



The Private Sector and Public Security: The Cases of Ciudad Juárez and Monterrey

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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 Justice in Mexico Project at 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 an edited volume. All papers, along with other background information and analysis, can be accessed online at the Mexico Institute's webpage and are copyrighted to the author.

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INTRODUCTION

Between 2008 and 2012, murder, extortion and drug and human trafficking rose to unprecedented levels in the important northern manufacturing and industrial cities of Ciudad Juárez and Monterrey. Private sector leaders and organizations confronted their grim reality and staged protests, made concrete demands of authorities and launched a host of civic initiatives aimed at reducing crime. This research focuses on the civic response to the extreme spikes in violence and crime—the actions of the conventional “private sector,” made up of business leaders, captains of industry and associations of businesspeople, and from private citizens who formed civil society organizations focused on activities designed to combat delinquency.

Civil society is weak and thin in Mexico. The robust civil society sectors in the United States and in other Latin American nations such as Chile boast about 20 times more civic organizations per capita than Mexico. Generally speaking, civic participation in Mexico is also poorly developed. Political observers, civil society advocates, and philanthropic organizations attribute the narrow and fragile civil culture to a widespread lack of trust in the society at large, a conservative culture, a tradition of governmental hostility toward independent actors and a low level of philanthropy that would make civic organizations viable. In this context, it is unusual that business associations and civic groupings would “step up to the plate” and protest publicly, press authorities for action and launch civic initiatives to combat crime at a time when most citizens were overcome by terror and intimidated by the threats of extortion, kidnapping, and violence. Yet, in both Ciudad Juárez and Monterrey, businesspeople, professionals, and civic activists came together to make common cause against crime.

The private groups that arose to battle for improved citizen security are distinctive because they are hybrids. In both Juárez and Monterrey, the most important and successful private, civic groups working on security issues were organizations that brought together business leaders and business and industrial organizations with civic organizations that included medical associations, human rights defenders, academics, and other activists. Umbrella organizations like these that cut across sectors are highly unusual in Mexico. The two cities are “isolated cases” in that business and civil society groups were able to work together, especially in a country where the government is “not an impartial arbiter,” says Miguel Fernández, CEO of the expanding Transtelco fiber optics cable firm and president of the Plan Estratégico de Juárez, a participatory citizen initiative to improve the quality of life in the city.¹ Insecurity was so pervasive “it was at the point of destroying the city, and that placed it in the interest of everyone” to take action, says Fernández.²

The hybrid civic organizations created in Juárez and Monterrey to respond to the security emergency blur the lines of the conventional understanding of “private sector.” Their leadership and composition went outside of commerce and industry to tap talents in universities and non-governmental organizations and also included, in the early stages, representative groups such as neighborhood associations and market vendors. In this paper, “private sector” may refer to the narrow definition of commerce and industry and, more broadly, may also denote the combined forces of the business sector and civil society organizations working together.

The paper focuses on the nature and results of the civic engagement and activist postures adopted by the private sector in Juárez and Monterrey since 2008. The private sector has successfully

¹ Miguel Fernández, telephone interview with author, February 27, 2013.

²Ibid.

established dialogues with authorities, has been met with varying degrees of receptivity and response and has created its own mechanisms for monitoring and reporting on government actions to combat crime. Private sector activism in both cities is based on creating trust among citizens that encourages citizen reporting of crimes, and centers on pressing specific demands with local and state officials, staffing crime report hotlines and web platforms and creating channels of communication that relay citizen intelligence about delinquency to the authorities. The results of this activism are most evident in drops in crimes such as extortion, kidnapping, auto theft, and other robberies. Another significant result of the organizations and initiatives of the private sector in Ciudad Juárez and Monterrey is the demonstration effect for other cities and authorities across Mexico of how civic participation can be catalyzed and function as a constructive force for improving citizen security. Indeed, the private sector leaders of both cities are consulted often by business associations and civic groups in other states of Mexico for their know-how on participation and combating crime.

The achievements of business groups and civil society are important in the context of the horrific spate of violence and crime unleashed in Juárez and Monterrey and other regions of Mexico in recent years. The results that can be expected from the private sector are limited, however. The structural problems that either fuel or facilitate the expanding wave of crime require intervention by the state. A classic example is the police force. “Here we have no career as a policeman, we don’t know what that is,” says Jorge Tello Peón, former executive secretary of Mexico’s national public security system.³ Police agents are disdained by society and return the favor, and are condemned to dangerous jobs with low pay and few benefits. The private sector has pressed hard for cleaning up the police force in both cities with limited success. This is a campaign that, ultimately, demands an overhaul of personnel, training, upgraded equipment, and investigative techniques and the leadership and commitment of authorities in municipal, state and federal governments. Where the private sector can be effective regarding structural problems of impunity and the criminal justice system is in raising its voice to define the problems, propose actions and demand a response from government.

CIUDAD JUÁREZ

The recent history and rapid growth of Ciudad Juárez have been shaped by the city’s strategic location on the border with Texas and the commercial possibilities implied by being a gateway to the United States. The city has long been a magnet for migrants and legal and illicit trade crossing the border. The Bracero Program drew workers to the United States, and many of them ended up in Juárez when the program closed in 1965. The creation and rapid expansion of the assembly plant industry over the past 40 years shaped the recent, burgeoning growth of Ciudad Juárez. The population tripled from 1970, reaching about 1.2 million in the last decade. Disadvantaged workers, mostly women and young workers, flooded into the city pursuing jobs in the “maquiladora” manufacturing plants. The influx of workers from the bracero and maquiladora programs “contributed to the gradual process of social disorganization in Ciudad Juárez (because) chronic income vulnerability, repeated economic recessions, and weak family structures laid the foundations for the onset of violence.”⁴ Many of the children of working mothers were raised with little education and minimal parental supervision and became easy recruits for drug cartels that have been on the scene since at least the 1980s.

³ Jorge Tello Peón, interview with author, October 16, 2012.

⁴ Carlos Vilalta and Robert Muggah, “Violent Disorder in Ciudad Juárez: A Spatial Analysis of Homicide,” HASOW (Humanitarian Action in Situations other than War) Discussion Paper 1, September 2012:8. This summary of the city’s recent social evolution draws heavily on the Discussion Paper: 6-8.

The Security Crisis in Ciudad Juárez

Despite its modern history of rapid economic growth, a large influx of migrants and a heinous reputation for femicides, Ciudad Juárez had remained a place where businesses could thrive and their owners could live a pleasant existence just across the river from El Paso, Texas. That changed drastically seven years ago. As drug cartels fought for control of the vital Juárez transit point, a conflagration of violence overtook the city.

Drug traffickers of the Juárez and Sinaloa cartels and criminal bands waged war over the next three years, and Juárez became the most violent city in the world. The murder rate soared to between 178 and 224 murders per 100,000 inhabitants in 2009 and 2010. Violence also increased across Mexico between 2008 and 2010, and homicide became the leading cause of reduced life expectancy among males ages 20-44. Nowhere was the toll worse than in the state of Chihuahua. The killing in Ciudad Juárez and throughout the state lowered the life expectancy of males by 5.2 years.⁵

The terror of kidnapping also reached a peak in 2010. “There were 10 kidnappings a day, that’s when we began to organize,” says Jorge Contreras, a manufacturer who became a leader in several of the Juárez civic organizations.⁶ Businessmen hired bodyguards. The city began to empty out as families moved across the border or to central Mexican states. Several thousand businesses closed, shops and restaurants shut their doors and nobody dared go out at night.

Beginning in 2005, Juárez had fallen prey to the violent rivalry between the Juárez Cartel and its violent arm, La Línea, and the Sinaloa Cartel, the powerful organization headed by legendary trafficker Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán. Murders tripled between 2007 and 2008, when more than 1,600 people were killed.⁷ The government sent 2,000 army troops to Juárez in March, 2008, as part of a Chihuahua joint operation.⁸ But violence grew worse.

Telephone extortion calls began to sweep through neighborhoods, and became commonplace. As 2008 wore on, doctors and lawyers were kidnapped. Businessmen, too, were carried away by criminal bands seizing people for ransom. Organized crime then began demanding protection money from businesses in central Juárez and the tourist district. “Kidnapping and extortion had been unknown in Juárez,” recalls Contreras, who presided over a non-profit economic development agency when the crime wave began.⁹

As killings increased in 2010, the army was withdrawn and 4,500 federal police were sent in to try to bring order in the city. It was not until the July 2011 capture of José Antonio Acosta Hernández, aka “El Diego,” leader of La Línea, the armed wing of the Juárez Cartel, that the murder rate began to come down. In custody, Acosta reportedly confessed to having ordered 1,500 murders. Months later, a large contingent of federal police was withdrawn, and state and municipal forces began to

⁵ Guillermo Julián González-Pérez, María Guadalupe Vega-López, and Carlos Enrique Cabrera-Pivaral, “Impacto de la violencia homicida en la esperanza de vida masculina en México,” *Revista Panamericana de Salud Pública* 32, no. 5 (2012):335-42, <http://www.scielosp.org/pdf/rpsp/v32n5/v32n5a03.pdf>.

⁶ Jorge Contreras, interview with author, September 27, 2012.

