inspired much confidence in the group.)

It was this same group that organized Juárez's first public display of anger towards the violence in December 2009. The march was a small but significant step forward, the organizers said, the first broad citizens' demand that the government address the issue.

¹⁰ Jorge Contreras, interviewed by the authors, September 2012.

“Juárez requires a new form of government-society relationship, where new types of dialogue open spaces for citizens and government to do what it takes to get Juárez out of this violent state,” Hugo Almada, a university professor, said in his speech following the march.

A month later, a representative of the federal government’s Interior Ministry, Laura Carrera, visited Juárez in search of the organizers. Carrera said the president was planning a visit to the city. After the January massacre of the students and the president’s gaffe, the timetable was accelerated. The government’s participation in the formation of the Mesa was critical, its members say. This included Interior Secretary Fernando Gómez Mont, the Attorney General’s delegate in the area, Cesar Peniche, and Federal Police Commissioner Facundo Rosas. Rosas remained in Juárez for months and played a crucial role in the Mesa’s early establishment.

The Mesa is, in essence, a place for citizens to interact with government officials. These interactions occur during regular meetings between the two. The meetings happen in hotels or government offices that can accommodate large groups. The citizens manage the meetings, controlling the agenda, minutes, facilitation and other aspects. Each meeting begins with crime indicators. Then they go through, one-by-one, the accords they have reached with the government on security issues to check on the status of these accords. In order to facilitate the work, the Mesa is broken down into 14 committees: crime indicators, public trust, Emergency Response Center, car theft, kidnapping and extortion, to name just a few. These committees meet monthly.¹¹

The Mesa has engendered informal contact and better relations with regards to specific criminal activity. Contreras says he talks on the telephone with police on a daily basis and interacts regularly via email with the Attorney General’s Office, the state prosecutor and a US security consultancy. Sometimes the interactions are related to specific cases. Initially, these were kidnapping cases. Now they are more related to extortion. In many of these cases, Mesa members serve as intermediaries between the security forces and the victims. This is because the victims still do not trust the security forces. They do, however, trust the Mesa members.

Not all relationships are the same, however. Contreras and others said that while they have a working relationship with the Municipal Public Security Secretary, Julian Leyzaola, they do not interact with Leyzaola’s boss, Mayor Hector Murguía. To deal with this issue, the Mesa designated a former Murguía associate to be the liaison with the mayor’s office.

Effectiveness

The Mesa has had more indirect than direct results. Its specific programs include Crime Stoppers, which later stalled because Mayor Hector Murguía stopped funding it,¹² and a crime database. Efforts to improve the “9-1-1” emergency system failed. The newly created “Citizens Defense Committee” – which was designed as a way to channel information of abuses by security forces directly to their superiors – still has no direct line of communication with the municipal or the state police. In terms of campaigns, perhaps the most successful has been the effort to get citizens of Juarez to place license plates on their cars. Authorities say that the statistic dropped from 40 percent without plates to seven percent in just two years.¹³

¹¹ Arturo Valenzuela, interviewed by the authors, September 25, 2012.

¹² Miguel Fernández Iturriza, interviewed by the authors, September 24, 2012.

¹³ Mesa de Seguridad, “Comunicado de Prensa Periódico Norte de Ciudad Juárez 10 Marzo del 2012,” March 13, 2012. (<http://www.mesadesseguridad.org/?p=657>)

The main result of the regular interaction between government and civil society, Mesa participants say, has been the resolution of specific cases, especially kidnapping and extortion cases, in which suspects have been arrested, tried and jailed. These direct interactions have resolved more than a hundred kidnapping cases and many more cases of extortion. The positive results of these civilian-government interactions have given other Juárez businesses more confidence to go to the security forces with their problems, leading to more arrests and greater security, Mesa participants say.

The Mesa has also served as ad hoc mediator between government forces. When one of Mayor Murguía's bodyguards was killed by two federal police, the Mesa brought representatives of both sides to the monthly meeting. The two reconciled at that meeting. An unintended consequence of the Mesa's regular interactions is that security forces have been pushed toward greater cooperation. One regular government security participant in the Mesa said his working relations with other security forces has never been better, in part because of the Mesa.¹⁴

However, the Mesa's power to mediate conflicts is limited. The municipal police tactic of arresting suspects en masse has created considerable tension in Juárez, but it is something the Mesa has not been able to curb despite some very vocal members' attempts.¹⁵ The Mesa has also steered clear of sensitive political issues, such as assertions regarding former Governor José Reyes Baeza and his prosecutor general, Patricia Gonzalez, and their alleged relationship with organized criminal groups.¹⁶

Still, in the end, Mesa members, including current Mesa President Valenzuela considers that the exercise of interaction recorded in Juárez between civil society and government is as relevant as "the fall of the Berlin Wall." Thanks to the interaction, he says, both parties were able to appreciate the other's point of view. "I've seen the authorities completely change because of their contact with civil society, because of listening and just being in the same room – having common goals placed on a chalk board – which gives a sense of team," said Valenzuela. "In Juárez, just as the Berlin Wall fell, Mexicans dissolved the huge wall that existed between society and government, and we sat at a table for the first time...Then others, who were scattered about, joined, and trust was built, and a team was formed."

