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Hybrid Police Work and Insecurity in the Mexican Federal State

Patrick Laurency



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the years leading up to 2015, the level of violent crime against ordinary citizens continued to rise in some Mexican states. It remains alarming today, despite a steady decrease in violence related to drug trafficking since 2011. Conventional analysis suggests that citizen security deteriorated mainly as a result of the Mexican government's sudden turn toward a more confrontational policing approach, including the reliance on military and paramilitary actors. This view holds that new policing strategies – commonly referred to as *mano dura* in the Latin American context – ultimately provoked a splintering of drug cartels into smaller criminal units, which subsequently felt compelled to generate sufficient income by diversifying their criminal portfolio into extortion, kidnapping or armed robbery. By contrast, this paper argues that the persistence of or increase in the insecurity of ordinary citizens beyond 2011 is connected to hybridized policing systems that are increasingly marked by an undifferentiated deployment of actors of different origin (military, paramilitary, police) for public security tasks. These include, first and foremost, collaborative arrangements among different public police forces at the federal, state and municipal levels and between the police and non-commercially operating private actors, like local vigilante groups. Additionally, the Mexican policing system is heavily reliant upon the deployment of military forces for fighting criminal activities. While hybrid systems of policing can be highly effective in principle, they remain prone to significant security risks and failures in Mexico. This is largely conditioned by structural peculiarities of the Mexican state, which are highly relevant for public security, including limited statehood, an ill-managed process of decentralization and excessive partisan rivalry as well as the historical prevalence of vigilantes in the country. The paper shows that these structural circumstances of the Mexican policing system contained latent threats to public security from the beginning. Hybridized forms of policing finally brought these threats to the forefront as security risks or failures.

ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

CISEN	<i>Centro de Investigación y Seguridad Nacional</i> (Center for Research and National Security)
D. F.	<i>Distrito Federal</i> (federal district / capital district of Mexico City)
INEGI	<i>Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía</i> (National Institute of Statistics and Geography)
ONC	<i>Observatorio Nacional Ciudadano</i> (National Citizen Observatory)
PAN	<i>Partido Acción Nacional</i>
PF	<i>Policía Federal</i> (Federal Police)
PFM	<i>Policía Federal Ministerial</i> (Federal Ministerial Police under the direction of the Attorney General of Mexico)
PGR	<i>Procurador General de la República</i> (Attorney General of Mexico)
PMSC	private military and security companies
Policía Municipal	Municipal Police
PRD	<i>Partido de la Revolución Democrática</i> (Party of the Democratic Revolution)
PRI	<i>Partido Revolucionario Institucional</i>
SEDENA	<i>Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional</i> (Ministry of Defense of Mexico)
SEGOB	<i>Secretaría de Gobernación</i> (Ministry of the Interior of Mexico) as successor of the SSP
SEMAR	<i>Secretaría de Marina</i> (Ministry of the Navy of Mexico)
SNSP	<i>Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública</i> (The National Public Security System)
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

INTRODUCTION

Areas of “limited statehood” have increased in both developing and highly industrialized nations over the last two decades. Against a backdrop of elevated levels of crime and violence in these areas, hybrid models of policing have emerged and proliferated. This is particularly the case in Mexico, where public security functions have increasingly been delegated to or even usurped by non-state or private actors – not only in maintaining public order, but also combatting crime and violence and delivering justice in the (semi)-public space. Moreover, the Mexican military is heavily involved in the fight against ordinary crime, despite its mandate being limited to national security by the country’s constitution. These forms of hybridization in policing were promoted as a crime-fighting strategy under former Mexican President Felipe Calderón (2006-2011). The strategy deliberately deployed these very different actors in order to grant policing measures more vigour through functional differentiation. This approach is commonly known as *mano dura* in the Latin American context, and it is occasionally described as a rather toughened version of the US model of “zero tolerance.”¹

Against this background, it appears remarkable at first glance that the process of organizational hybridization within policing networks went hand in hand with an increase in violent crime throughout the country, which reached unprecedented levels at the end of Calderón’s presidency in 2011. The proliferation of criminal gangs, which, for the most part, emanated from debilitated drug cartels, led to an increase in the national murder rate from 9.0 per 100,000 people in 2005 up to a peak of 22.6 in 2011, resulting in the country being one of the 20 deadliest countries in the world (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2013: 126). Despite the national murder rate falling to 16.7 in 2014 due to a downstream rise of organized-crime-related homicides (Observatorio Nacional Ciudadano [ONC] 2015), the rate remained nonetheless strongly elevated compared to before the Mexican drug war began.² This is mainly due to an increased incidence of homicides in several Mexican states, which were not related to organized crime.³ Violent crime in Mexico after 2011 mainly evolved to the detriment of ordinary citizens, who became increasingly victimized, not only by murder, but also by kidnapping, armed robbery and extortion. This development coincided with a strong prevalence of fear over crime, public mistrust in institutions and a high degree of institutional violence. The latter includes illegal killings and human rights violations by public security forces, the military or by non-state security providers, like vigilantes. Hence, there are good reasons to believe that the current hybrid policing models in Mexico have contributed to the perpetuation of insecurity rather than to the protection of citizens from the widespread violence in the country.

Various security experts have suggested that a correlative or a causal relationship exists

between hybrid policing models – including multiple actors and stakeholders of different origins participating in the provision of public security – and the various shortcomings and limitations in the provision of public security in Mexico. Similar concerns exist in other Latin American countries, although it should be acknowledged that such arrangements may be unavoidable in cases of limited capacity on the part of police authorities. These limitations include not only the exacerbation of violent crime and institutional violence, but also the problem of social selectivity in the provision of citizen security to the disadvantage of the poor strata of society. There are, therefore, reservations about the proliferation of commercial or non-commercial private security providers (Adams, 2012; Argueta, 2012; Arias, 2006; Bailey and Dammert, 2005; Bayley and Shearing, 2001; Bendel and Krennerich, 2007; Benítez Manaut, 2004; Cafferata, 2010; Chojnacki, 2005; Friedrichs, 2012; Gabaldón, 2004; Hagmann and Kartas, 2006; Huggins, 1991 and 2000; Leander, 2005; Mandel, 2001; Müller, 2010b; Perret, 2012-2013 and 2013; Sanchez, 2006; Ungar, 2007-2008). Furthermore, it is acknowledged that the bulk of police reforms in Latin America – many of them preserving hybridity or even containing new hybrid elements – have not proven successful, particularly with respect to the amelioration of accountability and the reduction of crime and institutional violence. This even applies to community policing as a hybrid system of police-monitored citizen self-help, as many community policing projects in Latin America were reportedly misused by powerful locals for selective private purposes or infiltrated by criminal elements (see, for instance, Braig and Stanley, 2007; Chinchilla, 2003; Frühling 2007, 2009a and 2009b; Glebbeek, 2009; Müller, 2010a; Uildriks, 2009; Ungar, 2007-2008 and 2013; Ungar and Arias 2012). This, in the end, has led to a prevalence of low-performing hybrid policing models in many Latin American countries, including Mexico. However, the specific nature of the apparent connection between organizational hybridity or hybridization in policing, increased violence and reform failure has remained largely obscure until now.

Some investigations consider contemporary violence in Mexico to be heavily fostered by political and administrative decentralization or by other features of state organization (see, for instance, Rios, 2012). The present analysis focuses on *hybridized agency* within the field of policing (*hybridized policing*) as a distinct mechanism. It takes into account that public security functions in Mexico have increasingly been overtaken by actors outside the state, the public police forces and the criminal justice system. It further considers that the formulation of crime-fighting strategies is heavily driven by interagency conflicts and multiple stakeholder arrangements, which seem to flourish on the basis of important structural peculiarities of the federal Mexican state and electoral system (see, for instance, Bailey, 2014; Davis, 2006). Besides Mexico's limited statehood in general, these peculiarities include excessive partisan rivalry and the subsequent politicization of security policies, and ill-managed political decentralization as well as a large number of various policing actors of different origins inside and outside of the Mexican state. This

paper's primary hypothesis is that, in recent years, hybrid or hybridized models of police work combined with the peculiarities of Mexican statehood have brought to bear latent and standardly existing pathologies of hybrid systems. These pathologies mainly include manifestations of institutional egoism, selective perceptions and negative coordination (Dearborn and Simon, 1958); asymmetries of information and principal-agent problems (Akerlof, 1970; Grossmann and Hart, 1983); as well as distortion of responsibilities and veto-player behaviour (Gregory, 2003; Tsebelis, 2002).⁴ The argument is that such latent pathologies ultimately provoked important security risks and failures as they were being brought to bear by the reliance on hybrid policing systems. This has led to a circular relationship between hybrid or hybridized policing and continued or increased violence, including violent crime, as well as legal and illegal institutional violence.