⁷ Borderland Beat, “Murders in Ciudad Juarez Top 2009 Total,” Nov. 20, 2010, <http://www.borderlandbeat.com/2010/11/murders-in-ciudad-juarez-top-2009-total.html>.

⁸ Wikipedia, “Operation Chihuahua,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Chihuahua.

⁹ Jorge Contreras.

take responsibility for security in the metropolitan area. Acosta's arrest is widely considered among Juárez activists to mark a turning point in the crime surge. After the arrest, Juárez began to see the beginning of a gradual decline in high-impact crime, a decline that is attributed to many different factors.

The Strategic Plan of Juárez

When the security crisis struck, Juárez could draw on the background of experience, relationships and strategic thinking developed by a citizen-led Strategic Plan, a non-governmental organization operating since 2001. The Strategic Plan of Juárez (Plan Estratégico de Juárez) is the effort of a plural, multiparty group of citizens with the goal of creating a participatory comprehensive development plan for the city. Between 2002 and 2004, 14,000 citizens took part in the planning process. "People are eager to participate when they see you are non-partisan," says Lucinda Vargas, an economist and director general of the Plan Estratégico.¹⁰ Many of the business and civic leaders formed through the planning work went on to become active participants in the Mesa de Seguridad, the civic organization that became the leading force in citizen-government collaboration on security beginning in 2010.

The initial implementation of the plan began in 2005 and 2006, but some of the projects ran up against the political agenda. "The relationship between society and government failed," recalls a professional leading the effort who asked that this comment be not for attribution.¹¹ The plan pulled back and after a rethink focused instead on promoting a set of cross-cutting policies to promote governability, a broad social pact for the city, and ad hoc initiatives to combat insecurity and impunity. The Plan released its Pact for Juárez in 2007, a proposal dedicated to creating the conditions for a governable Juárez. The pact was firmly based on the concept of co-responsibility between government and citizens for planning and managing the city to improve the quality of life for residents. The pact called for respect for law and order, and its *Manifiesto* demanded the elimination of corruption in public administration and pledged to create an ad hoc mechanism to promote security and social peace.¹²

Comité Médico Ciudadano

The direct civic response to the surge of violence and crime in Ciudad Juárez took form in December 2008 when some 200 doctors organized a march to protest the lack of security. The march sparked the formation of the Citizens' Medical Committee (Comité Médico Ciudadano), which aimed to create social networks that would encourage civic participation to combat insecurity. A surgeon and talented communicator, Dr. Arturo Valenzuela, began delivering a talk on the "pathology of kidnapping," and showed his audiences at schools, churches, and in professional and business associations the alarming increase in crime rates. His talks concluded with a call to action: his insistence that Juárez residents had it within their power to promote a culture of law and order. They could start by moving past their distrust of authorities and filing complaints about crimes, he argued. On an ad hoc basis, four doctors posted a call-in number to receive reports of kidnappings. Residents called in because they knew the responder would be a doctor, and the informal service

¹⁰ Lucinda Vargas, interview with author, September 28, 2012.

¹¹ Not-for-attribution interview with author, September 28, 2012.

¹² Plan Estratégico de Juárez, "Manifiesto por la Gobernabilidad de Juárez," <http://www.pactoporjuarez.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Manifiesto.pdf>.

was able to resolve 35 cases that were reported and offered advice about the logistics of rescue for non-reported cases.

Juarenses por la Paz

As the medical committee (CMC) was evolving, another group—Juarenses por la Paz (JPP or Juárez Residents for Peace)—had begun working to identify solutions for combating crime. Created in 2008, JPP was a heterogeneous group of business people, lawyers and other professionals. The two incipient groups met, and began an exchange about how to improve security.

In early 2009, a local newspaper editor, Oscar Cantú, organized a meeting that brought together longstanding business and community organizations and academics with these new activist groups. Leaders of two of the assembly plant associations, the wholesale market organization, church pastors and women’s groups met with heads of Juarenses por la Paz and the Comité Médico Ciudadano. The encounter proved catalytic, allowing each group to see that other people of good will shared the same concerns and were focused on addressing the same problems, participants recall. This heterogeneous group began studying organized crime and crime-fighting practices from Palermo, Italy, and the turnaround by the former cartel center of Medellín, Colombia. The encounters led to the creation of a non-profit monitoring group, the Juárez Observatory for Public Security and Social Security. The Association of Maquiladoras (AMAC) played a visible role in this effort by offering its offices for the new group’s meetings.

From the time JPP became active in 2008, the group launched a program to track crimes. JPP defined a set of security indicators that tracked the incidence of high-impact crimes that most affected citizens, including homicides, kidnapping, auto theft with and without violence, extortion, and robberies of business with violence. JPP provided information to authorities about where the crime problems were concentrated. This worked as a means of ensuring that police do their job, of monitoring the work of government to see results, and of developing ideas for strengthening institutions. Anonymous citizen reports of kidnapping and extortion and intelligence-sharing between authorities and civic groups are the main instruments for working to reduce these high-impact crimes. To encourage citizens to report crime, JPP introduced Crime Stoppers to Juárez and administered this hotline, which functioned well during 2009 and 2010 when the service had cooperation from the then-mayor. “No other organization in Juárez had worked on security,” says Fernández of the Plan Estratégico de Juárez.¹³ Their experience and leadership would prove invaluable later when the federal government invited civil society to collaborate in a broad anti-crime campaign.

Solution for Juárez

By 2009, extortion had reached epidemic proportions and spread into middle class neighborhoods, terrorizing residents. Members of JPP met with the state attorney general, Patricia González, to demand action. Her response was to recommend paying protection money and letting the authorities trace the money. To members of the JPP, this seemed like a recommendation to acquiesce to the demands of organized crime, with little or no chance of recovering the funds handed over to the extortionists. Whether this was a sign of indifference or even corruption on the part of the attorney general, it solidified the existing disaffection of civil society with the state government.¹⁴

¹³ Miguel Fernández.

¹⁴ González’s term ended with a cloud of controversy. In late 2010, days after González left office, she was accused of having ties to the Juárez Cartel. In a widely circulated internet video, González’s brother Mario made a videotaped

As frustration mounted, the CMC called for a protest demonstration. The organizers—doctors, human rights leaders and academics—decided it was essential that the protest place specific demands before authorities. In December 2009, the “Solution for Juárez” march gathered 2,000 people outside the city hall. This was a significant show of civic activism at a time when the city was living a reign of terror.

The six demands called for federal, state and municipal authorities to join in a pact between government and society that would install a permanent assembly to develop a rescue plan and a sweeping social policy to attack the causes of violence and provide aid for victims of crime, to complete restructuring of security forces with an emphasis on intelligence and overhaul the justice system to combat impunity and resolve crime. “The violence is not exclusively a public security problem, but rather an authentic crisis of governance and cannot be resolved exclusively with traditional strategies in the hands of police and the army,” the protesters said. The marchers demanded that President Felipe Calderón visit Juárez to set in motion the crime-fighting pact. After the march, federal authorities met with leaders of the Observatory and promised a visit by Calderón, although no date was set.

Less than eight weeks later, tragedy struck. On Jan. 31, 2010, 20 gunmen burst into a party of students and killed 15 people. Calderón mistakenly claimed the slayings were the product of a dispute between drug gangs, implying the youths were criminals. The president was soon forced to admit his error. The massacre at Villas de Salvárcar, perpetrated by a criminal gang seeking to murder rivals, was a grievous case of mistaken identity. The tragedy galvanized the government into action, and on Feb. 17, the president and his entire Cabinet came to Juárez, heard the stinging criticisms of mothers of the slain students, and heard the desperation and demands of civil society leaders. This meeting broke down the conventional barriers between government and society, say Juárez participants.

We Are All Juárez and the Mesa de Seguridad

Calderón then launched the “We are All Juárez” (Todos Somos Juárez) program aimed at implementing an anti-crime strategy that coordinated all levels of government, brought in civic groups and included social actions to foster crime prevention. Todos Somos Juárez called for representatives of the federal, state and municipal governments to develop and implement programs with local civil society participants grouped together in six task forces focused on security, labor, health, economy, education, and social development. The president sent his top security adviser, Tello Peón, to Juárez, where he met with citizens as the security task force—the Mesa de Seguridad—was being organized. An intelligence expert, Tello Peón had the authority to make demands of the army and police and came with a mandate from the president to listen to citizen demands. Ultimately, the task forces designed a total of 160 measures to attack crime and its social roots and to improve living conditions in the city.

The security task force, the Mesa de Seguridad, is widely considered the most successful of the Todos Somos Juárez initiatives. It included officials from all three levels of government, representatives of the security forces including the army, federal, and municipal police and the

confession at gunpoint, in which he claimed that he was the contact between his sister and the Juárez Cartel. William Booth and Nick Miroff, “Mexican Drug Cartel Forces Lawyer’s Video Confessions,” *Washington Post*, October 30 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/10/30/AR2010103004757.html>.

attorney general's office together with 24 citizen delegates drawn from the bar association, human rights commission, assembly plant associations, and civic groups including the CMC, Juarenses por la Paz, a youth group, a citizen observatory, the strategic plan project, and the university. It was not a natural combination. "The looks were like at a poker game," recalls Valenzuela of the Citizens' Medical Committee and a prominent civil society participant in the Mesa.¹⁵ Still, a breakthrough in collaboration was achieved between these disparate personages. "We took a leap of faith, we were in a situation so extreme that many people let down their defenses and were willing to enter into this dialogue," says Vargas, director of the Plan Estratégico.