¹⁴ Mexican government security official, on condition of anonymity, interviewed by the authors, September 27, 2012. See also: InSight Crime, "Police Use Brute Force to Break Crime's Hold on Juárez," February 13, 2013. (<http://www.insightcrime.org/Juárez-war-stability-and-the-future/brute-force-breaks-crimes-hold-on-Juárez>)

¹⁵ Various members of the Mesa noted the lack of traction on this issue in interviews.

¹⁶ Gonzalez's brother was killed after suspected members of the Sinaloa Cartel kidnapped and tortured him. A video of the interrogation in which Gonzalez's brother says he is a member of the La Línea was published on a blog. See: InSight Crime, "How Juarez's Police, Politicians Picked Winners of Gang War," February 13, 2013. (<http://www.insightcrime.org/Juárez-war-stability-and-the-future/Juárez-police-politicians-picked-winners-gang-war>)

Monterrey

Background

Monterrey is Mexico's third largest metropolitan area and the country's industrial capital. Sitting 90 miles from the U.S. border, it is an important production and banking center for numerous US companies such as Calloway Golf and Caterpillar. It is home the Tec de Monterrey, which is considered the "MIT of Mexico." While the center of Monterrey houses the state government, "Monterrey" is usually a reference to Greater Monterrey, an area encompassing 12 municipalities of and over four million people.¹⁷ It is spread over a large area nine times the size of New York City, but has a unified economic and social dynamic, complicating the construction of both political and security policies.

For years, the city was known as a safe haven for both legal and illegal actors. Cemex, the cement giant, has its home here, as does Cervecería Cuauhtémoc, Femsá (the biggest beverages supplier in Latin America), Grupo Maseca (Gruma, the world's biggest tortilla producer), and Banorte.¹⁸ They have long shared space with famous drug traffickers such as Juan García Abrego, the former head of the Gulf Cartel, who was captured near Monterrey in 1996.

However, beginning in 2007, things shifted for this city. New criminal organizations, with different modus operandi, began operating in Monterrey. The Beltrán Leyva Organization, a violent and well-armed wing of the Sinaloa Cartel, established operations in San Pedro Garza García, one of the country's wealthiest municipalities. More importantly, the Gulf Cartel ceded the city to its hyper-violent praetorian guard, the Zetas.

The Zetas have a particular way of operating. Their core were former military officers and their strategy has centered on a military-like effort to control territory and extract "rent" (known as "piso" in the underworld vernacular) from the illegal and legal businesses in that territory. The size and economic importance of Monterrey has made it the crown jewel for this organization. Beginning in 2007, the Zetas began extorting licit and illicit businesses throughout Greater Monterrey. And for three years, their dominance was unchallenged, except in San Pedro, where the Beltrán Leyva Organization had arranged for their own type of monopoly that was more about protecting themselves than extracting rent from their wealthy neighbors.¹⁹

In 2009, relations between the Zetas and Gulf Cartel soured, and in 2010, the two groups split definitively. The split put Monterrey back in play and violence quickly increased to astounding levels. The subsequent fight has been concentrated in the poorer areas where the Zetas control the local drug distribution points, but the violence also occurs on the main avenues, which the Zetas have blocked on numerous occasions to protest captures of leaders or to distract authorities, and middle class districts.

The peak of the violence came in August 2011, when a Zetas cell burned a casino in Monterrey as retribution for not paying the regular quota. Fifty-two people died in the blaze, which engulfed the building at a torrid pace. The case also revealed the corruption within the Monterrey and Nuevo

¹⁷ INEGI, *Delimitación de las zonas metropolitanas de México*, 2005.

(http://www.inegi.org.mx/prod_serv/contenidos/espanol/bvinegi/productos/geografia/publicaciones/delime05/DZMM-2005_31.pdf)

¹⁸ Secretaría de Desarrollo Económico de Nuevo León, *Algunos de los principales grupos empresariales de Nuevo León*, July 2007. (<http://sg.nl.gob.mx/DataNL/files%5CDNL00000395.pdf>)

¹⁹ For a full account of this process, see: InSight Crime, "How the Zetas Took Monterrey," December 16, 2012. (<http://www.insightcrime.org/zetas-monterrey/how-the-zetas-took-monterrey>)

Leon governments, which had allowed for these casinos to flourish via legal loopholes and payoffs to numerous authorities.²⁰

Civil Society Responses

The response of civil society has been slow. And while it has been formally channeled through specially created institutions engendered by various non-governmental organizations and business leaders, it has failed to produce a regular civil society-government interaction of the type that distinguishes the Mesa de Seguridad in Juárez.

The most noteworthy organization channeling citizens' appeals on security matters is Citizens in Support of Human Rights (CADHAC). CADHAC's leader, Sister Consuelo Morales, has won international recognition for her work and liaised with other nationally recognized leaders such as Javier Sicilia, the poet whose own personal tragedy pushed him to create a national movement calling for greater accountability and alternative ways of tackling the problem of organized crime in Mexico. Morales had worked with indigenous communities and street children in Mexico City; she returned to Monterrey in 1992 and helped found CADHAC in 1993.²¹

CADHAC is the only organization that regularly interacts with government officials. This interaction focuses almost exclusively on the review of "disappearances," habeas corpus, and kidnapping cases. CADHAC has had at least ten meetings since they began in 2011, in which officials from the state prosecutor's office, family members of victims represented in 50 case files, and CADHAC staff reviewed the files of research and exchanged data that could be useful to ascertain the whereabouts of victims and perpetrators.