The paper begins with a definition of organizational hybridity within the field of policing in Mexico, including an account of the specific set of distinct actors and stakeholders who take part in hybrid policing arrangements. This is followed by a discussion of the roots and path-dependence of hybridization, including the characteristics of the Mexican state that served as influential factors in the development of hybrid policing and crime-fighting strategies under the notion of *mano dura* in recent years. Finally, it depicts the development of violence in Mexico since 2006 and its relationship to the process of security hybridization in the country in the form of expanded joint operations between military and police forces, the proliferation of vigilante groups and the increased transfer of public security functions to municipal police forces.

HYBRID POLICING IN MEXICO: A DEFINITION

Organizational hybridity can be found in a variety of areas in which public tasks, or those conducted in the public realm, are completed, normally taking the form of formal connections:

- between public and private stakeholders when conducting public tasks;
- in *multiple stakeholder* arrangements (organizations with several possibly competing influences); or
- in overlapping *governance* mechanisms that may conflict with each other (for example, the competition between authorities in the public sector or the cooperation between authorities and private stakeholders).⁵

In terms of police work in Latin America, much research has been conducted on these organizational arrangements. Specifically, studies refer to *grey policing* between the state

and private security companies (Zedner, 2009), *security assemblages* (Abrahamsen and Williams, 2009: 2), *plural policing* (Bayley and Shearing, 1996; Jones and Newburn, 2006), the *multilateralization of policing* (Bayley and Shearing, 2001), explicitly hybrid structures, institutions and states (Dewey, 2012; Dupont, Grabosky and Shearing, 2003; Koehler and Zürcher, 2004; Mulone, 2011; Renders and Terlinden 2010), as well as the symbiotic interplay of public and private security providers (Müller 2010b; 2012). This study focuses on the conditions and mechanisms of hybridity in the form of collective efforts by the police and non-state security providers.

In terms of the importance and function of non-state security providers in Mexico, private security companies – as measured by the authority granted to them by the government, their relative number and the security risks connected to them – play a relatively supplementary role when compared to other Latin American countries. They mostly appear in public unarmed and – aside from a few American private military and security companies (PMSCs) enlisted to train Mexican police units⁶ – usually act on behalf of private clients to secure private spaces. In Mexico, commercial security in public and semi-public spaces is mostly ensured by state or federal police forces, for example the *Policía Bancaria e Industrial*⁷ (to guard financial institutions or industrial facilities) or the *Policía Auxiliar*⁸, which, in terms of disciplinary measures, answers to public authority but is paid by private clients and bound by their instructions.⁹

Non-state security providers that do not operate commercially play a much more influential role in public security in Mexico. Several Mexican states have seen an increase in armed militias operating illegally or semi-legally (vigilantism), which reflects systems of self-defence or self-justice in rural areas of Mexico and Central America. In some cases, such as in the state of Michoacán, these militias informally work together with police units or conduct joint operations against violent gangs. Hybrid security arrangements also exist in Mexico in the form of informal negotiations and agreements between police forces and members in organized drug cartels, with the latter sporadically involved in financing militias (see Althaus and Dudley, 2014). These agreements are not only an example of corruption – they also serve to control violence and maintain a public impression of law and order.¹⁰

Organizational hybridity in policing is also found to a considerable extent in the form of rivalries over who conducts policing activities among various administrative and governmental stakeholders of different departments and territorial entities.¹¹ Noteworthy are competing claims to operational authority in the protection against threats to public security, including the containment of violence, among the Mexican Federal Police (*Policía Federal*), the 32 preventive police forces at the state level including the Federal District (*Policía Preventiva del Estado*), the army (*Ejército*) and the Navy (*Marina*) with its marine infantry units. A blurring of responsibilities in the areas of criminal prosecution and crime

investigation also exists between the 32 judicial police forces at the state level, including the Federal District (*Policía Ministerial*), the Federal Ministerial Police (*Policía Federal Ministerial* [PFM]), which reports to Attorney General of Mexico (*Procurador General de la República* [PGR]) and the Federal Police (*Policía Federal* [PF]). The latter was granted investigative authority only in 2009, after the former investigative body of the PGR, the Federal Investigative Agency (*Agencia Federal de Investigación*) merged with the former Federal Preventive Police (*Policía Federal Preventiva*) into a newly established Federal Police. Moreover, the Mexican interior intelligence service, *Centro de Investigación y Seguridad Nacional* [CISEN]¹², which is supervised by the Secretariat of Interior (*Secretaría de Gobernación* [SEGOB]), is also involved in investigative police work and in drawing up policies and strategies for investigative policing, especially against drug trafficking and kidnapping. Comparable strategic intelligence is also provided by the National Planning and Intelligence Center (*Centro Nacional de Planeación e Inteligencia e Información para el Combate a la Delincuencia*), which provides intelligence directly to the Attorney General and the Deputy Attorney General Specialized in Investigation of Organized Crime (*Subprocuraduría Especializada en Investigación de Delincuencia Organizada*). Operational or tactical intelligence, on the other hand, is provided by specialized executive departments, like the Federal Police Intelligence Center (*Centro de Inteligencia de la Policía Federal*), the second section of the General Staff of the Army or the Naval Intelligence Unit (*Unidad de Inteligencia Naval*).¹³

Overlapping jurisdictions also exist between the territorial units. The PF, which now operates under the authority of the SEGOB, and the PFM are generally responsible for the criminal investigation and prosecution of specific types of offences against federal penal law, including drug and arms trafficking, human trafficking or environmental crimes. The state judicial police forces, on the other hand, are empowered to investigate offences against state criminal law, including the bulk of violent crimes committed within the states, such as homicide, assault, rape or robbery. Despite this institutional differentiation, the respective responsibilities remain blurred, especially in situations where it is unclear if specific criminal incidents – for instance, homicide or kidnapping – should be regarded as manifestations of organized crime or not. Here, the situation is marked by a lack of protocols indicating which authorities should take the lead, leaving a wide margin of discretion and room for informal interagency negotiations.¹⁴

The hybridity phenomenon thus refers not only to the large number of stakeholders, but also to the interaction and dedifferentiation among these stakeholders. Niels Uildriks (2010: 61) describes these intense hybrid organizational structures in the realm of danger mitigation and criminal prosecution as “organized chaos.” Distorted responsibilities and overlapping jurisdictions between various governmental authorities, including public prosecutors, preventive and investigative police forces and the armed forces, reflect a blurred line between preventive police work, criminal prosecution, intelligence services

and national defence. Furthermore, the lines between governmental entities and private security providers become blurred whenever uniformed police units are working in a “fee-for-service” capacity for private clients (see Bayley and Shearing, 2001: 14-15), or if militias take responsibility for ensuring public security under police supervision (see Althaus and Dudley, 2014; Huggins, 1991). Occasionally the lines are also blurred between the police and criminals, for instance by implicit agreements with members of organized crime who ensure a minimum of public order, or when police forces tolerate and “informally tax” the illegal activities of organized crime in order to maintain a certain minimum level of state “autonomy in operations” (see Dewey, 2012: 670).

HYBRIDIZATION OF POLICING IN MEXICO: STRUCTURAL ROOTS AND INCENTIVES

The large increase of hybridity in policing throughout Mexico, starting in 2006, is the intended result of administrative reforms in the Mexican security sector, as well as a reflection of the *mano dura* strategy introduced by the newly elected Calderón administration that same year. This strategy had the objective of enhancing the capacity to fight crime, in particular, the country’s increasingly powerful drug cartels. It is important to note that this increase was heavily influenced by path-dependent peculiarities of state organization, namely the specific failures of the political decentralization in the country that began in the 1990s. These reforms resulted in a disproportionately strong political veto power on the part of decentralized authorities with respect to policing operations and the deployment of police forces. They also caused an excessive personalization of politics and administration, coupled with a politicization of public security concerns (see Bailey, 2014; Davis, 2006; Munro, 2015; Sabet, 2010). In addition, given the country’s prevalent corruption, there were institutional weaknesses among Mexican police forces, which made them appear inept. Ultimately, the hybridization of policing in Mexico took place under conditions of limited statehood,¹⁵ which in the area of public security, appears to be caused by the design and implementation of crime-fighting strategies being dependent upon which stakeholder and veto player comes out on top. In this vein, the implementation of such strategies also depends on whose partial interests prevail in whichever “anti-crime coalition” of federal and state-level public security stakeholders is currently in power.