Both sides of the table were committed to working together. The visit of Calderón and the persistence of Juarenses por la Paz in working with authorities had established the dynamic of dialogue that assured the composition of the Mesa de Seguridad was decided correctly. Calderón assigned Facundo Rosas, at the time the federal police commissioner, to visit Juárez monthly with the pledge that civil society had a direct line to the Cabinet if the security agenda was not progressing well. A good working relationship was established with Rosas. "Trust exists with a person, not with the authority in general," says Valenzuela.¹⁶

The diverse private sector groups in the Mesa de Seguridad include two bar associations, business chambers of merchants and restaurant owners, two maquiladora associations, the economic development organization, the human rights commission, youth for Juárez, JPP, the medical committee, Plan Estratégico, Observatorio Ciudadano, and the Autonomous University of Chihuahua. Because of its experience tracking crime and promoting citizen denunciations, JPP became a leader in the Mesa, and its president, Abel Ayala, was named technical secretary of the Mesa.

Within the Mesa de Seguridad, 12 committees were set up with responsibility for oversight of investigative police and prosecution, the immediate response center, secure corridors, a culture of legality, vehicle identification, reports on crimes in bars, citizen intelligence, crime indicators, kidnapping and extortion, preventive police, communication, and liaison with the attorney general. A representative of government participates in each commission alongside the private sector delegates.

In 2010, the Mesa de Seguridad demanded that Calderón assign an additional 200 investigative police to the Juárez attorney general's office. The intention was to develop an intelligence strategy to complement the army's ongoing effort to control territory in the city. At the time, violence was charging toward new record highs, and the attorney general's office had 34 staff assigned to that unit, but only one agent actually conducted investigations. The federal government responded by sending 40 officers. All were assigned to investigation. Today, Juarez has 76 police investigators who investigate crimes and have been important in developing an anti-kidnapping unit that advocates say is effective. Professionally trained investigators are scarce in Mexico, so security analysts consider this a positive development.

Turning the Tide of Crime and Violence

By the end of 2010, murder had reached a record level of 2,000 in the year. In March 2011, the city government took action to improve policing. Retired Lt. Col. Julián Leyzaola was hired to take charge of the Juárez police. A controversial figure, he came from a stint in Tijuana where he led the

¹⁵ Dr. Arturo Valenzuela, interview with author, September 28, 2012.

¹⁶ Ibid.

police and presided over a decline in crime. Leyzaola built the Juárez municipal police force to 2,000 agents and saw to it that at least half the force was active on the street. He also began cleaning up the force. In April, crime began to subside.

The monthly crime indicators report is a prominent feature of the Mesa's work. Developed by an engineer and assembly plant manager, the indicators document the rates of violent and high-impact crimes since peak levels in late 2010 and the first half of 2011. The indicators track homicides, kidnapping, extortion and violent and non-violent car thefts. Every month, the authorities meet with the Mesa and together they review the latest statistics and analyze the results in reducing these crimes. "What you measure you can improve," says manufacturer Contreras of the Mesa.¹⁷ Government representatives in the Mesa "have an interest in coming and presenting good numbers and if not, they lower they heads," he says.

Murders dropped to 42 during the month of July 2012, an 81 percent improvement in 12 months. By September, the Juárez murder rate had fallen further, to one a day, an amount that "is still high for our goals," said then-Mayor Héctor Murguía.¹⁸ Reported kidnappings reached 14 in May 2011, and have fallen ever since, including three months with no incidents. Kidnapping figures are considered incomplete, however, because many victims do not report the crime. Another underreported crime, extortion and protection rackets, is on a slightly downward trend, but increased between November 2011 and April 2012. During July 2012, the crime report registered 108 violent car thefts, a 64-percent improvement over the previous year. By year-end 2012, Juárez had seen the lowest rates of high-impact crimes in three years. The Mesa tracking tool showed that no kidnappings were reported in December, and the city experienced the lowest rates of homicides, auto theft and reports of extortion since 2009. While there have been periods of fluctuation, trends in 2013 suggest that the city has sustained lower rates of violent crime.

A strategy devised by a Mesa committee has been highly effective in attacking the pervasive problem of unlicensed cars. In 2010, 40 percent of all cars circulating in Juárez had no license plates, making easy for criminals to attack and escape without a trace. A campaign dubbed "My Car in Order for a Safe Juárez" (*Mi auto derecho por un Juárez seguro*) was launched in 2011. The campaign called for citizens to get plates for their cars and to take other precautions such as checking the registry to be sure a car they might buy was not stolen, to avoid buying stolen car parts and to put serial numbers on their car parts to dissuade theft. In 2012, the percentage of unidentified cars had dropped to 7 percent, according to a survey of 5,000 cars.

A Mesa committee has created a facility for receiving grievances about omissions or abuse by authorities. This service, called Center of Citizen Trust (Centro de Confianza Ciudadano), includes features that reduce fear of filing a complaint about mistreatment by any security force. The center is staffed by citizens and is located within the state attorney general's office in Juárez, and thus is readily accessible for people involved in court cases. Led by Gustavo de la Rosa, a member of the state human rights commission and former head of the penitentiary system, the center provides legal advice and follows up on complaints. While federal police were operating in Juárez from April 2010 to October 2011, a good relationship was forged between the Mesa de Seguridad and the internal affairs division of the federal police. Cases were brought against 89 federal police, 42 of whom were sentenced.

A successful strategy aimed at driving away extortionists was carried out through coordination

¹⁷ Jorge Contreras.

¹⁸ Héctor Murguía, interview with author, September 28, 2012.

between the Mesa, federal police commissioner Facundo Rosas and the regional federal police chief, Luis Cárdenas Palomino. More than 200 shopkeepers and restaurateurs agreed to stand up to the criminal gangs by refusing to give in to extortion demands. Banners were hung on strategic avenues that said, “Here, the only tax we pay is property tax” and “For a Juárez on its feet, never again on its knees.” Two hundred police were assigned to secure the perimeter of the central commercial and entertainment district called Pronaf and to patrol the area. When a business was approached by an extortionist, the owner would call the police, and a patrol car would pull up and detain the suspect. The intensive patrolling operation lasted several months, and resulted in the arrest and sentencing of many extortionists, greatly reducing the crime. Today, Pronaf is open for business, and its restaurants and night life attractions are drawing customers again. New businesses are opening in the area which just two years ago was largely abandoned.

In mid-2011, Leyzaola launched an operation to detain people judged to have a “suspicious appearance,” many of them poor youths. In the past 15 months, 70,000 people, nearly 10 percent of the urban population, have been detained and fined. This measure is criticized by some civic activists who point out that only 3 percent of the detainees have been charged with a crime. They consider the detentions to be indiscriminate. Still, Leyzaola is considered to have been a factor in reducing crime, and is said to enjoy the support of some in the business community.

Murguía, mayor of Juárez from 2010-2013, took a narrow view of the role of the Mesa in addressing crime and improving security. “The Mesa (de Seguridad) is not operational; no citizen task force can substitute for the decision of governments to work together, the true heroes are the police,” the mayor said in an interview in his offices on Sept. 28, 2012. The mayor’s security strategy was centered on two fronts: breaking the city into six districts, and deploying properly equipped police units to patrol those areas, and creating community centers that offer sports, music classes, and other activities for youth and families. Coordination between the levels of government was also important. “When a house is burning, you can’t fight over who takes the bucket,” he said. Murguía was controversial because soon after his first term ended in 2007, his former police director was arrested by U.S. agents for bribing an undercover cop to allow him to transport drugs. Murguía was later elected to a second, non-consecutive term in office.

Murguía did an apparent about-face in February 2013, when he called for “institutionalization” of the Mesa de Seguridad. The mayor invited the Mesa to regular meetings with the city council, attorney general and police chief, and the Mesa agreed. “We see the permanence of Todos Somos Juárez, the Mesa de Seguridad is institutionalized, we don’t have legal status, the relationship between society and government becomes formalized,” says Valenzuela of the Mesa. The scope and terms of Mesa participation in municipal security remain to be seen.

Since taking office in October 2010, the governor of Chihuahua, César Duarte, took a number of important decisions that supported the drive against crime and improved the climate for civic-government engagement. He replaced the controversial attorney general, Patricia González. His appointee as attorney general for the northern district which includes Juárez, Jorge González Nicolás, has achieved a high rate of convictions in high-impact crimes, and leaders of the Mesa praise his work. Duarte backed the creation of an anti-kidnapping unit that has proven effective. The governor set up monthly meetings with state judges to press for convictions and sentencing and convened the state legislature, which improved an initiative that allows life sentences. “The three powers (of Chihuahua state) built the initiatives and today we have a new structure,” he said in a speech before President Enrique Peña Nieto in December 2012.