Sister Consuelo Morales says Nuevo Leon State Attorney General Emilio de la Garza Santos and his top assistant Javier Enrique Flores have participated in these meetings and have designated coordinators who follow the progress of each case. These coordinators work closely with representatives of the victim's family and a CADHAC staff member. Interestingly, according to Morales, Javier Sicilia helped pressure the authorities into participating in this process.²²

The other principal actor in civil society and security matters is the powerful business community in Monterrey. In 2011, with violence increasing, the largest employers in the area formed the Council of Civic Institutions of Nuevo Leon (CCINLAC). It groups together more than a hundred institutions and individuals, including chambers of commerce, professionals, charitable organizations, service industry companies, sports teams and others.

The CCINLAC spearheaded a forum for government-civil society interaction. Beginning in 2011, nine municipal governments in Greater Monterrey responded to citizens' calls for more accountability by implementing something called, "Mayor, how are we doing?" The program is a list of broad commitments, which include numerous citizen security issues such as "minimum three police for every 1,000 inhabitants."²³ These programs were hammered out in a series of behind the scenes meetings between the Nuevo Leon state government and the business sector, represented by CCINLAC. In theory, some 40 civil society organizations, including the

²⁰ See InSight Crime, "Arson Attack on Monterrey Casino Part of Battle over Gambling Industry," August 26, 2011. (<http://www.insightcrime.org/news-analysis/arson-attack-on-monterrey-casino-part-of-battle-over-gambling-industry>)

²¹ "Consuelo Morales, Mexico," Human Rights Watch, 13 August 2012. (<http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/08/13/consuelo-morales-mexico>)

²² Consuelo Morales, interviewed by authors by phone, October 2012.

²³ "Alcalde ¿cómo vamos?" official website. (<http://www.comovamosnl.org/accion>)

CCINLAC, review these commitments monthly to ensure compliance. In reality, very few of these organizations are directly interacting with government actors.

Effectiveness

In Monterrey, the commitment is impressive and – in sheer numbers, economic power and variety of its participants – the civil society coalition seems on paper to be far superior than its neighbors. In practice, however, getting traction with government officials has proven difficult and putting into motion programs such as the “Mayor, how are we doing?” has been very hard. Indeed, despite the impressive array of groups interacting with the government, Monterrey has yet to develop a functioning model of civil society-government interaction.

The trouble began almost immediately after the grand coalition was formed and announced. The CCINLAC, for instance, felt obliged to present their concerns about public security to the public via press conferences. But this very public approach soured its relations with the government almost immediately.

“There was a lot of effort expended on being cordial,” explained Miguel Treviño, the former director of CCINLAC. “We had a lot of meetings with state government officials to design ‘transformations’...But we have an obligation to lobby and our partners were wondering how we see the daily situation...(So) when we started with press conferences to publicize the ‘Green Light Indicators,’ the relationship changed, with ups and downs. Later there was outright anger because of what we were saying.”²⁴

The “Green Light Indicators” were a very specific set of expectations that the civil society organizations developed. The indicators were both crime-related (lowering property-related crime such as car theft), and indicators related to the violation of human rights and corruption cases. Treviño says that when the government realized that the economic achievements were not the only measure they were using to guide their public pronouncements, they backed away from the partnership.

Others are not so harsh in their evaluations. Lorenia Canavati works for Evolución Mexicana. Evolución was co-founded by a former federal congresswoman, Tatiana Clouthier, the daughter of the late National Action Party (PAN) presidential candidate, Manuel Clouthier. It is now an active member of CCINLAC, and Canavati says it’s too early to judge. She says the interaction with the government is in its infancy, and that her organization had begun with their first workshop with the nine participating mayors in September 2012.

Still, it will be a long road, beginning with the commitments themselves. Perhaps the most complicated of these commitments with regards to security is the “creation of a transparent police.” The municipal police units in Greater Monterrey (and nationwide) are a tremendous source of tension in the communities they serve. Many members have long worked for the Zetas and other criminal organizations (in this area and others they were referred to as “poli-Zetas”). And the creation of a system to purge them, then restock them with trustworthy officers has proven very difficult and time consuming. Federal officials estimate that only one in every five candidates will pass the various new tests the government has implemented to secure a solid police force.

²⁴ Miguel Treviño, interviewed by the authors by phone, October 2012.

However, the number of applicants is far less than sufficient.²⁵ Tec de Monterrey researchers recently estimated the statewide deficit to be close 12,000 officers.²⁶

Determining civil society's role in this matter is extremely complicated. And the sensitive nature of political actors in the state has virtually excluded civil society from this and other processes. The CCINLAC, for instance, has no interaction with the government on security matters aside from its limited participation in the "Mayor, how are we doing?" campaign and its attendance of National Public Security System meetings.

The only concrete results Monterrey can point to are related to the work that CADHAC and prosecuting authorities are doing. Morales says that since they began working with the government, 24 people have been arrested in cases involved 11 victims. The two sides have also worked together to develop protocol on these cases.

"This is a way to create accountability," Morales said.

²⁵ Authors' interview of a Mexican security force official who did not have permission to speak on the record, September 19, 2012.