Those involved in this coalition of political stakeholders on the federal level are, essentially, the president of the Republic and the members of the Mexican Congress. The former is the supreme commander of the Mexican armed forces and freely appoints the federal secretaries as well as the heads of certain federal agencies, such as the commissioner of the PF.¹⁶ The Mexican Congress includes the chamber of deputies (500 deputies) and the senate (128 senators) and it has become increasingly active since

the end of the one-party rule in 2000 in terms of submitting legislative initiatives and controlling the executive branch by vetoing or modifying legal reforms (see Puente, 2015: 152). The senate is furthermore empowered to reject presidential nominations for Attorney General and for the heads of autonomous administrative units. Other important stakeholders are the relevant members of the executive cabinet of Mexico. In the field of public security, this includes the PGR, the Secretariat of Defense (*Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional* [SEDENA]), the Secretariat of the Navy (*Secretaría de Marina* [SEMAR]) and the *SEGOB*.¹⁷ The *SEGOB*, which is now executing coordinative functions in public security policies, has considerably gained in power during the Peña Nieto administration. Its annual budget more than tripled between 2012 and 2014, and it has (re)-incorporated the former Secretariat of Public Security (*Secretaría de Seguridad Pública*) as an internal division. The latter was renamed as National Security Commission (*Comision de Seguridad Pública*)¹⁸, and now serves as the supervisory body in the rank of a sub-secretariat over the PF (see, for instance, Meyer, 2014: 20; Rodríguez, 2014: 70-72). In addition, there are also leading positions in the decentralized authorities – in particular, the PF, the PFM and the intelligence service CISEN – which enjoy considerable levels of operational autonomy and have the power to define certain policies (see Bailey, 2014; Rodríguez, 2014). Political veto players also exist in regional and local levels of government, especially in the form of directly elected state governors, who not only have authority over state police forces, but also the power to appoint the judges in their respective states (see for instance, Uildriks, 2010: 72 f.; Munro, 2015: 182). As a result, penal law (with the exception of federal penal law and the code of criminal procedure) falls under the jurisdiction of the respective federal states.

The ability of those various stakeholders to assert themselves is often determined by personal connections or loyalty networks, a remnant of the personalized political and administrative culture rooted in Mexico's period of one-party rule. An example of this is the influential yet polarizing role of then Minister of Public Security Genaro García Luna in designing and implementing the police reforms adopted by the Calderón administration, during which Mexico's security sector was extensively restructured. This ultimately resulted in increased interagency conflicts and rivalries both within and between various local authorities or levels of government (see Bailey, 2014: 156-57), as well as a solidification of hybrid forms of policing.

The strategy of the Calderón administration (2006-2012) consisted mainly of strengthening and upgrading federal police forces and transferring a wide range of police duties to the military, with the objective of directly confronting and breaking up the drug cartels (see Bailey, 2014). With regard to reforming the organization of the police, the Calderón administration continued to implement the plans and measures of the previous government under Vicente Fox (2000-2006), which centralized the Mexican police forces (see Davis, 2006). In terms of operations, however, the Calderón administration's strategy

was significantly more confrontational, which is why it is referred to as iron fist or *mano dura*. Initially, this strategy marked a fundamental switch from the hitherto pragmatic and occasionally optimistic approach of the previous government to organized crime, which was a continuation of the political tradition in Mexico, particularly the period of one-party rule by the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) up to 2000, when public violence was largely held in check by way of ad hoc agreements between state and criminal actors or even by integrating state actors into circles of organized crime (see Bailey and Godson, 2000: 5; Rios 2012: 92-97). Markus-Michael Müller (2012: 2) describes this political system in Mexico, which has since been partially defeated, as a “perfect dictatorship” in which corruption, political co-optation, selective state repression and the traditional right to immunity for the police and the military led to wide-ranging impunity enjoyed by both power-abusing state actors and criminals. Consequently, this resulted in the establishment of systems for civil society to seek self-help and vigilante justice (see Uildriks, 2009: 197; Bailey and Godson, 2000: 13).

These existing forms of organizational hybridity in the security sector remained, which may explain why the *mano dura* strategy retained a high level of organizational hybridity despite its tendencies toward centralizing the power of federal police units. In other words, the Calderón administration’s strategy was characterized by “path dependence” despite introducing new programs. This is evidenced in the expansion of the so-called *operativos conjuntos* (joint operations) between the federal police, police forces in individual states, the army and the navy.¹⁹ These operations also exhibited characteristics of a “dirty war,” which included cooperation between paramilitary groups and vigilante groups (see Bailey, 2014: 6).

Moreover, the hybrid elements of Mexican police forces that were in place before the new *mano dura* strategy were not eliminated, despite a clear need to do so. This problem is closely related to pathologies within the decentralization process implemented as part of electoral reforms and efforts to democratize the country beginning in 1997. The decentralization process led to a strengthening of authorities at the state and municipal level and a related emancipation from the constraints of the one-party system (see Rios, 2012).

On the one hand, decentralization in Mexico provoked a further fragmentation of police forces in the sense that due to extensive subsidiarity in administrative competence, political stakeholders in municipalities or in the 32 federal states had even more incentive to organize police work independently of their regional authority, and thus promote and expand their own police forces. This was particularly the case wherever the respective regional authority was led by politicians belonging to different parties (see Rios, 2012: 23-24). This explains the widespread resistance among municipal authorities to centralizing the police reforms, which they interpreted as a threat, as well as a failure of

the Calderón administration in enforcing the goal it declared in parliament of dissolving the municipal police forces, which were considered particularly susceptible to corruption (see Davis, 2006: 72-73; Bailey, 2014: 158). Public security policy in Mexico is also extremely politicized, resulting in a lack of continuity in the design and implementation of security strategies. Furthermore, there is often such a lack of experience in decision-making bodies that the coordination necessary for effective police work within networks between municipal, state and federal levels is usually weak or even pathological (see Bailey, 2014: 18; Sabet, 2012; Rodríguez, 2014).

On the other hand, democratization and decentralization enabled many vigilante groups that were active at a local level to persist in their activities. They continue to enjoy a high level of legitimacy among sections of the population, partially due to past experiences with corrupt and abusive public police forces during the period of one-party rule. For the government, recourse to hybrid forms of policing also enabled it to expand the basis for its legitimacy. This may explain, for instance, the basic, albeit restricted, tolerance of state institutions toward the efforts of indigenous groups in rural parts of Mexico, especially in the states of Guerrero and Michoacán, to build up a so-called *Policía Comunitaria*.²⁰ This institution still serves as a localized policing solution in order to address the citizens' skepticism and distrust toward state and federal police forces, which were involved in human rights violations under the PRI regime and which continued to be considered unresponsive toward the needs of the local population and were suspected of being involved in drug trafficking and other criminal activities (see, for instance, Sierra, 2005; Azaola, 2009; Rowland, 2005; Bailey and Dammert, 2005: 8-9; Braig and Stanley, 2007). In this sense, hybrid policing can be interpreted as an occasionally unintended consequence of democratization and decentralization. Therefore, decentralization can also be seen from a pragmatic perspective: delegating policing tasks to decentralized or non-state actors enables state actors to avoid responsibility for failures in containing crime or violence ("plausible deniability").²¹

HYBRIDIZATION OF POLICING AND THE INCREASE OF INSECURITY IN MEXICO

The Increase in Violence since 2006

Hybrid policing arrangements have proliferated in Mexico in areas of limited statehood, which have increased throughout the country in the past two decades. When Felipe Calderón took charge of the government in December 2006, Mexican drug cartels had obtained such a powerful position that they were able to challenge the military and jeopardize the integrity of the nation-state (see, for instance, Bailey, 2014: 2). The significant increase in the number of murders in Mexico between 2006 and 2011 (an

average annual rise of 24 percent) can be attributed first and foremost to intensified turf wars between the cartels, particularly in the northern Mexican border states and in Michoacán. According to estimates from the *Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública* (The National Public Security System [SNSP])²², the number of murders committed in Mexico that exhibited “organized crime group-style characteristics” (OCG homicides, *narcoejecuciones*), rose from approximately 27 percent in 2007 to approximately 75 percent in 2011.²³ Between 2006 and 2011, there were approximately 47,000 such murders that can be attributed to the “war on drugs.”²⁴ This escalation of violence was largely due to the newly implemented policy under the Calderón administration, which called for a rigorously confrontational fight against organized drug-related crime, which caused the gradual splintering of drug cartels beginning in 2006. This largely unintentional consequence – which resulted in an increase in the number of violent turf wars by new, smaller criminal organizations and gangs looking to secure markets to sell drugs – is commonly referred to as the “fantasia effect.”²⁵

A change in this trend took place in the second half of 2011, as the number of OCG homicides in the northern border states of Chihuahua, Nuevo León and Coahuila dropped significantly, which, in turn, led to a decrease in the overall national homicide rate (from 22.8 murders per 100,000 residents in 2011 to approximately 19 in 2013 and ultimately down to 16.7 in 2014).²⁶ This largely coincides with recourse to a more moderate approach to the drug cartels and a piecemeal demilitarization of police work during the final stages of the Calderón administration, which continued under the subsequent administration of Enrique Peña Nieto beginning in 2012.