In early 2013, Duarte proposed that town councils send their nominees for municipal public safety chief to the state legislature for approval. The State Council for Public Security was reconstituted and its membership is now evenly split between representatives of government and citizen delegates. The council regularly reviews the statewide indicators on crime and discusses measures for confronting delinquency. The governor also put teeth into the council by pressing for a law requiring that the attorney general's office and other security agencies adopt the council's proposals. Citizen representatives are pressing for measures to strengthen institutions, including a code of ethics for the attorney general's office. "It's not very comfortable to press for a code of ethics, we are going to affect interests," says Contreras, now a member of the council.¹⁹

Businessmen across Chihuahua state decided for a self-imposed tax of 5 percent on the payroll of companies to raise funds to support crime-fighting actions. The monies collected in Juárez throughout 2012 were to be invested locally to finance a Citizen Observatory to geo-reference the location of crimes, study the origins of violence, and support a center for citizen reports on crime and on abuse by authorities. A statewide survey of perceptions of security will be conducted. The tax was to be applied for three years, through 2014, and the funds administered by a trust run by entrepreneurs.

Results: Juárez

After becoming the most violent city in the world, Ciudad Juárez has experienced a steady and significant decline in homicides since 2010. The number of murders decreased from 3,622 in 2010, to 2,086 in 2011, then fell by 60 percent to 797 in 2012 and dropped to 481 in 2013.²⁰ During 2013, the murder rate averaged 36 per 100,000 inhabitants, slightly lower than the murder rate in the same year in New Orleans, where murders have fallen sharply since 2008.²¹ Other violent crimes, such as kidnappings and violent carjacking, have also declined since mid-2011. The conclusion of the turf war between the Juárez and Sinaloa cartels is widely considered to have been a leading factor, but not the only one, in the reduction of violence. The positive results are considered the product of efforts of Leyzaola to reduce corruption and the activities led by citizen and citizen-business groups. The Mesa de Seguridad, and several social initiatives of other Todos Somos Juárez task forces, are considered by analysts to have improved conditions for reducing violence and high-impact crimes. Of all the task forces created by Todos Somos Juárez, the Mesa de Seguridad is widely recognized as the most successful and enduring.

An essential underpinning to the success of the Mesa de Seguridad was its origin as part of Todos Somos Juárez. Calderón's backing for the multifaceted Todos Somos Juárez program meant that federal officials would attend meetings and work with civil society, and government spending increased significantly. Many of the leaders who stepped into the fray of the crisis of violence were already known and experienced civic leaders, and were quickly incorporated into the Mesa. Other task forces of Todos Somos Juárez also worked effectively. The education and social development mesas have led campaigns that lengthen the school day in 60 primary schools in high-risk

¹⁹ Jorge Contreras.

²⁰ Elyssa Pachico, "Juarez Murder Rate Reaches 5-year Low," InSight Crime, Jan. 4, 2013, <http://www.insightcrime.org/news-analysis/juarez-murder-rate-reaches-5-year-low/>; Mesa de Seguridad y Justicia, Comité de Indicadores, Diciembre de 2013: Slides 2, 5, <http://www.mesadeseuridad.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Indicadores-Diciembre.pdf>.

²¹ Ibid.; Brandy Zadrozny, "The Year in Murder: 2013 Marks a Historic Low for Many Cities," The Daily Beast, Jan. 1, 2014. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/01/01/the-year-in-murder-2013-marks-a-historic-low-for-many-cities.html>.

neighborhoods and position schools so that youth identify with them by offering sports and music programs. Parks and public spaces were improved and citizens now feel safer to move about in their neighborhoods. Community centers were built in depressed areas to provide activities for adults and children. These and other measures have helped lower the incidence of crime. The economic task force worked to promote the city and stimulate investment and employment.

Local ownership of the mounting insecurity problem was decisive in tackling the crime surge. Duarte and the Mesa de Seguridad were the leading local actors. Shortly after taking office in October 2010, the governor called in a diverse group of people to brainstorm about the lack of security. The group included representatives of civil society, leading business organizations—the chambers of commerce (Canaco), manufacturing (Canacintra) and the maquiladora association—and educators and legislators. This meeting of the minds was motivated by “desperation” and fear over kidnappings, recalls Gabriel Flores, then a business leader and now a state legislator.²² Coordination between the federal and state governments and with the federal police force improved. “Things were so bad we had to work together, and the political will that was put behind coordination created a sense of hope,” says Flores.

Duarte agreed to put in place a private sector initiative and set up a state council for public security with a membership split evenly between official delegates and citizen representatives. The business sector was granted incentives by the federal and state governments, and tax deferments on investments in Juárez. In accordance with federal law, the real estate industry stopped denominating contracts in U.S. dollars and switched to Mexican pesos, a move it hoped would stimulate sales. Restaurants and shops soon followed suit.

Civic leaders of the Plan Estratégico and the Mesa de Seguridad emphasize the “invisible but indispensable advances” achieved by mixed government-civic groups and their collaborative initiatives. First among them is to trust in authorities and engage in a dialogue. The dialogue is a vehicle for citizens to express their needs and demands for security to the responsible authorities and to follow up on unresolved crimes and cases of abuse. In this sense, the Mesa became a mechanism for monitoring the government response and for holding the authorities accountable. The Mesa established commitments for citizens and authorities alike. Intelligence-sharing has become a fruitful area of public-private collaboration. The Mesa and other civic groups created a trustworthy channel that encouraged people to denounce kidnappings and extortion. The stream of complaints provided useful on-the-ground intelligence about kidnapping, extortion and protection money rings for police, and civil society worked to help victims by following up on the cases. Even though the local police force has a hotline (Centro de Respuesta Inmediata) for receiving anonymous complaints, residents prefer to contact citizen groups to denounce crime.

The Mesa de Seguridad serves as a bridge between government and civil society and has also facilitated inter-institutional coordination. During the Calderón administration, the different military and security agencies failed to coordinate their actions, but the Mesa succeeded in bringing them together. “We always convene the army, navy, intelligence office, and federal and state police,” says a businessman involved in the Mesa. The people responsible for dealing with car theft in the federal, state, and municipal police forces and the army did not know each other until civil society brought them together to combat carjackings in a year when 17,000 cars were stolen in Juárez.

When the Mesa staked out clear positions and followed them up, it got a response from authorities that led to improvements in security. The demand for beefing up the investigative police unit led to a

²² Gabriel Flores, interview with author, September 27, 2012.

doubling of its agents and put muscle into the nearly nonexistent investigations up to that time. The Mesa pressured the government to act to reduce abuses by army troops and federal police and the government followed up on specific grievances that were filed. After the Mesa set up the Center of Citizen Trust, it became easier to register complaints, and the Center has pursued cases of abuse that have led to the jailing of 50 federal police. Collaboration with government by business associations and civil society organizations is rooted in three conditions, says Contreras. These are: acceptance by authorities of citizen participation, respect for the rule of law and establishing best practices in institutions which transcend the terms of mayors and governors.

Police reform has proven to be one of the most difficult areas of implementation. The municipal police remains a small force, and recruitment is far behind schedule. Cleaning up the police force has moved slowly, say members of the Mesa. The confidence tests to screen for drug use, links to organized crime and skills and abilities to perform on the job are proceeding at a glacial pace. An obstacle to the screenings is that the state has only two professionals trained to administer lie detector tests, and both are based in the capital city of Chihuahua, 215 miles south of Juárez. At best, the police could be tested two at a time. “Political will has been lacking regarding the confidence tests,” says Valenzuela of the Mesa. Building up a reliable, professional police force remains a serious challenge and one of the greatest concerns of the Mesa. “The majority of our effort is to make demands, we process information, see that it is complete and demand commitments for improvement in the municipal police force,” he adds.

Critics point to glaring social problems that persist in Juárez. The government does not engage in long-term planning, and has not yet provided basic services to many neighborhoods. In some cases, Todos Somos Juárez has made improvements in individual schools or communities, but these are isolated cases rather than a general trend. Ciudad Juárez built up over the last 40 years of rapid growth a cumulative social debt with its work force and youth that remains an urgent problem, and attending to community needs must be part of the security strategy.

MONTERREY

Like Juárez, Monterrey also grew rapidly in the last 50 years as migrants from small towns and rural areas of Mexico flocked to the city seeking to land working-class jobs with the enormous corporations that drive the economy of Nuevo León state. Monterrey is considered the industrial capital of Mexico, and is the headquarters of huge Mexican multinational corporations such as Cemex and Femsa and to enormous Mexican conglomerates such as the diversified manufacturers Grupo Alfa and Cydsa.

The weight of Monterrey’s giant corporations and the links between their executives have created an unusually cohesive business sector in Mexico’s industrial capital. The heads of the dozen or so biggest corporations meet regularly and discuss their concerns. Each company takes responsibility for studying an issue such as security, energy, education, post-hurricane reconstruction, or institution-building. The company reports back about its assigned topic to the so-called Group of Businesses of Nuevo León, which then decides which policies and activities to support.