²⁶ InSight Crime, "Police Purge Leaves Monterrey Unguarded," October 19, 2011. (<http://www.insightcrime.org/news-analysis/police-purge-leaves-monterrey-unguarded-as-cartel-battle-rages>)

Nuevo Laredo

Background

Nuevo Laredo is the Mexico-U.S. border's most important commercial crossing point. Between 10,000 and 12,000 cargo trucks cross the border each day, or an estimated 35 percent of all truck traffic that crosses the border. Another 14,000 passenger cars and 1,000 railroad cars join that truck traffic daily to make Laredo – Nuevo Laredo by far the more important commercial crossing point along the 1,951 mile border with about \$500 million in daily trade.

The city connects Mexico to Interstate 35, one of the United States' most important arteries. I-35 splits the US in two and connects to the east-west arteries that dissect the US into a grid of vast proportions. The city is also the crossing point for most traffic coming and going between Mexico City and Monterrey, and the border via Mexico Federal Highway 85.

The border dynamic engendered in Nuevo Laredo stretches east to Matamoros. The space between Matamoros and Reynosa is known as the Frontera Chica. It has traditionally been the domain of the Gulf Cartel, a one-time contraband operation that morphed into a large, international drug trafficking organization. The Gulf's founder is Juan García Abrego, but its progenitor was Osiel Cárdenas.

Cárdenas, a one-time car thief, took control of the group by force. His nickname, "el mata-amigos," or "friend-killer," speaks volumes about his tactics. To consolidate his control of the cartel and expand to new areas, Cárdenas lured several members of Mexico's special forces into his organization in the late-1990s. This new guard christened themselves Zetas for the radio handles commanders of these forces use in the armed forces. The Zetas were small at first, but brutally effective. Cárdenas and the Zetas took complete control of Nuevo Laredo and expanded into new territories such as Michoacán, which gave the Gulf access to a Pacific port to complement their already burgeoning smuggling business on the eastern Caribbean side.

However, the dynamic changed after Cárdenas was arrested in 2003. Zetas leaders demanded, and Gulf leaders granted, increasing amounts of autonomy to their guards. This helped the organization expand its purview. The Zetas were nearly self-sufficient, living from a wide array of activities, most of those related to collecting "piso." The reasons for this were simple. Drawing from their military roots, the Zetas controlled territory better than any other organized criminal group. This dominance led them to displace the traditional operators of the piso business, the police. Soon, the group was extorting both legitimate and illegitimate businesses. They also began to delve in local drug dealing. These multiple revenue sources gave them even more autonomy.

For a variety of reasons that are not the subject of this paper, tensions rose between the Zetas and the Gulf Cartel leaders. Following the extradition of Cárdenas to the US in 2007, the Zetas essentially began operating on their own terms. And in 2010, following a deadly altercation with the Gulf Cartel, the Zetas announced their independence. War with the Gulf Cartel followed. The long-time relationship between the Gulf Cartel and the Zetas make this fight even more complicated. The two groups know each other's modus operandi, their financial and military strategies. They know how they choose their safe houses, who they bribe, and how they move their merchandise. It has made for a fratricidal squabble that has cost thousands their lives, mostly along the northern border area from Nuevo Laredo to the east.

Among the territories in dispute is Nuevo Laredo. It has been under nearly constant siege since 2004, when the Sinaloa Cartel attempted to take control of this important corridor. The bloody

battle that followed lasted over a year, but the Gulf Cartel, because of the Zetas, prevailed. The Zetas' prize for their work was Nuevo Laredo. The plaza became the Zetas' headquarters where they would establish near absolute control over local police, politicians and the press. The area seems to have had little peace mostly due to the Zetas' modus operandi, which is, put simply, hyper-violent. The group's default response to internal and external conflicts is violence.

The fight between the Zetas and the Gulf Cartel has renewed rivals' interest in controlling Nuevo Laredo. The Gulf Cartel has allied with one-time foes from the Sinaloa Cartel and the Caballeros Templarios, itself a product of Gulf Cartel-Zetas interventions in Michoacán. Government forces are also focused on debilitating the Zetas, Mexico's most violent and chaotic criminal group. As evidence of the impact of these efforts (which some would argue are in concert), the entire original Zetas' leadership has been captured or killed since 2008.

The Zetas have responded to these challenges by aligning themselves with former foes, such as the Beltran Leyva Organization and the Juárez Cartel. But the group also has internal problems. Its top leader, Heriberto Lazcano, was killed by naval forces in October 2012. Other top leaders, most notably Ivan Velazquez Caballero, alias "El Taliban," were captured in 2012. El Taliban's core group remains strong and was mounting a challenge to the Zetas' here apparent, Miguel Treviño, alias Z40, when Treviño was captured in July 2013. Treviño and his brother and now supposed head of the Zetas, Alejandro "Omar" Treviño, alias "Z42," were born in Nuevo Laredo.

As a result of this multi-layered battle, Nuevo Laredo is going through one of its worst periods of violence since the fighting began in 2004. Official statistics do not tell the whole story. For 2011, the last year for which official statistics are available, the government's statistical agency, INEGI, reported 192 murders in Nuevo Laredo. The Consejo Ciudadano para la Seguridad Pública y la Justicia Penal, a Mexico non-governmental organization, said that murders reached 288 during 2012.²⁷ This does not include reported disappeared and other deaths during confrontations between Zetas and security forces, after which the Zetas are known to carry away their dead and wounded. In sum, the real total could be much higher.

The capture of Z40 may also lead to more violence and upheaval. It is not clear that Z42 has the ability to hold the organization together. Most analysts expect internal and external groups to challenge his leadership and attempt to fill the power void left by Treviño, Lazcano, and Velazquez.