It is remarkable that the security of the normal civil society (citizen security) only improved to a comparably low extent, despite this seemingly positive overall development.²⁷ First, Mexico remained among the 20 most violent or “deadliest” nations in the world more than three years after overcoming the height of the violence in the war on drugs in 2012, and now ranks on average with the rest of Latin America in terms of the level of violent crime.²⁸ In this sense, the federal and decentralized structure of the Mexican nation-state with its 31 federal states (plus the capital district of Mexico City, D.F.) results in comparatively significant regional differences. This relates to the level of violent crime, particularly in the form of murder, robbery, extortion and kidnappings. The states with the highest levels of violence in recent years are Chihuahua, Guerrero, Michoacán, Morelos, Nuevo Leon, Sinaloa and Tamaulipas, while, surprisingly, the capital Mexico City is considered relatively safe by comparison.²⁹

Contrary to the development in OCG homicides, the victimization rate as well as the crime rate for criminal offences against an individual – which include armed robbery, harassment, sexual offences, assault, extortion, kidnappings and burglary, as well as car theft – increased significantly nationwide from 2010 to 2014.³⁰ As the national statistics

institute, INEGI, reported in its victimization report ENVIPE from September 2015, the overall victimization rate (number of victims of criminal offences per 100,000 residents per year) rose from 23,993 in 2010 to 28,200 in 2014, and the crime rate (number of corresponding crimes per 100,000 residents per year) increased in parallel from 30,535 to 41,655, where armed robbery made up the most common criminal offence with 28.2 percent of crimes against individuals. The proportion of female victims increased from 47 percent in 2010 to 51.4 percent in 2014. According to the victimization report ENVIPE, the number of abduction victims increased from 94,438 in 2012 to 99,747 in 2014, which corresponds to an abduction rate of 83 victims per 100,000 residents per year. In parallel with the increase in violent crime and crimes against individuals, the corresponding number of unreported cases also rose, estimated at over 90 percent.³¹ The national average rate of reported abductions (number of reported abductions per 100,000 residents per year) increased from 2011 to 2013 by an additional 17 percent and in May 2014 was 350 percent higher than the rate in 2005.³²

Since 2011, the states of Guerrero and Michoacán especially have experienced an increasing rate of violent crime, including homicides without an immediate connection to drug trafficking, followed by Estado de México, Morelos and Tamaulipas.³³ In Michoacán, there was a decrease in OCG homicides of 18.4 percent in 2013, even though the overall number of murders (*homicidios dolosos*) rose by 27.3 percent.³⁴ During the same period, the rate of reported abductions rose from 3.0 to 4.28, an increase of 42.6 percent. In the state of Guerrero, which recently made headlines because of the 43 kidnapped and most likely murdered students, OCG homicides in 2013 compared to 2012 decreased by 33.6 percent; however, the overall number of murders rose by 16.8 percent.³⁵ The same year, Guerrero had the highest homicide rate in Mexico with 63 homicides per 100,000 residents.³⁶ During this period, the number of reported abductions increased by 48.9 percent, which meant the rate of reported abductions in Guerrero at the end of 2013 stood at 5.87 (the third-highest in Mexico after Morelos and Tamaulipas).³⁷ In addition, Michoacán and Guerrero had an increase in the rate of crimes against individuals of 4.8 percent and 20.7 percent, respectively, between 2013 and 2014; however, this does not include homicides.³⁸

The escalation of violence in Mexico can therefore be divided into two phases. The first phase from 2006 to 2011 is characterized by a sharp rise in drug-related crimes, in particular OCG homicides due to turf wars between drug cartels striving for criminal consolidation that had been caused by the transition to the iron fist policy introduced by the Calderón administration in 2006. In a second phase beginning in 2012, the excesses of violence directly attributed to the drug cartels declined considerably, even though this did not lead to a decrease in institutional violence or in violent crime that was not directly connected to drug trafficking, as in the examples of non-OCG homicides, armed robbery, assault, abductions and extortion. Both institutional violence and criminal violence were increasingly directed at the so-called “innocent citizen” after 2011.³⁹

On the one hand, this development can be understood as a further reflection of the fantasia effect, insofar as the splinter groups from the former large cartels, lacking adequate equipment, were dependent on additional sources of funding, which led them to take on new forms of criminal activities such as abductions and extortion (see Althaus and Dudley, 2014). Moreover, there has been a growing spread of youth gangs committing serious crimes (in particular, the *Mara Salvatrucha*), which have attained a level of organization in several Latin American countries that poses a challenge to governmental authorities. To date, these gangs are responsible for a significant number of violent crimes in southern Mexico and have a considerable impact on how security is perceived in the public and in the media (Ungar, 2013; Dudley, 2011; Huhn, Oettler and Peetz 2008).

On the other hand, there is reliable evidence indicating that after overcoming the height of the war on drugs in the second half of 2011, the subsequent deterioration in security for the general population in some states is linked to a proliferation and consolidation of certain forms of hybrid policing that were not sufficiently held in check in these states. This also takes up the assumption that even the so-called fantasia effect benefited considerably from a hybridization of policing, which is largely characterized by functional dedifferentiation of security actors and subsequently led to an indiscriminate increase of institutional violence, counter-violence and violent crime. This can be attributed, in particular, to the joint operations of the military and various police units (*operativos conjuntos*), which continued even after 2011, along with the collaboration between governmental bodies and vigilante groups, as well as the continued transfer of responsibilities for maintaining public security to municipal law enforcement units in the form of the *Policía Municipal*.

Joint Operations

The expanded use of the military to maintain public security in Mexico under the conditions of a war against the drug cartels has been accompanied by a strong increase in violent crime and human rights violations, mainly against civil society (see Uildriks, 2010: 221-25). For example, between 2007 and 2012, the number of human rights violations reported by citizens and illegal homicides by members of the military rose roughly six-fold (Meyer 2014: 4; see also Fondevila and Mejía, 2014: 90). John Bailey (2014) finds that the descent into increased violence, in particular in the northern Mexican border states, in which a total of approximately 40,000 soldiers were deployed for policing, can be traced to the existence of certain structural organization pathologies that are peculiar to the joint operations (*operativos conjuntos*) between the police and the military. It is clear that these operations are characterized by a strong level of institutional self-interest, considerable coordination problems and a distortion in responsibilities (see Chindea, 2014). In the past, these phenomena meant that the main stakeholders, i.e., the army, navy, federal police and the police forces in the individual states, usually operated completely independently

of each other (see Bailey, 2014: 156). At the same time, there was resentment in the military toward the Mexican federal police, which was seen as a privileged unit. For example, Gerardo Rodríguez (2014: 88) describes situations within the scope of the *operativos conjuntos* in the federal state of Michoacán (*Operación Michoacán*), in which military units were housed in tents with unsatisfactory hygienic conditions, while the federal police officers were evidently allowed to stay in comfortable hotels. Circumstances such as these led to long-standing impediments to the urgently needed improvements in the exchange of information between authorities and across government sectors.

An essential conditional factor not only for the occurrence of such pathologies, but also for the propagation of acts of violence and human rights violations within the context of such operations, is the fact that military activities in the area of criminal investigations and prosecutions in Mexico are technically illegal and thus de facto informally done in defiance of Mexican law. It is worth noting that arrests of civilians by the military in Mexico are essentially a form of citizen's arrest or a so-called "any person arrest," and therefore any incarceration of civilians by the military is done by flouting the law of the land. This informality ultimately led to the fact that there is no mutual control and no institutional countermeasures for the autonomous operations of the military within the scope of criminal prosecution. Military units or personnel are usually not held accountable for acts of violence they commit, or they are only held accountable by military courts whenever complaints are submitted in individual cases by the Mexican Commission on Human Rights (see Fondevila and Mejía, 2014: 87-92).

An additional conditional factor connected to hybridity regarding the increase in insecurity due to the *operativos conjuntos* is the fact that their excessive organizational centralization based on distinct hierarchies of command with central command posts in Mexico City resulted in an inability of units of the federal police and the military on the periphery to adapt to local conditions, making it impossible to collaborate with local police forces (see Chindea, 2014). The resulting information asymmetries have led to an escalation of acts of violence in the form of repeated clashes between public security forces and armed members of the drug cartels, resulting in a high number of civilian casualties (see Bailey, 2014: 153-56).

An indication of the existence of a causal relationship between the joint operations between the police and military and the increase of insecurity can be seen in the northern border town of Ciudad Juárez in the state of Chihuahua, which enlisted 8,500 soldiers and 2,300 officers of the federal police to undertake policing activities in 2009 (see Uildriks, 2010: 221-25). After a causal relationship between the implementation of a hybrid *mano dura* approach and the escalation of violence became increasingly apparent, particularly in the border city of Ciudad Juárez, the Calderón administration decided in April 2010 to adopt a more moderate operation called "*Todos somos Juárez.*" This removed the military

from policing activities and deployed the federal police to maintain public security in the city (see Chindea, 2014). This measure of dehybridization correlated with a decrease in the homicide rate in Chihuahua beginning in 2011. Conversely, the military deployment in 2009 ushered in an increase in the homicide rate by more than 70 percent up to 2010 (INEGI, 2014: 7; see, for instance, Bailey, 2014: 155).