The bonds that tie this group together go far beyond business interests. The links are familial and intimate; many of the heads of the multinationals are cousins, relatives or are related through marriage. The strength of the city in the national economy and the power of Mexico’s leading multinationals headquartered there carry leverage with the national government and open doors in Mexico City. Beyond that, the Monterrey executives and the president in office and cabinet officials are well known to each other. This has meant that when violence and crime struck Monterrey,

businesses got and will get a hearing immediately with the highest-ranking federal officials.

Monterrey's Security Crisis

Monterrey industries and the city's prosperity benefited for decades from a prevailing climate of security. For many years, the crime rate was so low in Monterrey that people barely discussed it. "Businesses were focused on growth," says Javier Treviño, a former Cemex executive, state government official deputy governor, and now a federal deputy.²³ Some business leaders say the city was a "paradise" of security. Until 2006, the city was considered the safest in Latin America by business publications.²⁴

The longstanding peacefulness began to break apart in in 2007 when violence increased notably. Murders and kidnappings related to drug trafficking hit a new high; over 100 people were killed in the metropolitan area, including more than two dozen police officers, and 88 people were reported as kidnapped and disappeared.²⁵ Also that year, armed robberies of stores, bank robberies and carjacking increased and extortion by phone calls became common.

In 2008, members of the Beltrán Leyva trafficking group started settling in Monterrey and setting up business. They soon forged ties with local political leaders and businessmen. About this time, the Beltrán Leyva group had developed a partnership with the Zetas, based on the Gulf Coast, and the Zetas had already begun to move into Monterrey.²⁶ Organized crime sought to reap maximum benefit from Monterrey's longstanding assets, its wealthy market and the city's proximity and transportation links to the U.S. border. Murders in the city doubled during 2008, to more than 5,300, fueled by rivalries stemming from the splitting off of the Beltrán Leyva group from the Sinaloa Cartel in early 2008, the state attorney general reported.²⁷

During 2007 and 2008, the number of youths joining gangs in Monterrey doubled to over 26,000, the state Ministry of Public Security reported, although specialists considered this a low estimate. In the same period, the number of gangs in metropolitan Monterrey rose to nearly 2,000, and in Escobedo municipality alone tripled to 492 in 2008, according to a study by the Autonomous University of Nuevo León.²⁸

²³ Javier Treviño, interview with author, September 11, 2012.

²⁴ William Booth and Nick Miroff, "Mexican drug cartel forces lawyer's video confessions," *Washington Post*, Oct. 30, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/10/30/AR2010103004757.html>.

²⁵ U.S. State Department, "Mexico 2008 Crime and Safety Report: Monterrey," Jan. 30, 2008, <https://www.osac.gov/pages/ContentReportPDF.aspx?cid=6242>; Borderland Beat, "'Narco' Offensive Strikes Monterrey"; "In Two Years the Number of Gang Members Doubles in Monterrey, Mexico," translation of story by Diego E. Osorno, *Milenio*, March 15, 2009, posted by Kristin Bricker, March 23, 2009, <http://narcosphere.narconews.com/notebook/kristin-bricker/2009/03/two-years-number-gang-members-doubles-monterrey-mexico>.

²⁶ Steven Dudley, "The Zetas and the Battle for Monterrey: Part I — How the Zetas Took Monterrey," InSight Crime, December 16, 2012, <http://www.insightcrime.org/zetas-monterrey/how-the-zetas-took-monterrey>; "Mexico's Monterrey still ranks as top city, despite violence," *Los Angeles Times* blog, August 15, 2012, http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/world_now/2012/08/mexicos-monterrey-still-ranks-as-top-city-despite-violence.html.

²⁷ "Mexico gang killings more than double in 2008: Drug cartels are fighting increasingly bloody battles among themselves," Associated Press, December 8, 2008, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/28119385/ns/world_news-america/t/mexico-gang-killings-more-double/.

²⁸ Borderland Beat, "'Narco' Offensive."

After the killing of Zeta lieutenant Sergio Peña Mendoza in January 2010, the Zetas broke off from the Gulf Cartel, and Monterrey was a leading battleground between the rivals. Brutal killings, roadblocks and kidnappings became common. In 2010, the number of homicides in Monterrey and the state of Nuevo León tripled to 828. The Zetas had penetrated police forces, and during 2010, Monterrey fired more than 400 officials—nearly half the force—and two other municipalities in the metropolitan area fired some 200 officials each.²⁹

The slaying continued in 2011 as the rivalry between the Gulf Cartel and the Zetas raged on. The security chief of a Monterrey prison and the top intelligence official of the state were murdered in February, and during the first half of the year, 78 security officials were killed. The afternoon of August 25, 2011, eight gunmen carrying automatic weapons and gasoline burst into the Casino Royale in Monterrey, poured gasoline and set the gaming machines afire. Fifty-two people died in the brutal attack. Among the five suspects initially rounded up by authorities, one was a state policeman who confessed to being a Zeta.³⁰

In 2012, gruesome and widespread violence continued to plague Monterrey. The mutilated bodies of 49 people were dumped in the state, a prison riot in the municipality of Apodaca provided cover for the escape of 30 prisoners and murders on the streets continued. The State Department reported experts' estimates of one or two kidnappings a day in the city of Monterrey and noted that the underreported crime would be much higher if the metropolitan area as a whole were considered. The prime targets were "mid-level Mexican business executives and entrepreneurs," and 16 U.S. citizens were also kidnapped during the year, three of whom were confirmed dead.³¹

Illuminate Nuevo León

In August, 2008, alarmed civic leaders organized a march called "Let's Illuminate Nuevo León", and 25,000 adults, children and youth, dressed in white and carrying candles marched to a central plaza to protest violence and crime. Their demands: a police reform and improved security. The Illuminate Nuevo León protest in 2008 was an unprecedented event for conservative, business-focused Monterrey, and marked a watershed in civic life because it showed that mobilizing citizens was possible. The protesters placed four specific demands before authorities. First, they demanded the governor dedicate three hours a day to security matters. They also called for a cleanup of the police force, a revamping of the process for denouncing crimes to make it reliable and, lastly, a reform of criminal investigation offices and courts. "The march drew a sharp line, and showed the only way to defend citizens was with institutions," recalls a businessman who presides over a leading civic group.³²

Illuminate Nuevo León placed demands on institutions even though the state government and the

²⁹ Steven Dudley, "The Zetas in Monterrey: Part III — The Battle for Monterrey." InSight Crime. December 16, 2012, <http://www.insightcrime.org/zetas-monterrey/part-iii-the-battle-for-monterrey>.

³⁰ Steven Dudley, "The Zetas in Monterrey: Part II — The Zetas and Monterrey Math." InSight Crime, December 16, 2012, <http://www.insightcrime.org/zetas-monterrey/part-iii-the-battle-for-monterrey>.

³¹ Department of State, OSAC, Bureau of Diplomatic Security, "Mexico 2013 Crime and Safety Report: Monterrey," <https://www.osac.gov/Pages/ContentReportDetails.aspx?cid=13553>.

³² Interview with businessman, October 16, 2012.

nine municipal governments of metropolitan Monterrey had demonstrated their inability to act in a way that could protect citizens. Recent cases of corruption and fraud in a Monterrey municipality had been exposed by civic groups, but authorities took no action. “There comes a moment when the only thing you can do is to act with a civic conscience,” says a businessman-activist.³³

The Crime Stoplight and the Consejo Cívico

One month after the march, the Crime Stoplight (Semáforo Delictivo) was launched. It is a civic intervention to monitor the trends in murder, carjacking, thefts in homes and businesses, and family violence in each municipality of greater Monterrey, including Monterrey itself, which is the state capital. Designed in consultation with security experts, the Crime Stoplight draws its information from the attorney general’s office. The Crime Stoplight is a tool for holding government accountable because it identifies progress and setbacks in combating crime in each metropolitan township.

As the presence of organized crime groups expanded in Monterrey during 2009, violence and crimes continued to mount. In early 2010, the private sector decided to back the revitalization of a civic group that had languished over the years. The Consejo Cívico (formerly known as the Civic Council of Institutions of Nuevo León, called CCINLAC) was reconstituted and began working to demand effective public policies to restore security. At the outset of this new phase, the Consejo Cívico began operating as a repository of the business chambers of bankers, employers, and manufacturers. Among those groups, the employers’ association (Coparmex) had been assigned responsibility for coordinating with the state attorney general’s office.

The Consejo Cívico is a hybrid organization, a non-partisan association that brings together business chambers, professional associations, civic and charity organizations, neighborhood organizations, human rights groups, and sports clubs. It has become the standard-bearer of a security agenda shared by the private sector and civil society, and has grown to count 100 organizations as members. As a representative group, the Consejo Cívico has become a legitimate spokesperson for the needs and concerns of civil society. The group serves as a bridge for building dialogues between the private sector and civil society organizations and the government and business.

The major lines of Consejo’s actions are to act as a watchdog and demand accountability in the security and the penal and justice systems, serve as an interlocutor with state and municipal security agencies, promote civility and a culture of peace and legality and combat corruption through collaborating with local academic institutions to advocate reforms and set up a state anticorruption agency.