The Zetas' abrasive style leaves little room for civil society. Threats are direct. Retribution is swift and often public. The Zetas' control of the local security and political forces also makes public interaction with the State less desirable at best and dangerous at worst. Those civil society actors who do interact with the government do it gingerly, on a personal level, without public notoriety or fanfare. These relationships are fragile and largely ineffective, however, because mistrust, suspicion and the potential for deadly consequences override the urgency to act in concert.

Civil Society Responses

In Nuevo Laredo, there are several civil society groups such as the Human Rights Committee of Nuevo Laredo, the Casa del Migrante, the Municipal Committee for Citizen Participation and various business associations of brokers, builders, maquilas and others. Many of these business associations are part of the so-called Council of Institutions of Nuevo Laredo (CINLAC).

²⁷ El Manaña, "Nuevo Laredo está entre las más violentas," February 8, 2013. (<http://www.elmanaana.com.mx/notas.asp?id=320405>)

Among these, the Human Rights Committee is the only organization that interacts with the government on a regular basis. The committee was founded in 1997. To date, it has documented dozens of citizen complaints, especially against the Mexican Army and Navy. The committee meets with the Secretaries of Defense and the Navy, as well as other portions of the federal government. The sides talk through human rights policy and violence related to the war on drugs. It confronts the government about forced disappearances that it blames on security forces.

Raymundo Ramos Vázquez, a former editor of the city's daily, *El Mañana*, is the head of the committee. Ramos says the main reason for limited interaction between the government and citizen groups is fear. He says the local community is afraid of Zetas' retribution and that it has no faith in the local authorities' ability or willingness to act if the criminal group commits a crime, adding that the police and the mayor's office have been known to work directly with the Zetas.

Ramos knows a lot about this issue. Journalists have been some of the most affected parts of civil society. Since 2002, two have been killed in Nuevo Laredo. Dozens more have been threatened. In May 2012, *El Mañana* became the first paper to publicly state it would not cover violence.²⁸ In reality, it had been the paper's de facto position for years. To cite one example, on May 4, nine bodies were hung from a bridge on the Federal Highway 85, and another 14 were found in different parts of the city.²⁹ The next day, the paper focused on the presidential elections, ignoring the brutal public display of violence.³⁰

Aside from the nearly constant attacks on journalists, there were also attacks on civil society. In 2005, Alejandro Domínguez Coello, who was the president of the Chamber of Commerce and the newly appointed Public Safety Director, was murdered just a few hours after reluctantly assuming his security post. The reasons for Domínguez's murder were not clear. Domínguez was promoted to the post by PRI governor Tomás Yarrington. Yarrington, for his part, was indicted in 2012, in the United States for allegedly laundering money for the Zetas and the Gulf Cartel. The former governor has also been accused of participating in the murder of former gubernatorial candidate Rodolfo Torres Cantú in 2010. The Domínguez murder cast a dark cloud over civilian participation in security matters.

"[The murder of Domínguez Coello] was the worst message to civil society," Ramos said.³¹

The police are at the heart of the security problem in Nuevo Laredo. Domínguez's successor disappeared months after he resigned from the job and has not been seen since.³² In 2011, another police chief, the former military officer Manuel Farfán, was ambushed and killed, along with his secretary and two of his bodyguards.³³ And in February of 2012, another police director, Roberto

²⁸ Opinión Editorial, *El Mañana* (Nuevo Laredo), May 13, 2012. (see: <http://www.excelsior.com.mx/node/833926>)

²⁹ InSight Crime, "Threatening Banners, 23 Dead as Zetas Fight Rivals in Nuevo Laredo," May 7, 2012. (<http://www.insightcrime.org/news-briefs/threatening-banners-23-dead-as-zetas-fight-rivals-in-nuevo-laredo>)

³⁰ *El Mañana's* May 5, 2012, home page included a story about the insecurity in Mexico and three stories about the presidential elections. (<http://www.elmanana.com.mx/default.asp?f=5/5/2012&s=1>)

³¹ Raymundo Ramos, interviewed by the authors, October 2012.

³² *Dallas Morning News*, "Unorthodox Nuevo Laredo police chief's 2006 disappearance just now comes to light," February 23, 2012. (<http://www.dallasnews.com/news/nationworld/mexico/20130223-unorthodox-nuevo-laredo-police-chiefs-2006-disappearance-just-now-comes-to-light.ece>)

³³ *New York Times*, "Police Chief is Shot Dead in Mexico," February 3, 2011. (http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/04/world/americas/04mexico.html?_r=0)

Balmori Garz, disappeared the weekend that his two brothers, one of them a federal prosecutor, were found dead.³⁴

In reality, Balmori had little to do. The federal government had disbanded Nuevo Laredo's police two years earlier. Six hundred officers, both patrol and transit, were told they had to go through lie detector tests and other exams to gain reentry. Since that time, four have done the tests. One has passed.³⁵ And Nuevo Laredo remains without any police officers or transit cops. Army troops patrol the streets. The state government has a small presence via several prosecutors but little else.