Violence and human rights violations by the military against civil society in the form of torture, disappearances of individuals and illegal killings have remained a fundamental problem in the Mexican security order since 2011. The killing of at least 12 alleged kidnappers by members of the Mexican military on June 30, 2014 in Tlatlaya in Estado de Mexico (the so-called “Tlatlaya massacre”) has been called an extrajudicial execution in a statement from the Mexican Commission on Human Rights (*Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos*). Witnesses reported that the alleged kidnappers had surrendered before being killed; this case has since been brought before a Mexican federal court.⁴⁰

Vigilante Groups (“Autodefensas” and the “Policía Comunitaria”)

There are various forms of vigilante groups in Mexico, in terms of both the degree of organization and level of aggression. The limitations of these non-state stakeholders have been recognized and increasingly discussed, particularly in media coverage of certain events in the states of Guerrero and Michoacán.

Since 2006, Michoacán has repeatedly made international headlines and has now become something of a microcosm for the effects of hybrid policing systems in Mexico. First, Michoacán was the starting point of the Calderón administration’s new strategy of confrontation against the Mexican drug cartels. The Joint Operation Michoacán, which began in December 2006, was made up of a hybrid conglomerate of various actors, including the Mexican federal police, the Mexican army, the Mexican navy, local police forces and vigilante groups, which were also supported by various US authorities, including the FBI and the Drug Enforcement Agency. The splintering of the drug cartels in Mexico, along with the associated diversification of violent crime (the aforementioned *fantasia* effect), was most prevalent in Michoacán following this early operation of *mano dura*. The best known example is probably the founding of the so-called Knights Templar Cartel (*Caballeros Templarios*) in 2010 as a splinter group from the *Familia Michoacana*, which formed out of the Gulf Cartel and was active from 2006 to 2010. The Knights Templar Cartel is responsible for a large number of murders, extortion crimes and abductions, in addition to drug trafficking in Michoacán.⁴¹

A reaction to this has led to a continued proliferation of vigilante groups, or *autodefensas*⁴², in recent years, which are now active in at least 29 of the 131 municipal authorities in Michoacán as systems for self-defense and vigilante justice.⁴³ This underlines the level

of power and legitimacy they have now attained, as well as the limitations of the state monopoly on the use of force in certain areas of Mexico (see, for instance, Althaus and Dudley 2014). Although the *autodefensas* obtain their legitimacy from the obvious weaknesses of government security authorities and from the population's lack of confidence in the state's ability to guarantee security, the activities of these groups are still often done in direct collaboration with units of the state or even the federal police. One example of this is the "liberation" of the city of Apatzingán from the criminal control of the *Caballeros Templarios* on February 8, 2014.⁴⁴ In this context, it is worth mentioning that the *autodefensas* in Michoacán (and indeed only in Michoacán) had just been recognized by the Mexican federal government (see Horton, 2014; Althaus, 2014). From this perspective, it makes sense to attribute the strategy of *mano dura*, which already exhibited hybrid features from the beginning, as an inherent mechanism of reinforcing organizational hybridity in policing.

There is strong evidence that the activities of such vigilante groups are associated with considerable danger for civilian security. This applies in particular to cases in which the joint operations between these groups and public security forces are explicitly recognized or tolerated by the government. In various outlets, it is considered probable that the 27.3 percent increase in the total number of homicides committed in Michoacán in 2013 can be linked in large part to the increase in extrajudicial killings and executions by the *autodefensas*.⁴⁵ Following a series of reports on specific cases of human rights violations and illegal killings by vigilante groups,⁴⁶ the head of the Mexican Commission on Human Rights, Raúl Plasencia, warned against the additional spread of such groups and called them a threat to internal security and the rule of law in Mexico.⁴⁷ In fact, it has been reported that many members of vigilante groups in Mexico themselves have a criminal background, are victims of violent crime or are related to drug cartels (see Cawley, 2014). The activities of vigilante groups are aimed primarily at fighting ordinary violent crime such as robbery and abduction, whereas international drug trafficking as an illegal business model conducted by these groups is tolerated and sometimes even promoted for the purposes of their own funding (see Althaus, 2014; Althaus and Dudley, 2014). In this respect, there are justifiable fears that members of these groups are themselves involved in organized drug trafficking, as was the case in Colombia (see Horton, 2014). As such, the PGR recently investigated various vigilante groups in Michoacán on suspicion of being involved in organized drug trafficking (Dudley, 2014). Michoacán perfectly illustrates not only some important failures of a highly confrontational crime-fighting strategy whose inclination toward violence stemmed largely out of its hybrid organizational features, but also the existence of a circular relationship between organizational hybridity in policing and continued and increased violence.

Guerrero, one of the poorest and most marginalized Mexican states, has the most visible presence of organizational hybridity in public security. At the same time, the state – in

the context of its high rates of murder and abduction – is currently considered as the least secure state in Mexico. The proliferation of vigilante groups began in 1995 in response to human rights violations by the army, particularly against indigenous populations, as well as corruption in many sections of the police forces. Unlike in Michoacán, the vigilante groups in Guerrero are often made up of indigenous communities, which initially established themselves as a *Policía Comunitaria* in the mountainous regions of the state and are now present in about half of the municipalities in the state (see Sierra, 2005; CNN México, 2013). Although the *Policía Comunitaria* in Guerrero, due to its roots in indigenous traditions, demonstrates a lower level of aggression compared to other vigilante groups and, according to media reports, can even boast of having succeeded in the fight against violent crime (see Sierra, 2005), it is tolerated to a far lesser extent by the Mexican government than the vigilante groups in Michoacán, for reasons that are predominantly political. It has been reported that official government bodies see the indigenous groups' aspirations for autonomy as a threat to political authority (see Rowland, 2005: 199). In addition, more recently, the fact that the current governor of the state of Guerrero – unlike the current governor of Michoacán – is not a member of the national ruling party, PRI, but rather of the left-wing *Partido de la Revolución Democrática* (PRD), has resulted in less political support of the state from the central government (see Althaus, 2014). Clashes are common, in particular with the Mexican army and other federal authorities, which accuse the *Policía Comunitaria* of repeated violations of individual civil liberties (especially against women) and parallel justice, as well as the illegal possession of arms (see Sierra, 2005: 63-64). These inter-organizational conflicts may ultimately further undermine the effectiveness of ensuring civil security in Guerrero (see Asfura-Heim and Espach, 2013; Rowland, 2005: 191).

The Municipal Police in Mexico

The federal state of Guerrero made international headlines mainly because of the repeated involvement of police units, in particular the municipal police, in violent crimes against segments of the civilian population. The most recent example, which has gained international attention, is the participation of the municipal police in Iguala in the kidnapping and presumed murder of 43 students from the Escuela Normal Rural Isidro Burgos in Ayotzinapa, a teacher training college in the state of Guerrero, after violent clashes on September 26, 2014 between local police officers and roughly 100 students. This initially resulted in six deaths and 25 injuries among the students. According to media reports and the preliminary results of investigations of the Prosecutor's Office in Guerrero and the PGR, the 43 students are said to have been handed over by the municipal police in Iguala to the criminal organization *Guerreros Unidos* from the neighbouring community association Cocula and subsequently murdered.⁴⁸ This evidently took place with the

expressed participation of the heads of the police departments of Iguala and Cocula and under the leadership of the mayor of Iguala, Jose Luis Abarca Velázquez, and his wife, María de los Ángeles Pineda Villa, who are accused of maintaining direct connections to the *Guerreros Unidos*.⁴⁹ In addition, according to an investigation report by an expert team from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights from September 2015, there is reason to suspect that units of the federal police and the Mexican army played a conspicuously passive role in these disappearances, facilitating the crime against the students committed by the municipal police and the *Guerreros Unidos* by not intervening at the appropriate time to stop them. In particular, it is striking that the federal police and the military were aware of the violent clashes between the municipal police and the students before their disappearance – based on a common emergency, monitoring and coordination system (C4 – Command, Control, Communications and Computer) – but took no action that could have served to protect the students or de-escalate the violence.⁵⁰ According to the investigation report, the reasons for this passivity remain unresolved, which in itself is astonishing.

Although the crime has not yet been solved and the role of state and federal security forces remains obscure, this incident, which has led to the detention of 44 officers from the municipal police of Iguala and Cocula and the incarceration of the mayor of Iguala in a federal maximum security prison,⁵¹ must be seen as part of a series of repeated implications of the municipal police in violent crimes against the civilian population in Mexico.⁵² This uncovers a fundamental problem in municipal police work in Mexico.

Legal provisions limit the tasks of the municipal police in Mexico to preventive policing, which excludes tasks in the area of criminal investigation and prosecution.⁵³ Thus, in essence, municipal police forces are charged with minor offences, such as incivilities and other disturbances to public order.⁵⁴ Against this normative background, in a large number of cases, the institution of the municipality is factually unsuitable to assume the tasks of fighting crime and investigating delicts or to engage in competition with federal or state police forces on issues of public security. In addition, a large number of smaller municipalities in the poorer rural areas of Mexico, such as in Guerrero, simply do not have the capacities for guaranteeing the provision of public security due to a significant lack of financial resources and qualified personnel, which, in turn, makes the respective municipal police forces exceedingly vulnerable to influence and payments by organized crime.