The Consejo also manages the public release of the crime-monitoring Stoplight. The results of the Stoplight are released at a monthly news conference delivered jointly by two of the city’s leading business chambers, Coparmex and CAINTRA, and the Consejo. The study causes some friction with state authorities and “has had an impact as a way of ranking the municipalities,” says a former civic leader.³⁴ Based on the Stoplight, the Consejo Cívico sets goals for reducing crime. “We put pressure on municipal and state authorities so they meet the goals, and we make specific assessments each month,” says Sandrina Molinard, manager of government evaluation with the Consejo.³⁵

³³ Interview with businessman-activist, October 16, 2012.

³⁴ Interview with former civic leader, October 16, 2012.

³⁵ Sandrina Molinard, interview with author, October 16, 2012.

In talks with the government, the Consejo Cívico and business groups sharpened their focus and centered increasingly on police reform. Following meetings with the state government, agreement was reached on a five-point pact to regain security by reforming the police, implementing the federal judicial reform, investing in social programs, and promoting a civic culture and respect for the law.

The ranking government official for each area was put in charge of implementation of the reforms, and the Consejo Cívico was assigned a direct role in oversight of each of the transformations in the five-point security pact. Cleaning up and professionalizing the police force were the first priorities in the pact. Confidence tests of state and municipal police, including lie-detector tests, were to be applied to determine the honesty of police agents. The chief of public security for Nuevo León was placed in charge of implementing the police reform, and the Consejo Cívico was responsible for oversight. The Consejo has taken steps to make the confidence tests of police transparent. In the past, mayors received the tests, stuffed them in drawers and took no action on the test results. The Consejo Cívico maintains a web platform containing confidence test results which are cross-checked with information published in the media.

An external evaluation of how the police were organized found that no reliable information existed about security forces in the state; there were no protocols, no shared radio frequencies between state and municipal police, and no proper list of agents on the payroll. “At that time, the perception had been that the problem was one of (the government) not wanting to act, but we learned it was a problem of not being able to act,” says Manuel Zavala, president of Consejo Cívico and a restaurateur.³⁶

Fuerza Civil

Nuevo León set out to create a new police force, Fuerza Civil, beginning in late 2010. Two urgent needs were to recruit quickly a cadre of new agents and give them proper training in a short time. A private sector alliance with the state government was put into action rapidly to give momentum to this effort. Six of Monterrey’s biggest companies put their human resources staff at the disposal of government to develop the recruiting and screening protocols and devise the career path and incentives to draw in applicants. “We established a consortium with businesses to carry out the vetting and recruiting of clean entry-level police,” says a Nuevo León security official.³⁷

Five universities offered their talent to prepare training programs for the police. The goal was to recruit and train 1,900 police during 2011. Despite the offer of a high salary of more than U.S. \$1,000 per month—nearly double the entry level elsewhere in Mexico—plus a benefit package including housing, insurance and a pension, few people applied for the dangerous job of patrolling Monterrey which, at the time, was experiencing its most violent year ever. The first recruits completed a compressed 3-month training, and Fuerza Civil was launched in June 2011 when 422 graduates were deployed in the city. By year’s end, Fuerza Civil had 900 agents, most of them from out of state. The goal was to recruit and train another 2,000 police by the end of 2012, and recruitment is taking place nationwide. Currently, the Fuerza Civil numbers about 2,500 agents and meeting the goal of recruiting 18,000 by the close of 2012 appears remote. Many former cops in Monterrey do not apply because they are waiting for a change in leadership and commitment at the top, says a security source. Turnover has been high, between 20 and 30 percent, because the officers

³⁶ Manuel Zavala, interview with author, October 16, 2012.

³⁷ Interview with Nuevo León security official, October 17, 2012.

don't adapt to confinement in the barracks for 20 days at a time. Some of these difficulties are typical start-up problems. A more intractable problem is that the commanders of the Fuerza Civil are drawn from the conventional police force, says a security analyst.

The state legislature levied a 50-percent increase (from 2 percent to 3 percent) in the payroll tax on businesses to raise funds for the force. Although business backers remain committed to the Fuerza Civil, the tax increase was challenged by a number of companies seeking an *amparo*, or staying order.

As Fuerza Civil was being formed, the state government led an effort to establish coordination between all agencies involved in security. A coordinating group was formed that included the chiefs of the Nuevo León contingents of the army and navy, the state police, attorney general's office, state intelligence agency and mayors of the townships with the highest crime rates. "Building trust with the private sector was the most important thing, especially because of the great desperation of the community," says Treviño, deputy governor of the state from 2009 to 2012.³⁸ "We brought the private sector into the coordinating meetings so they could see first-hand the magnitude of the problem," he adds. "My vision was that we have to align efforts, focus on a few issues and we can get things done."

The support provided by businesses to the creation of Fuerza Civil demonstrates the potential of business-government cooperation. A Monterrey-based phone company, Axtel, created a call center for the recruitment process, and Super Seven convenience stores made space available for the recruitment posters. The transportation company, Senda, offers discounts for home visits made by the police now in the Monterrey force. Corporations donated equipment including patrol cars. "The key to success is called willingness to do things and to break paradigms," says state security spokesman Jorge Domene.³⁹ In December 2012, a Consejo Cívico initiative was approved and a new state law called for creating a council on police development that is to include one citizen representative, the first time such a body has been opened to civil society.

An outgrowth of this dialogue was that the private sector overcame its distrust of government to such a degree that businesses also committed to investments in urban programs aimed at rebuilding the social fabric such as building parks, supporting training for youth and cultural activities, backing addiction prevention programs and strengthening a culture of law and order. Some government officials say the private sector should be investing more to support interventions in poor, crime-ridden communities, but they recognize the efforts so far are moving in the right direction. Civil society leaders involved in the meetings with government on security report that the relationship is one of ups and downs.

Measuring Progress

An important tactic of the Consejo Cívico has been to create instruments that measure progress in combating crime. The Consejo Cívico is a prime mover in the Crime Stoplight, or *Semáforo del Delito*, which relies on figures from the State Attorney General to monitor monthly the crime rate. In 2011, as the number of auto thefts in Monterrey equaled that of greater Mexico City, which has nearly five times more inhabitants, the Consejo Cívico asked the government to set a goal for reducing carjacking. The number of thefts dropped over the next year from more than 2,000 to 800 as all nine municipalities and the state focused on the goal. The Consejo Cívico made a harsh

³⁸ Javier Treviño.

³⁹ Jorge Domene, interview with author, October 17, 2012.

pronouncement about the continuing high rate of homicides when it presented the Stoplight on January 13, 2012. “Although homicides dropped 27 percent in 2012 compared with the previous year, the numbers are still in a range similar to those of 2011 which was the worst year in history in Nuevo León (and) the rate of murders in the state remains one of the highest nationally,” the Consejo said in a press conference.⁴⁰

Another tool for tracking levels of insecurity was the quarterly survey, “Metropolitan Pulse,” which monitors citizens’ perceptions about crime and their confidence in municipal institutions and police forces.⁴¹ Sponsored by the CAINTRA and COPARMEX business chambers with and the Consejo Cívico and Centro de Integración Cívica (CIC), eight surveys were published between August 2011 and May 2013. Perceptions of insecurity are a highly reliable indicator of real conditions of insecurity, say experts in monitoring and evaluation. (Other analysts blame the high perception of insecurity in Mexico to media sensationalism.) The survey gathered public opinion from each of the municipalities, and reported in July 2012, that 39 percent of metropolitan residents thought security had worsened in the previous quarter. In January 2013, the survey showed a slight increase in the number of residents who thought their municipality is “not very safe” (45.5 percent) and strong improvements in those who ranked their city “unsafe” (31.5 percent, a seven-percent drop from July 2012) and “safe” (23 percent, an increase of nearly five percent).

The survey also reported on the level of trust in municipal police, experiences with bribing officials and opinions of the degree of commitment of authorities to combating crime. Commissioned jointly by the Nuevo León chapters of CAINTRA, Coparmex and Consejo Cívico, the poll was designed and carried out by the graduate school of public administration (EGAP) of the Monterrey Tec.

Center for Citizen Integration

Richly endowed in human resources, technology and capital, Monterrey’s leading corporations are well positioned to contribute to improving the business environment, and can mobilize their assets for the benefit of citizen security. Cemex rose to this challenge by backing the creation and operation of a nonprofit organization that assembled an innovative technology platform to help fight crime and rebuild a sense of community relying totally on citizen reporting.

The Center for Citizen Integration (CIC in its Spanish acronym) web platform seeks to bring together the collective knowledge of citizens and put it to use for improving Monterrey’s communities. Commissioned by Cemex CEO Lorenzo Zambrano, an IT whiz, the CIC platform (<http://www.cic.mx>) is called ‘Tehuan’ after the word for ‘us’ in the Nahuatl language of the Aztecs. Citizen reports are received on Tehuan and staff members channel them to local authorities almost in real time so they can respond to the grievances. Reports to Tehuan cover the categories of shootings and other “situations of risk,” theft, traffic accidents, broken streetlights, and other faulty public services, community events, and citizen-led initiatives. The vision for the CIC was presented to and embraced by the inner circle of powerful Monterrey companies.