Aside from the army, Nuevo Laredo was also virtually abandoned by the federal government. The city is traditionally an Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) stronghold. While President Felipe Calderón (PAN) visited Ciudad Juárez four times in 2010 alone, he did not visit Nuevo Laredo once during his six-year term, an amazing fact given the enormous economic importance of the area. For its part, the federal prosecutor's office representative reportedly arrived to the city and, after sensing the institutional void, departed after just a few weeks.³⁶

"The only ones who concern themselves with the security issue is us. Outside of that, there's no one, no authority. Not the businessmen. Not the Church. Not the universities. Not the unions," Ramos explained. "They prefer to run than confront the issue."

The irony is that in Nuevo Laredo there is a Municipal Committee for Citizen Participation, which predates many of the other efforts around the country. This non-governmental organization was founded in 2002. Using its 189 "community committees," it does diagnostics – producing reports on domestic violence and petty crime – but willfully ignores the larger issue of organized crime. Instead, it focuses on violence prevention, advocating for workshops and lectures in schools and neighborhoods and, in some cases providing the infrastructure and logistics to make these events happen.

Fernando Ríos, president of the committee, says his group interacts with various federal government agencies, such as the Undersecretary of Prevention and Citizen Participation of the Ministry of Public Security, the Office of National Crime Prevention (which is part of the Ministry of Interior), and the local office of the Attorney General.³⁷ But these meetings are to discuss issues related to crime prevention, not assess the violence related to drug trafficking or organized crime.

"We don't talk about it because we don't want to seem like we are challenging or replacing any state authority," he explained to the authors. "We are simply a civil society organization participating in preventative measures. We are not an operational group."

Ríos is a former police chief himself. He held the post before Domínguez's death. His survival, he says, was due to his "understanding of the limitations" in his post. He did not elaborate. He advocates for more citizen participation but is careful to keep it confined to "citizen" activities, which he defines in more pedagogical than bellicose terms. He insists that the strength of the Zetas (he notably never says their name out loud) is overblown, and that civil society is active and engaged.

³⁴ San Antonio Express News, "Police chief of Mexico border city missing, brothers killed," February 19, 2012. (http://www.mysanantonio.com/news/local_news/article/Police-chief-of-Mexico-border-city-missing-4290394.php#ixzz2MZo3Fxr3)

³⁵ Authors' interview with public official that requested anonymity, February 27, 2013.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Fernando Rios, interviewed by authors, February 28, 2013.

“Nuevo Laredo is not a war zone,” he said. “These problems are being dealt with, so that Nuevo Laredo can obtain the peace it needs.”

For its part, CINLAC brings together almost all the business sectors of the city, including dentists, construction company owners, and Rotarians, among others. According to Ramos, CINLAC does interact regularly with the government but does not touch public safety issues or organized crime-related violence. It focuses on questions of infrastructure, energy and communications costs. This may, in part, be due to an absentee landlord effect. Numerous business leaders have taken their families to live in Laredo or San Antonio, Texas.³⁸ By one unofficial count, as many as 500 of 800 owners of the customs brokers companies have left the city.³⁹

The only regular interlocutor with the government on security matters in Nuevo Laredo is Raymundo Ramos. He says this interaction began to gain momentum only after the murder of two siblings at a military checkpoint in 2010. He has since met regularly with the Defense and the Interior Ministries. President Calderón also met with the parents of the slain children, which he says opened the way for continued dialogue with the army.

“For example, if there’s a report about army abuse, I can talk directly with the general in the military garrison. If it’s the Navy, then they send someone from Mexico City (to speak to me),” he said. “We’ve got the space to speak with the federal government.”

Effectiveness

The only space in which civil society groups dialogue with authorities on security issues is from a human rights perspective. And within that context, it is the presumed violations of the State that concern these interlocutors. Political parties, as a rule in Nuevo Laredo, do not touch security issues. The media completely avoids it. The business sector has minimal engagement. The Church is mute. There is, in sum, no one who touches citizen security issues regarding organized crime-related violence in Nuevo Laredo. On the contrary, it is studiously avoided, even by those sectors that are most impacted by it or work directly with potential aspects of it.

What’s more, even the limited space created by the Human Rights Committee to speak of alleged State-repression is limited and in danger, according to Ramos. Ramos says his interactions with the Interior Ministry and Department of Defense are centered on resolving cases rather than talking about institutional changes. In addition, the committee has currency with the federal and not the municipal or state governments. Thus, he says, this space could close with the change of administration from the National Action Party President Calderón to the PRI President Peña Nieto, with whom he has no contact or interaction.

³⁸ Pablo Camacho, professor, Texas A & M University – Laredo, interviewed by authors, March 1, 2013.

³⁹ Authors’ interview, public official who requested anonymity, February 27, 2013.

Tijuana

Background

Tijuana is the gateway to California, the eighth largest economy in the world and the primary destination for Mexican migrants. The fluidity of that border crossing has long made it one of the most important areas to traffic illegal drugs and contraband. For years, this illegal drug trade was controlled by the Arellano Felix family. In the 1990s, the family's reach extended to its native Sinaloa and beyond. It was led by Benjamin who was considered the strategist, and Ramon, who was considered the muscle. Various other brothers, sisters, and nephews contributed.

Its violent tactics put it at odds with other criminal groups who competed with the group for territory and influence along the western border area. In the early 1990s, the Arellano Felix Organization, or Tijuana Cartel, as it became known, began a long, drawn-out battle with what would become the Sinaloa Cartel and its leader, Joaquín Guzmán. The fight between the two groups included gun battles in an airport and a nightclub. The gunfight at the Guadalajara airport in 1993, cost an archbishop his life and pushed the cartel's leadership into hiding.