These shortcomings are largely conditioned by the position of the municipalities in the political system of Mexico (see Rowland, 2005; Basombrío and Dammert, 2013: 7). As such, the Mexican municipalities are largely dependent on funding from the federal government despite the rights guaranteed by the constitutional amendment in 1983 to collect municipal taxes (see Rowland, 2005: 189-93; Sabet, 2012: 69-70).⁵⁵ Accordingly, a

federal grant for improving public security and professionalizing the police forces in the municipalities was approved in 2008, with the *Subsidio para la Seguridad en los Municipios*, amounting to US\$340 million (earmarked for 2013-2014).⁵⁶ Notwithstanding, these funds are only distributed to a fraction of the municipalities in Mexico (in 2014, only 268 of a total of 2,457 municipal authorities). Urban metropolitan areas, capital and border cities, as well as places important for the tourist industry, are given precedence. For example, only seven of the 81 municipalities in the state of Guerrero received funding from this grant in 2014, compared to all 16 municipalities in the federal district of Mexico City, where the murder rate is six times lower than in Guerrero.⁵⁷

Expert opinions voiced on several different occasions state that the subsidization for guaranteeing municipal security represents a misallocation due to the lack of additional incentive systems, which prevents the police at the municipal level from being professionalized in a sustainable manner (see, for instance, Rowland, 2005: 189). This lack of incentives is closely related to a prevailing political system that is heavily dominated by partisan competition and patronage. Municipal politics in Mexico, since the end of the one-party rule in 2000, have been determined less and less by factual necessities and increasingly by informal rules, loyalty relationships and party patronage. Causing this delegative and personalized style of government and leadership, particularly at the local level, are certain constitutional provisions that ban the direct re-election of political incumbents and provide for proportional or party-list voting systems. These provisions are even more pronounced at the municipal level than at the state or federal level (see Bailey, 2014: 19; Sabet, 2012: 72). Thus, whereas the president, governors and senators receive a mandate of six years at the federal and state level, the maximum term of office for mayors and city councilors in Mexico is only three years. Moreover, political reforms at the municipal level, which sought to strengthen parliaments vis-à-vis the executive branch, have failed. Thus, the horizontal responsibilities of the mayors, vis-à-vis the city and municipal councils, either hardly exist or do not exist at all. As such, municipal authorities in Mexico still have a veritable party-list voting system. This not only means that the respective local party associations nominate the candidates for the municipal council, but also that the elections are largely aligned to match the candidates for mayor, and that the members of the municipal council are usually elected based on the popularity of the mayor.

These constellations in the political code at the municipal level in Mexico have negative consequences, especially relating to the obvious necessity of professionalizing the *Policía Municipal*. First, the frequent replacement of politicians holding office, each from a new party, means a lack of political continuity, which makes qualified personnel the exception rather than the rule. Moreover, once reforms based on party-specific motivations are initiated, they are often repealed shortly thereafter without having been in place long enough to have any effect (see Bailey, 2014: 18). Second, the lack of horizontal

responsibility of the mayor facilitates the common practice of hiring personnel at the level of municipal administration and for the municipal police force by way of appointments based on patronage. This politicization of municipal administrations in Mexico ultimately results in the fact that the heads of police do not always possess the necessary qualifications for the job. Moreover, they do not show the necessary willingness to perform their duties due to the likelihood of a short stay in the position. Daniel Sabet (2012: 75-80) shows that, on average, the heads of municipal police forces remain in office for just two years. The situation in the upper and middle levels of leadership is no different. It has been reported that police chiefs frequently return to the status of ordinary police officers regardless of their performance on the job.

Informality in the form of political party patronage and the corresponding uncertainty in future employment for senior police officials, along with the additional threat to municipal police forces by centralization within the scope of police reforms, ultimately create significant incentives for corruption on the part of municipal police officers.⁵⁸ Considering these realities, it seems highly problematic that units of the municipal police, which demonstrate a low level of competence in performing their duties and a high susceptibility for corruption and criminality (see Müller, 2010b: 135), are given extensive duties to ensure public security. This is especially true since this role runs contrary to their original mandate and is exacerbated by the fact that they are issued the corresponding weapons and equipment for this expanded role.

This was evidently the case for the *Policía Municipal* in Iguala, which, according to media reports, was equipped with 36 G-36 assault rifles made in Germany – contrary to German export regulations. It is possible that these rifles were used against the students from Ayotzinapa on September 26 and 27, as well as in previous instances of violence on the part of the municipal police units against students in Guerrero.⁵⁹ However, it is not always the direct involvement of local police forces in criminal activities that endangers the legitimacy and sustainability of public security. Given the relatively high level of autonomy enjoyed by local police forces in connection with informality and patronage, in which strong personal relationships of dependence with supervisors play an important role, it is obvious that the police work at the municipal level in Mexico tends toward more informal consultations and negotiations with criminal stakeholders, regardless of the policy that is being pursued at the state or federal level.⁶⁰ As units of the municipal police are usually not as well equipped – both in terms of materials and personnel – as state or federal units, and are therefore less able to protect themselves, such an approach does seem at least to be rational.

SITUATIONAL SECURITY THREATS IN MEXICO AND THEIR TRANSFORMATION INTO SECURITY RISKS OR FAILURES

So far, this paper has described structural pathologies that are relevant for public security in Mexico, including the extreme politicization of security matters leading to political and institutional stalemates, and incentives to use criminal and institutional violence as well as disincentives to use institutional measures to contain violence (see also Davis, 2006).

Nevertheless, these pathologies should be seen as structural and static preconditions, which opened possible paths toward escalating violence without precluding contingent outcomes. In other words, the previously mentioned peculiarities of Mexican statehood have served to activate latent existing security threats that had not yet been reflected in concrete security risks or in factual insecurity because they needed mechanisms that actually brought the threats to bear as risks or failures. Therefore, the argument is that latent security threats stemming out of typical standard pathologies of the above mentioned situational factors were being brought to bear as security risks or failures by hybrid agency within the field of policing (*hybrid policing*) beyond 2011.⁶¹

Securitization and Decentralization as Situational Mechanisms Activating Security Threats

As mentioned earlier, it has become a common political practice in Mexico to exploit public security matters to achieve party political advantages. Experts occasionally use the term “securitization” as they consider this to be a pathology of the democratization process in Mexico (see Rodríguez, 2014: 58; Bailey, 2014: 147-148). Diane E. Davis (2006: 58-60) largely sees an “obsessive partisan competition combined with democratization led decentralization” as the reason why Mexican institutions are essentially paralyzed in terms of the actual implementation of necessary reforms of Mexican police forces. The police are considered to remain ineffective and prone to corruption, which has ultimately led to continued institutional fragmentation in the police units. One example presented by Davis is the lack of willingness on the part of former President Vicente Fox (*Partido Acción Nacional* [PAN]) to work with the then head of the Federal District of Mexico City, López Obrador (PRD), in a bipartisan effort to fight corruption, as the PRD had nominated Obrador as its candidate for president in the 2006 elections.

Excessive partisan competition in connection with political decentralization already jeopardized police reforms as part of the Fox administration’s ambitions to centralize the government at the federal level, which included establishing new federal investigation agencies in the fight against corruption. Thus, police forces in the individual states and municipalities were increasingly enticed into expanding their informal cooperative relationships with members of organized crime in order to combat the threat to their

position of power within the Mexican police and continue to ensure financial resources (Davis, 2006: 72-73). This, in turn, is thought to have led to a deeper mistrust in police forces and, ultimately, fostered the spread of vigilante groups.

Rios (2012) shows how the political decentralization implemented in Mexico beginning in 1997 led to mechanisms that created even more incentives for drug cartels to use violence between 2006 and 2011. According to her argument, the de facto reality of political decentralization in Mexico creates the conditions for criminals to make a rational choice to increase the level of violence and thereby ensure its expected utility. Thus, as protection rackets in federal Mexico usually remained limited to the individual federal states, drug cartels had more incentive to take up arms themselves rather than “outsource” the responsibility for their protection against rival cartels to corrupt state agencies. To make matters worse, criminals would usually anticipate that they had a comparatively small risk of punishment for both drug trafficking and violent crime. Public security remains much too politicized and the various governments and levels of government in Mexico generally lack any “homogenous incentivization” (Rios, 2012: 24-25, 98) to allow for the prosecution of crime throughout Mexico beyond their respective jurisdictions. As for the shift from the drug cartels’ increased propensity for violence to them actually using violence, Rios (2012: 14 and 23) postulates that the criminal incentive systems influenced by public structuring measures presented a significant conditional factor for how criminal organizations respond to the “law enforcement shocks” within the scope of the *mano dura* strategy and the level of violence they are willing to use. Thus, the increase in violence associated with the Calderón administration’s *mano dura* strategy demonstrates that excessive violence on the part of criminal organizations is more likely if these organizations are active in a decentralized political environment.