Early in 2010, the platform was piloted with small networks of trusted citizens who filed reports in real time from cell phones and e-mail accounts. A year later, the platform was upgraded to integrate reports from Twitter accounts and to aggregate citizen reports and display crimes and hazards on

⁴⁰ “Bajan homicidios, se disparan delitos patrimoniales,” Info7.mx, January 21, 2013, <http://info7.mx/a/noticia/370901>.

⁴¹ “Pulso Metropolitano de Seguridad, CAINTRA Nuevo León. <http://www.caintra.org.mx/portal/?p=3162>.

maps that can be accessed online or from a smart phone. The platform was subsequently adapted to receive reports from e-mails, SMS and Facebook and apps for smart phones and computer tablets have been released. All reports are confidential unless the sender releases his or her name. Today, CIC is building new services and tools it may share with its main constituents — citizens, sponsoring businesses and local authorities.

CIC was launched publicly in October 2011. “CIC intends to be a facilitator with public authorities to address citizen needs,” says Mauricio Doehner, vice president of corporate affairs with Cemex.⁴² The platform now has over 43,000 followers and receives over 2,000 reports a month. CIC has established working relationships with the local municipalities of Monterrey, San Pedro, Guadalupe, and San Nicolás and the Nuevo León state government. The San Pedro mayor’s office went a step further and signed a collaboration agreement with CIC, signaling that the platform is now an official trusted source of aggregate citizen reports. CIC works hand in hand with San Pedro to follow up on all citizen reports and complaints about the municipality.

Talks are under way with other municipal officials to set up similar arrangements. “Our value proposition is simple, we are a cost-free medium where government can both learn of citizens’ most-pressing needs and engage with citizens to work to resolve their needs,” says Patrick Kane, executive director of CIC.⁴³ Observing the CIC connection with active citizens, the public electricity commission (CFE) studied CIC’s approach and decided to create its own Twitter account as the vehicle for delivering on-demand customer service.

CIC also provides legal counsel for citizens who wish to file a formal complaint to authorities and offers psychological counseling for victims of violence. The legal services function to help inform and convince victims of kidnapping, extortion and theft to overcome their distrust of the justice system and to file crime reports with the police. During 2012, half of all kidnappings addressed by CIC were formally filed and processed with authorities. By late 2012, the percentage of kidnapping cases handled by CIC and filed with police rose significantly, suggesting CIC is trusted by citizens who also now feel more confident about approaching authorities, says Kane. It is expected that the proportion of kidnappings that are reported could continue to rise, he adds. Last year, CIC provided legal counsel in almost 500 cases of crime and over 1,500 sessions of psychological counseling to victims of violence and their families.

Monterrey is an especially apt proving ground for CIC. The city boasts cellphone penetration of 100 percent, and a high percentage of the mobiles are smart phones. The surge of crime and violence fuels the impulse to let complaints be heard, and CIC is trusted because it is a citizen-run effort. The posted testimony of an extortion victim who was helped by CIC psychological counseling drew an endorsement from a citizen: “An incredible initiative!” writes Jess Baez in a post to the site. “We all complained and felt that there was nothing we could do, now we have a way to pressure the authorities—good CIC! Thanks for sharing, and may people begin to trust that there is a place where we can get help and above all prevent this (type of) crime.”

CIC is designed to act as a model for promoting citizen participation, and creates an environment of confidence because it is an all-citizen organization. The advisory board is made up of a wide range of civil society leaders, and although seed capital was provided by Cemex, the financial backing now comes from a growing number of private companies and individual donations.

⁴² Mauricio Doehner, interview with author, October 16, 2012.

⁴³ Patrick Kane, telephone interview with author, February 26, 2013.

The intention of CIC is to scale up. The core technology is designed to be replicable beyond Monterrey. “The bottleneck to scale beyond Monterrey is not technical but strategic and operational—what is required is finding committed organizations that will use technology wisely to promote citizen participation,” says Kane.⁴⁴ Talks are underway with civil society groups and businesses interested in applying the CIC model elsewhere. “In Mexico, citizen participation is in its infancy, that is our bet for the long term,” says Doehner.⁴⁵

Ranking of Mayors

When the new mayors of Nuevo León took office in October 2012, 34 businesses and civic organizations embarked on a priority program to monitor and rank mayors. “Mayor, how are we doing?” (Alcalde, ¿cómo vamos?) is a platform of 10 concrete civic demands that will be measured during the three-year terms of the nine mayors of greater Monterrey. The actions to be measured include:

- Cleanup of the police force.
- Decent pay for honest police.
- Expanding the force to reach minimum coverage of three police per 1,000 residents.
- A drop in crime statistics.
- Elimination of casinos and nepotism.
- Improvements in public areas, including more sports centers, sidewalks, reforestation of parks.

Consejo Cívico will track changes in police staffing to be sure they are registered on Mexico’s national anti-crime data base, Plataforma México. This initiative is funded with donations from local backers.

When the first comparative rankings were released in February 2013, “there was a lot of competition among them, they all wanted to be the best, they take it seriously,” says Molinard of Consejo Cívico.⁴⁶ The rankings include the Consejo’s kudos for good performance and reproaches for laggardly progress and create incentives for mayors to fulfill their promises to their communities and outdo one another.

Results: Monterrey

Monterrey is by no means in a position to lower its guard on combatting violence. Crime continued to rise through 2011, which was the most violent year on record for the state. Killings in Nuevo León increased by 192 percent in 2011. The rate of vehicle theft rose steadily from 606 per 100,000 residents in 2007 to 803 in 2011, a rate that is twice the national average.

A trend toward a decline in crime became identifiable beginning in March 2012, and held up through the year to October. State security spokesman Domene points out that by October 2012, the murder rate had dropped to 18 homicides per 1,000 inhabitants. Car theft dropped from 1,363 vehicles in March to 687 in September, and violent robberies declined from 1,294 in March to 866 in August, Consejo Cívico reported.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Mauricio Doehner

⁴⁶ Sandrina Molinard.

It is difficult to be sure that Monterrey has turned the corner on crime. Many positive steps have been taken. Inter-agency coordination, civic activism and collaboration between government, business and society are cemented and will be assets in the continuing campaigns to reduce violence. Government and business have taken the initiative to create an all-new, honest, well trained professional police force. The war between rival cartels has changed, although analysts are not convinced that one cartel can claim victory. The presence of army troops and police is preventing bands engaged in extraction of rents through extortion and theft from aligning with organized crime, analysts say.

Coordination between the army, federal police and local police was set in motion early in the Monterrey crisis, largely thanks to the decision of Calderón to send his then-security adviser, Tello Peón, to the city. An intelligence expert on loan from Cemex, he had a clear sense of what could be done and catalyzed communication between the army and federal and local police forces. The state government remains highly dependent on federal operations, say some analysts.

The importance and close-knit nature of Monterrey's business establishment is a driver of the responses by federal and state governments to the crisis in the city. The top executives were close to Calderón, they monitored actions of the state government and they set the agenda with specific demands such as confidence tests and certification for police and they invested in equipment that supports new government efforts. Between October 2011 and August 2012, review and evaluations to clean up the police forces quadrupled. Businesses leveraged their influence with government and succeeded in getting large contingents of army, federal police, and investigators deployed to Monterrey. The giant businesses also have a good relationship with President Enrique Peña Nieto, who took office on Dec. 1, 2012. Some of the executives are said to enjoy friendships with members of the president's transition team that date back to school days. There is every reason to believe the understanding between the federal government and Monterrey captains of industry could improve, says a corporate security adviser. "Security is beginning to be built to a great extent due to pressure of the businessmen," says Alejandro Hope, formerly an official in Mexico's intelligence agency, CISEN, and now security director of IMCO, an applied research institute.⁴⁷

Monterrey has launched a pioneering response to combating crime. Police reform is a universal need and demand nationwide in the context of Mexico's crisis of violence. Monterrey is the only city to create an all-new police force, the Fuerza Civil. Many opinion leaders in Monterrey consider the force an improvement over the former state police, although some say Fuerza Civil is a militarized unit. "The police force is increasingly credible, there are better confidence control centers and a better control by commanders," says security analyst Hope.⁴⁸

The state government led by Gov. Rodrigo Medina has come to rely on support from the business sector, so much so that it has a vision of how businesses could be of help in the near term. "The most important thing with the private sector is that it join in with initiatives that can arise," particularly by lending human talent and technical know-how to government efforts, says Nuevo León security spokesman Domene.⁴⁹

The private sector has flexed its muscles in a previously unknown fashion in Monterrey through protest and through setting a concrete agenda and following up on its demands with state and federal officials. Civil society has been strengthened by financial support from the business sector. Civil

⁴⁷ Alejandro Hope, interview with author, October 3, 2012.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Jorge Domene.

society, academia, and business talent working together have created accountability mechanisms for government with tools to monitor perceptions and statistics about crime and disseminate the information regularly.

When the wave of violence swept across Monterrey, the social fabric had not broken down to such a great degree as in Juárez. Corporate social responsibility programs are being directed to improving community services, opportunities for youth, and cultural activities in high-conflict areas. However, a wide range of sources in academia, political analysts and civil society believe that a much more extensive urban intervention is required and that corporations need to put up more money and resources to address social needs and crime prevention.