These were some of the first public battles between drug trafficking groups and set the stage for what would be an arms and paramilitary war. The Tijuana Cartel fought this war by drawing from street gangs in Tijuana and California, the most famous of which was the Logan Street Gang from San Diego. The cartel hired foreign military trainers, and bought sophisticated communications equipment and weaponry. As this paramilitary army grew, so did its costs. In order to pay for it, the leadership allowed individual commanders to draw rent from other illicit activities such as extortion, petty drug dealing, and kidnapping.

For a time, the plan worked. The cartel kept its rivals at bay, expanded in various parts of the country, and increased its local revenues. But things changed quickly after Ramon was killed in 2002, and Benjamin was arrested one year later. Its traditional leadership decimated, the armed cells the group had created began breaking away, seeking business opportunities of their own on the local and international front. New alliances were made and rival groups, such as the Sinaloa Cartel, sought to take advantage.

The resulting chaos led to a violent and unpredictable period in which hundreds, if not thousands, of professionals fled the city, businesses beefed up their security operations and citizens of all stripes scrambled to take cover. As it was in Ciudad Juárez, kidnappings were a particularly important catalyst for civil society and business organizations that began concerted efforts to push security forces to act on their behalf and not on the behalf of the criminal organizations. With the help of the city's most important business organization, this effort gained some traction and produced results.

Civil Society Responses

In Tijuana, there have been three main actors who participate in civil society – government security interactions. The first was a business association known as COPARMEX. The association combines everything from natural gas providers to large food transport companies. It is one of the oldest in Mexico and operates nationwide. In the mid-2000s, as Tijuana was slipping into a period of prolonged violence, it was led by Roberto Quijano, a lawyer, who had also led a lawyers association in the state. And at that time, COPARMEX was one of the few voices of a desperate business sector that was being extorted to near extinction and facing down the nearly constant threat of kidnappings.

Along with other business associations, COPARMEX sought an audience with both the governor of Baja California and then President Vicente Fox to address the problems. Soon, the state prosecutor, Antonio Martínez Luna, joined the meetings and they became somewhat more regular. Later, Martínez began to meet with other business sector representatives to exchange crime statistics. This was part transparency, part political ploy: some statistics came from the Tijuana mayor's office, which was controlled by a rival party and wanted to undermine the state government's efforts.

COPARMEX also pushed for the little-used Citizens' Public Security Council (Consejo Ciudadano de Seguridad Pública) to take a bigger role. Space for councils, as noted earlier, had been created on a federal level in 1995. And in 2000, Baja California passed a similar law. Eventually, this would become the second actor to take on a significant role in spurring civil society-government inter-action. But in the mid-2000s, there were few active councils around the country. In fact, Tijuana is the only place in which the authors found an active council.

To lead the council, COPARMEX got Alberto Capella, another local lawyer. Capella took the job in 2006. However, he found neither the municipal nor the state government receptive to the increasingly urgent security situation and so, in late 2006, he organized a series of marches. The marches took place in various parts of Baja California and had the effect of pushing the issue into the public sphere in an unprecedented manner. By the end of these marches, Baja California Governor Eugenio Elorduy had united with Capella and the council.

The council isn't just about marches. It is made up of eight citizen representatives: five citizen presidents from the state's municipal councils, plus three others from various parts of civil society such as universities or chambers of commerce. The group meets every three weeks to discuss the current situation and active programs.⁴⁰ Since Capella became its head, it has produced eight public safety reports and held close to 100 meetings.⁴¹ It has also had a fluid relationship with government security forces. Capella, for instance, was named Tijuana's Secretary of Security in 2007. Like Domínguez, his civilian counterpart in Nuevo Laredo, Capella was attacked by gunman. Unlike Domínguez, he survived, in part, he says, because of the security training he had received prior to taking office.

In 2008, retired army colonel Julián Leyzaola replaced Capella as the city's Secretary of Security. Leyzaola's appointment was part of a broader militarization of the Tijuana security forces. These military forces form the third actor responsible for increased interaction between the government and civil society in Tijuana. This was in part because, relative to the local and state police, the army was considered a neutral actor in Baja California. Both police units were deeply enmeshed in criminal activities, including directly participating in kidnappings and extortion schemes. This was not the first intervention by the Mexican military in Tijuana's security affairs. In January 2007, President Calderón had sent over 3,000 army troops to Tijuana.⁴² Under the leadership of General Sergio Aponte Polito, the army created a "unified command," in which it took the lead in security matters in Baja California. In the years that followed, both Aponte and Leyzaola played major roles in lowering the threat and violence level in Tijuana, according to interviews.

⁴⁰ José Carlos Vizcarra, interviewed by the authors, September 2012.

⁴¹ Marco Antonio Carillo Masa, "La Participación Ciudadana en Baja California: a 10 años del Consejo Ciudadano de Seguridad Pública," Vizarra, Olmeda, Alvarado editores.

⁴² José Román, Gustavo Castillo, Antonio Heras, "Miles de fuerzas federales en el operativo Tijuana," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), May 3, 2007.