However, the connection between decentralization and the increased propensity of drug cartels to use violence in the case of law-enforcement shocks fails to account for the higher levels of crime in the time after the return to a more moderate policing strategy under President Peña Nieto after the year 2011.

Hybridization of Policing as a Transformative Mechanism for Security Risks or Failures

As already mentioned, we have seen a two-fold escalation of violence in Mexico. Whereas the first phase from 2006 to 2011 saw a sharp rise in OCG homicides, the second phase after 2011 was characterized by an increase in institutional violence and violent crimes against ordinary citizens. Thus, it sounds plausible that this differentiated escalation of criminal activity has much to do with a differentiated development in agency, even if it remains path-dependent from structural conditions, such as decentralization, partisan competition and the excessive supply of various armed actors. This escalation in violence

was also likely strongly influenced by hybridized agency in police work. This can be seen in the multiple examples of security threats stemming from these structural features that manifested as security risks or led to escalated violence as a result of decisions by the Mexican government to rely on hybridized policing arrangements through endowing military, municipal and private actors with repressive policing or crime-fighting competencies beyond 2011.

These examples include the acts of violence following the *operativos conjuntos* (see Bailey, 2014: 155; Fondevila and Mejía, 2014: 90) and the continued deployment of military forces beyond 2011. They also include the increased cooperation between federal police units and local vigilante groups, which also grew out of the pathologies of centrally or federally organized police work in the state of Michoacán after 2011. In addition, the Mexican government's decision to centralize the responsibilities for criminal prosecution of organized crime at the federal level and to expand federal powers over police reform incited state and municipal police units to passively resist the push for reforms and the fight against corruption and to pursue their own selective interests (see Bailey, 2014: 147; Chindea, 2014). In this regard, political decentralization and administrative centralization were, to some extent, brought into conflict. This encouraged behaviours of institutional self-interest and principal-agent problems within the scope of a dysfunctional competition between centralized and decentralized police forces. Moreover, this provoked a defensive posture on the part of the police institutions at the municipal level with respect to the reform measures adopted by the Mexican federal government (see Davis, 2006: 73). The decisive factor for the transformation of security threats into concrete security failures, however, lies in the decision to provide the municipal police units with heavy weaponry and to endow them with extensive policing competencies in the field of public security and criminal investigation. This happened despite their lack of suitability for this purpose and the fact that their original mandate was limited to the maintenance of public order. The descent of entire segments of municipal police institutions into criminal activities, as can be seen in the example of the *Policía Municipal* in Iguala, ultimately fostered the continued existence of vigilante groups. It furthermore led to the political decision to continue the militarization of Mexican police forces, including the use of the military in internal affairs. As the units of the *Policía del Estado*⁶² and, in particular, the *Policía Municipal* have the reputation of being notoriously corrupt, military commanders often refused to cooperate with these police bodies in the *operativos conjuntos*, which ultimately caused information asymmetries in the field of operational intelligence. This, in turn, has caused violent clashes with the drug cartels as well as additional limitations to security standards for the civilian population (see Bailey, 2014: 154-155; Rodríguez, 2014: 97).

Hybridity on the level of agency, especially in the form of a dysfunctional competition between authorities, is characterized by increased tendencies of institutional self-interest, information asymmetries (due to an official “secretism”) and distortions in responsibilities. Pathologies of this kind, however, not only exist in the relationships between stakeholders from different authorities but also in the relationships between various security providers at the federal level. This competition between Mexican police forces to secure discretionary budgets and increase their positions of power has been described by US diplomats as a zero sum game, in which the success of one public authority is the other one’s failure (Rodríguez, 2014: 87).⁶³

As such, institutional self-interest has ultimately led to the fact that federal police and military units as well as units of the PGR in the context of *operativos conjuntos* largely operate independently of each other and deliberately ignore existing coordination instruments (such as the *Plataforma México* or the SNSP. Corresponding conflicts even occurred within the Mexican military, as the Mexican army (SEDENA) and the Mexican navy (SEMAR) are commanded by different ministries and were deployed within the *operativos conjuntos* as separate entities (see also Bailey, 2014: 156). As shown above, there is reliable evidence that the specific hybrid nature of this form of operative police work increases information asymmetries and prevents the effective fight against crime based on sufficient operational coordination among the stakeholders involved (see Aguayo, 2013; Rodríguez, 2014: 53, 89-91). In addition, there are distortions in responsibilities associated with informality and the lack of mechanisms to ensure the rule of law within the framework of these operations. This has allowed military units to commit acts of violence in the form of illegal killings, extrajudicial arrests, torture or disappearances against civilians in areas they have locked down, essentially turning them into lawless areas (see Fondevila and Mejía, 2014: 90). The same may be assumed with regard to the cooperation between the police and vigilante groups.

Overall, there is a wide range of forms and manifestations of security hybridity in Mexico, which appear to have a causal, circular connection to the ongoing insecurity – or even increased violence to the detriment of the civilian population. Hybrid forms of policing in Mexico have so far proven both ineffective and increasingly violent, mainly as a result of the corresponding solidifying of institutional self-interest and their inherently notorious problems of coordination and distortions in responsibilities. This is reinforced by the emerging uncontrolled nature of hybridization. The corresponding latent dedifferentiation effects that are subject to no or insufficient public control mechanisms are rarely counteracted. A lack of transparency and distortions in responsibilities, in turn, foster individual and institutional opportunism that can just as easily tolerate organized crime as it can breach the principle of proportionality as a demonstrative show of force.

It is important, however, to remember that the escalation of violence in Mexico did not

(2010) account for this problem by adding “situational mechanisms,” which construct a real effect out of a potential effect (i.e., effects of consolidated drug cartels), and “transformative mechanisms,” which, in the end, bring this effect to bear. Against this theoretical background, I propose to understand decentralization, limited statehood, excessive partisan competition and hybridity as situational mechanisms, which make the pathologies, including their potential threats, more likely to be mobilized as real dangers. Accordingly, it makes sense to understand the “transformative mechanisms” as the agency of individuals or groups of individuals (concrete decisions and actions), because only agency is capable of bringing security dangers to bear as security risks or failures in the end.

CONCLUSION: DEHYBRIDIZATION AND INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING AS A POLICY RECOMMENDATION

The developments in the field of public security in Mexico show that measures of hybridization in policing may be associated with serious security risks as well as significant limitations in security standards. The country has seen the corresponding consequences in the form of an inability to ensure public security together with sustained high rates of crime and criminal violence as well as institutional violence. The hybridized systems of policing operate in a situation of limited statehood with insufficient institutional capacity and are largely influenced by these conditions.

This relates to the toleration and the use of vigilante groups as traditional systems of self-defence and self-justice. In many cases, these groups are directed by individuals with violent criminal backgrounds or henchmen from previous authoritarian regimes, which makes instances of cooperative relations with perpetrators of organized crime, especially organized drug trafficking, hardly surprising (see, for instance, Horton, 2014). At any rate, it is certain that vigilante groups are continuously involved in large numbers of illegal killings and excessive violence throughout Mexico and in many regions of Latin America (see Argueta, 2012; Davis, 2006; Dudley, 2011 and 2014; Horton, 2014; Sanchez, 2006; Ungar, 2007-2008; Oettler, 2005; Huggins, 1991; Snodgrass Godoy, 2004; Müller, 2012). The example of Michoacán in Mexico shows that cooperation between these groups and public police forces usually opens the door to the use of illegal institutional violence.

Similar to the case of vigilante groups, it can also be assumed that municipal police forces remain prone to corruption and informal consultations with members of organized drug trafficking and cause corresponding security risks for the civilian population. This will continue to be the case as long as the professional situation for municipal police officers does not improve significantly, the excessive personalization and patronage in politics

and administration is not significantly reduced at the municipal levels, and heavily armed municipal police units continue to be deployed to ensure public security. In the short term, informal agreements between municipal police forces and members of organized crime may produce effects that promote stability and reduce violence within the sense of “criminal security.” In the medium and long term, however, it can be expected that such hybrid forms of “local order” will lead to the continued criminal consolidation of these groups and thus also promote their potential for violence and, conversely, undermine the Mexican government’s ability to reduce violence and ensure internal security (see Arias, 2013: 263-66; Dewey, 2012). In contrast, doing away with municipal police forces in Mexico could improve the security situation in the medium and long term.⁶⁴

The cooperation of the police and the military in the area of public security has caused ineffective police work and crime fighting as well as important limitations to security standards in conjunction with an increased institutional propensity for violence. Joint operations, such as the *operativos conjuntos* that have been conducted in Mexico since 2006, are an example (see, for instance, Bailey and Dammert, 2005; Davis, 2006). While the reliance on military forces certainly led to immediate successes in confronting and weakening the drug cartels, it did not reduce criminal violence in the medium term. One important factor explaining this shortcoming is the fact that the armed forces simply proved unable to conduct criminal investigations for prosecution and to be present for permanent law enforcement.⁶⁵ Benítez Manaut (2001) also sees the danger of an instrumentalization of the military by political groups or by criminals for their selective interests and security concerns, and therefore warns against the militarization of police forces. As the example of Mexico shows, overloading the military with policing activities not only prevents it from becoming more professional, but it also reduces the necessary pressure to introduce reforms, which would facilitate a modernization of police forces (see also Bailey, 2014: 148-149).