KEY LESSONS

Today, the Mesa de Seguridad in Ciudad Juárez is considered a model for citizen participation and private sector civic engagement for confronting organized crime and violence. Its success in promoting a pluralistic dialogue with government is evident, and the concrete achievements in presenting initiatives to authorities, acting as a watchdog and generating citizen crime watch intelligence are clear. Other Mexican cities including Acapulco, Aguascalientes, León, Mazatlán, Monterrey, and Torreón have consulted the Mesa for advising about how it confronted crime in Juárez. National victims' groups also look to the Mesa for lessons that can be replicated elsewhere.

Juárez stands out in Mexico not only for the terrible violence it suffered but also because the city offered a rich experience in participatory planning and civic engagement by the private sector. The Plan Estratégico mobilized reflection and initiatives by citizens about how to lift up the city in every aspect and improve quality of life for all residents. Businessmen created and supported non-profit groups that taught values and ethics in schools, for example. In addition, many of the residents who became active in the Mesa de Seguridad already knew one another and many had worked together in the past. This unusual depth of experience in private sector involvement in civic affairs undoubtedly contributed to making the Mesa work well. Even so, civil society in Mexico still lacks a familiarity with civic action, and citizens need to learn how to be citizens, says Vargas of the Plan Estratégico.⁵⁰ In this sense, "The problem of Juárez is not of Juárez, it is a Mexican problem," she adds.

Meanwhile, the power and reach of Monterrey business leaders have been important factors in catalyzing action on security issues and in bringing about some of the principal improvements achieved there in fighting crime. Business leaders may be focused on a local issue, but their influence is national. They make specific requests of the federal government, such as legal reforms and a cleanup of the police force. During the current security crisis, the Monterrey corporations and the federal, state, and municipal government have cooperated on several fronts. "The view of the businessmen is that it's not useful to do battle with government," says a source familiar with one of the biggest Monterrey multinational corporations. The top corporate leaders of Monterrey have been important participants in a variety of actions aimed at improving security. "Their taking on responsibility has been fundamental and it would be unjust to not recognize it," says Zavala of Consejo Cívico.

The leading businesses in Monterrey relate to and pressure the government both from above and below. At the top, CEOs speak directly with the president or Cabinet-level officials behind closed doors, press their demands, and reach a gentlemen's agreement that responds to their needs for

⁵⁰ Lucinda Vargas.

Monterrey. The business chambers have legitimacy because they are representative and include small and medium businesses as well as the dominant corporations within their sector. The local chapter of the Mexican Employers' Confederation (Coparmex), for example, represents employers of 80 percent of the contractual labor force in Monterrey.

The major businesses finance the intermediate organizations, the associations of small, medium, and large enterprises in the sectors of manufacturing, commerce, and industry. These groups in turn expose the governor and local authorities by publicly denouncing corruption and questionable public debt, and the associations make demands for business-friendly policies. "It's a pincer movement they (big business) make on the government," says a corporate security source.⁵¹ This pressure tactic is not always well received. "The worst way to communicate between government and the private sector is in the pages of newspapers; mechanisms of communication are needed," says federal deputy Treviño.⁵²

In the context of the security crisis in Monterrey, corporate interests have built up another type of representative organization, the hybrid civil-society group; Consejo Cívico brings together business interests with civil society groups, universities, conventional charities, and a host of non-profit social programs. The business chambers communicate among themselves, and each chamber decides what will be its central issue for policy and action. In this constellation, although it is not a business chamber, the Consejo Cívico has become the representative organization and leading civic mechanism for private sector security concerns. The Consejo works in close coordination with representative business chambers, especially the employers' association and manufacturing chamber, Coparmex and CAINTRA, respectively. These associations provide visibility and valuable financial and technical support to the Consejo's efforts. For example, the Coparmex membership includes all the private security experts and firms in Monterrey. The business associations support the Consejo Cívico with technical information which is then used to develop proposals in dialogue with the governor and mayors of the metropolitan area.

The creation of Fuerza Civil is a major innovation and is a collaborative public sector-private sector project. The new police force is widely thought to represent a significant improvement over the former police force. Its formation is a long-term investment in combating crime. In the short term, a number of problems must be resolved. The state needs to do more to organize the Fuerza Civil, say civil society advocates. Bringing in recruits from other states means the police have no roots in the community, so there are natural barriers to creating an optimally functioning neighborhood police force. Another adverse circumstance is that the members of Fuerza Civil are separated from their families for a month at a time and must live in barracks. The mid-level command positions have yet to be filled. The training period should be longer.

The state and municipal governments have been open to meeting with and listening to the private sector and civil society since their collaboration on security began in earnest in 2009. Consejo Cívico membership has grown to 100 organizations. Like the Mesa in Juárez, the Consejo Cívico serves as a bridge for building dialogues between the private sector and civil society organizations and the government. "In this process, we've helped with transformation because it is not possible for states to transform themselves," says Consejo Cívico president Zavala.

CONCLUSION

⁵¹ Interview with corporate security source, October 16, 2012.

⁵² Javier Treviño, September 11, 2012.

The northern cities of Ciudad Juárez and Monterrey have been overtaken by two of the worst waves of violence in Mexico's contemporary history of savagery. The darkest days of the two cities elicited bravery and commitment among their hometown residents, professionals and business people. The citizens who rose to the challenge to confront crime and impunity created vibrant civic organizations composed of business persons and civil society organizations working together. These hybrid groups, new on the Mexican scene, have placed specific demands before authorities, generated their own information to monitor government actions and, ultimately, worked in coordination with government to stem the threats to security from organized crime and from weak and often corrupt institutions.

Reducing crime is the product of many forces and requires the efforts of diverse government institutions and private sector groups. The turnaround in Juárez, for example, is attributed to the dissolution of the violent La Línea arm of the Juárez Cartel following the 2011 capture of its leader, improved coordination between army troops and federal police, local ownership of the crime problem by the private sector and the municipal and state governments and the president's support for the comprehensive security and social programs of Todos Somos Juárez.

The response by the private sector including businesses, industries and civil society in both cities shared common elements. Private businesses and manufacturers large and small demonstrated their willingness to devote company resources and time to addressing the problem of a lack of security in their cities. Civil society leaders who are typically dedicated to issues such as education, health and human rights showed their ability to focus on citizen security and to devise reporting and information systems that would track efforts to combat crime, set goals, and hold authorities accountable for their performance.

A fascinating aspect of civic engagement by the private sector was the creation of hybrid organizations. With the cities under siege from organized crime, business and industry joined forces with nongovernmental organizations and representative groups such as community associations. The two parties—business associations and civic groups—in the Mesa de Seguridad and Consejo Cívico benefited from the presence of the other. Private sector interests gained a wider audience among citizens and greater legitimacy by working with civil society, and civic groups gained added clout from the financial backing they could get from businesses and the more fluid access to government enjoyed by the private sector. “It is indispensable to have the participation of (various) sectors, you cannot work with one part of society and leave out the other, they must be complementary and the complementarity fosters greater trust,” says Plan Estratégico president Fernández.⁵³

In both cities, citizen-led groups set up mechanisms to build trust in government authorities and created user-friendly centers, hotlines, or web platforms to receive anonymous reports of crimes and abuse by authorities. These new private sector services were understood immediately by citizens who aired their grievances and allowed civil society to amass information about the incidence of crime. Over time, assistance was provided to citizens willing to make formal crime reports, and city residents gained enough confidence to file their cases with the authorities.

Private sector groups, particularly the hybrid organizations, gained credibility and became trusted and respected mouthpieces for residents of the troubled cities. These organizations have gained the ear of public officials from the municipal to the federal levels. There have been and continue to be ups and downs in the access and receptivity coming from government.

Civil society, professional groups and private sector associations are most effective when they

⁵³ Miguel Fernández.

receive backing from government institutions. In Juárez, the Mesa de Seguridad and its member civic groups gained strength from the support provided by Calderón and his Todos Somos Juárez crime-fighting initiative. A notable achievement of the Mesa was to serve as a bridge between different divisions of government and to prod them into coordinating efforts on security issues for which they shared responsibility. Peña Nieto has sent initial positive signals indicating he will support civic participation within the framework of his new security strategy. In Monterrey, the Consejo Cívico agenda of forming a new police force secured federal support at least in part through the access to the highest levels of government enjoyed by its powerful business establishment. The relationship with government is also bolstered by business contributions of technical expertise and donations of equipment to the local government.

Private sector engagement in civic affairs can certainly bring about positive results, and the building of trust among people is a compelling antidote to the pervasive fear that undercut a sense of community in both cities. It is beyond the capability of the private sector to confront powerful forces such as organized crime, impunity across the justice system, and corruption in the police. Fixing structural issues requires a vision and multifaceted commitment from all levels of government. Mexico faces a particular problem for addressing long-term problems.

Promoting civic participation by the private sector—businesses, professionals and civic groups alike—is a permanent challenge in Mexico. Ciudad Juárez and Monterrey show that under the worst of circumstances, citizens will come together and work to improve their communities. It appears that the extreme emergency in both cities galvanized private sector activism. These two case histories of private sector engagement in citizen security set examples that could encourage citizens elsewhere in Mexico to organize demands and press authorities to reduce crime.

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