(<http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2007/01/03/index.php?section=politica&article=003n1pol>)

They were also open to interacting with civil society. After General Aponte arrived in Baja California in 2006, business leaders met regularly with him. Because it was a unified command structure, all the security forces were present at many of these meetings, including the municipal secretary of security, the prosecutor's office, and the federal police's investigative unit, as well as the Citizen's Security Council. In these meetings, the various pieces of the security team explained their strategy to the civil society representatives and asked for public support during their operations. Unlike the Mesa in Juárez, however, Tijuana participants did not directly intervene in these law enforcement activities.

"From citizens' point of view, we were always representing the business sector, but our participation was to listen," said Quijano. "We did not want to, nor should we, get involved. That was not our intention. We saw the information, results, crime statistics. But the involvement of civil society was merely as spectators. Occasionally they asked our opinions. General Duarte is a gentleman. But from the army's perspective, civilians are not part of the strategy."

The business leaders and council members did, however, express their support for the army's presence and for specific programs. The council even prepared the terrain for the army's arrival, Capella noted, organizing a public campaign designed to "concienciar" the population.

"We created 30 billboards that said, 'We want the army in the streets,'" Capella said. "We sold the idea."

They also sold specific strategy points, the most important of which was an anonymous tip line established by the army. The line's effectiveness was contingent on public participation and on the security forces responsiveness. By several accounts, both were present during the most conflictive years in Tijuana. The participation of the public, however, was not a given. The council tried to change that fact with a public campaign.

After the violence fell, businessmen organizations like COPARMEX helped create two institutions to show their gratitude. The first, "Tijuana Agradecida," or "Grateful Tijuana," gives outstanding police monetary rewards and medals. The second, "Patronato de los Militares," provides scholarships for military personnel that do outstanding work in Tijuana.

More recently, a third organization called "Tijuana Innovadora," roughly translated as "Innovative Tijuana," emerged. Unlike the other two, Tijuana Innovadora focuses on providing training and conferences to civil society, and hosting large social events as a means of revitalizing the city.

Effectiveness

The civil society representatives interviewed for this case study consider their participation critical to resolving the issue of violence in their city. If nothing else, this increased connection between civil society and the armed forces provided Tijuana citizens a filter through which they could determine which security force structure was trustworthy. This is a critical first step in that it led to the resolution of specific cases, particularly kidnap for ransom cases. This had a domino effect on the rest of those afflicted: suddenly, they saw a state actor that acted on their behalf.

Within this context, the most important direct impact may have been the creation of an effective anonymous tip line. Tip lines have been very hard to create and maintain in Mexico. Criminal groups use numerous means to undermine them, such as direct infiltration, and diversion (by flooding the center with calls), among other tactics. But with the business sectors' backing, the tip lines have obtained and maintained a high level of acceptance and use in the city.

Finally, the interactions in Tijuana seemed to have had a political impact. As political actors saw security actors, such as the army and the police, interacting with civil society and business sector members, they realized the need to do it themselves. As Quijano points out, it was Aponte who opened the doors to these civil society actors, which pushed the Baja California governor to do the same. This led to a better overall relationship between these various actors.

Conclusions

The experiences of four cities along the Mexico-U.S. border tell us a lot about how civil society interacts with authorities on security matters during times of stress. As noted, it is not easy, and many attempts have not succeeded. These failures came despite legislation that promotes engagement, powerful and charismatic actors who participate in it, and dire circumstances that demand it. Still, rather than dwelling on what does not work, it is important to conclude with what does.

To begin with, it seems important to combine various sectors of the society. From businessmen to professionals to university professors, the larger the combination of actors, the greater chance of mobilizing enough political force and will to gain access. These protagonists seem to have greater success if they are already participating in business associations or chambers of commerce. They also seem to draw strength from personal circumstances, i.e., they frequently have business associates, friends or colleagues who have been impacted by the violence. Juárez is a classic example of how this combination of actors can lead to powerful, direct results. What's more, as the case of Juárez also illustrates, these civilian actors do not necessarily have to be the wealthiest members of the community. In fact, it's likely they will not be, since the wealthiest can and do leave the areas most affected.

Secondly, the existence of strong civil society groups and business associations is a necessary precondition for successful interaction between government and civil society. The civilian sector needs organized voices and the necessary contacts that can channel grievances and get the authorities' attention. However, strong civil society and business associations does not guarantee that these interactions will lead to results. Monterrey is an unfortunate example where the strength of civil society has not translated into clear results.

Thirdly, there has to be political will at the highest levels. This means the presidency. The limited success in the cases of Juárez and Tijuana both occurred, in part, due to the participation of federal authorities. Local authorities, it seems, respond to the federal government's lead, party differences notwithstanding. The federal authorities also bring money, human resources and security forces. However, the federalist nature of Mexico can also make for roadblocks, and partisan politics seems more often than not to trump goodwill.

Fourth, the security forces' leaders must take an active role in civil society interactions with the government. In both of the successful cases, there were top-level security forces' involved and participating in meetings between the civil society groups and the government. These leaders are providing information about strategies and responding to the civil society's needs. Direct interaction also breeds confidence, and confidence breeds information, which leads to results, further engendering that confidence.

Finally, there needs to be a clear understanding of what civil society's role is in fostering security in their community. There are some topics that it simply will not be able to broach. Of course, these are tricky balancing acts. Police reform may be difficult to dissect, but police conduct, especially as it relates to Human Rights abuses, is an absolutely essential part of the civil society agenda. Just how civil society approaches these touchy issues – and in what forum, as the Monterrey example illustrates – could make the difference between a successful interaction and a failed experiment.

About the Authors

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