Overall, the example of Mexico provides a number of indications that there can be a circular, causal connection between hybrid or hybridized policing and continued or increased levels of violence, both in the form of violent crime and of legal and illegal institutional violence. In this context, it initially seemed promising that the current government under Enrique Peña Nieto declared the need for reforms aimed, in principle, at reducing organizational hybridity in Mexico’s security order and subsequently started corresponding initiatives for legal and constitutional amendments regarding the allocation of policing competencies in the country.

First, Peña Nieto intended to reduce hybridity at the federal level. His predecessor Calderón had already achieved partial success in standardizing federal police units and removing dysfunctional intergovernmental “feuds” (Bailey, 2014: 156-61). In this respect, the plans called, for instance, for gradually relieving the military from fulfilling police

duties, which were envisaged to be taken over by a newly established Gendarmerie – as a subsection of *Policía Federal* under civilian control (Meyer, 2014: 21).⁶⁶ Partially based on the French model, this gendarmerie was intended to ensure public security in the areas of Mexico that had so far been most affected by violence and by the adverse consequences of the non-state security providers' inability to guarantee security on a sustainable basis. It is also worth mentioning that the current governor of Michoacán, who assumed office in October 2015, declared his intention to legally prohibit the activities of vigilante groups in the state and to transfer public security tasks back into the hands of state or federal police forces (see, for instance, Lohmuller, 2015).

With respect to the problem of the municipal police forces, President Peña Nieto further drew on the plans of his predecessor Calderón to abolish the *Policía Municipal*, even if the latter failed to complete this project due to political resistance (see Sabet, 2010: 11). Nevertheless, given the positive experiences in Chile and Colombia with standardized police forces (see Sabet, 2012: 65-66; Frühling, 2009b), the Peña Nieto administration, which took up the cause of fighting crime that affects ordinary citizens, focused its ambitions of introducing standard police command structures by dissolving and integrating units of the *Policía Municipal* into 32 newly created state police forces in the 31 states and the Federal District of Mexico City. This concept of police reform, which has led to the use of the term *mando unico*⁶⁷ (see Meyer, 2014: 21), additionally included plans for enhancing the operational capacities of local police forces and for establishing nationwide standardized systems of remuneration and training. Respective measures were designed to be first implemented in the states most affected by problems of hybridity, namely Michoacán, Guerrero, Jalisco and Tamaulipas, and an improved monitoring of the implementation of the measures at the federal level was planned.⁶⁸ *Mando unico*, in addition, should contribute to reduce the military involvement in public security affairs as the notorious inclination of the municipal police forces toward corruption had been one of the main reasons for resorting to the military. However, as of 2016, only 17.5 percent of the Mexican municipalities, which are roughly more than two thousand in total, are reported to operate under the scheme of *mando unico*, covering altogether only 16 of the 32 federal states in Mexico.⁶⁹ Only two of these 16 states, namely Aguascalientes and Campeche, changed their state laws for institutionalizing the *mando unico* on a long-term and sustainable basis. That means that this scheme is still dominated by the principle of voluntary adherence on a case-by-case basis. Moreover, the Peña Nieto administration so far has not succeeded in establishing equal conditions regarding remuneration and training of the remaining municipal police forces, which contributes to the continued patchwork quality of police services throughout the country.⁷⁰

Reducing organizational hybridity in the Mexican police forces, backed up by comprehensive measures for capacity building and the fight against corruption in public police forces, can certainly be regarded as a best practice in the light of the developments

and relationships shown here. In particular, the concept of *mando unico* seems to be a promising tool of organizational reform. The metropolitan zone of *la Laguna*, for instance, showed a decrease in violent crime of more than 50 percent after *mando unico* was implemented.⁷¹

The extent to which a de-hybridization of the Mexican security sector can be implemented successfully, however, depends on the ability to enforce federal policies, which are, in turn, dependent on the veto power of decentralized stakeholders. Recent developments show that the notorious existing stalemates between competing political factions at the federal and state level have prevented the urgently needed reforms of the Mexican security sector. This is one reason why the constitutional reform process that was launched by President Peña Nieto in December 2014 to line up an agreement on *mando unico* did not get sufficient support in Congress. Likewise, the upcoming 2018 general elections and the presidential election are expected to further stymie political cooperation between the parties.⁷² So far, the opposition parties PAN and PRD have proved unwilling in the Mexican Senate to agree with the ruling party PRI on a general abolishment of the municipal police forces in all instances. Political negotiations resulted in a modified approach, which contains the possibility of preserving municipal police forces in cases of good results and evaluations on the individual level. As this concept is called *mando policial mixto*,⁷³ it more or less connotes the hitherto existing hybrid policing model in Mexico and can at most be regarded as a lowest common denominator solution for ameliorating policing in Mexico. However, even this approach is stuck in Congress so far. This is in part due to the veto power of local political actors who hint at the need to respect and to treat with caution the various local peculiarities and customs throughout the country. Reference was, for instance, made to the existence of voluntary acting communitarian police forces resembling more or less the *Policía Comunitaria* of Guerrero (see above).⁷⁴

To overcome the deficiencies of hybrid policing in federal Mexico, there is no alternative for further constitutional legal amendments. Up to now, excessive partisan competition has prevailed and matters of public security remain far too politicized. Policing matters are still governed by a logic according to which the success of one party reflects another's failure. To implement effective police reforms, which lead to better capacities in combatting crime, policy makers should consider re-introducing the possibility of re-electing the political leaders of the respective territorial authorities. This would certainly be a crucial factor in de-politicizing policing matters in the country, which is a necessary precondition for establishing a long-term and stringent strategy for combatting crime and violence in Mexico.

Given the current reservations against *mando unico*, especially on the part of regional and local veto players, it seems wise to adopt a pragmatic standpoint at the initial reform phase and build up a rather incremental reform process in order to prevent any further

consolidation of political stalemates. Efforts to improve the financial situation of local authorities in Mexico should be done urgently in order to achieve at least some progress in the field of police reforms in the short term, under the umbrella of *mando policial mixto*.

NOTES

1. On the notion of *mano dura*, see for instance Ungar (2009a: 95; 2009b: 206–12, 2013); Sanchez (2006); Wolf (2017). It refers to a toughened and hybrid version of “zero tolerance” as a policing strategy on the basis of a dedifferentiated use of various security actors, including the military and non-state actors.
2. For the most recent numbers, see the UNODC homicide statistics at <https://data.unodc.org/>.
3. For information on the federal states of Michoacán and Guerrero see p. 13 of ONC, 2015.
4. For more recent publications on the problems of hybrid organizations, see Seibel (2015); Fossetøl et al. (2015); Denis, Ferlieand and van Gestel (2015).
5. For more on this concept, see Seibel (2015).
6. On the adverse security consequences of American PMSCs in Mexico and Colombia within the scope of the Mérida Initiative as well as the Plan Colombia, see Perret (2012-2013; 2013).
7. A public bank police in the federal district that guard financial institutions or industrial facilities for remuneration.
8. Public auxiliary police forces, which also perform “fee for service” for private clients.
9. Discussions with members of the board of the Federación Panamericana de Seguridad Privada in Buenos Aires on October 23 and 24, 2014, as well as expert interviews in Mexico City on October 31, 2014 and November 2, 2014. On the role of private security companies in Mexico, also see Ungar (2007-2008) and Müller (2010b). Müller, in particular, discusses the problems of the informal side of the private security market in Mexico and Mexico City.
10. See Müller (2012); Bailey and Taylor (2009). On the possible stabilization provided by organized crime with regard to controlling violent crime in Brazil, also see Arias (2006; 2013).
11. An explanation of the various levels of the Mexican police system is available in Annex A: Overview of the Police System in Mexico.
12. A strategic intelligence service under the direction of the Ministry of the Interior of Mexico.
13. For an overview, see, for instance, Quezada and Benítez Manaut (2012); Bailey (2014: 156–65); Rodríguez (2014); Sabet (2010).
14. See Bailey (2014: 165); Sabet (2009: 171); Rodríguez Ferreira and Shirk (2015: 20). Similar to the United States, the criminal justice system in Mexico is marked by the coexistence of state penal laws and federal penal law, which includes specific forms of crimes of national or international importance or involving persons with special status, like federal civil servants. In December 2013, however, the Mexican senate ratified a new code of criminal procedure, which – in contrast to the penal law – applies to all territorial units in Mexico.
15. See Risse (2008: 156), on “subsections of limited statehood” in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico. Also see Sanchez (2006) and Bailey and Godson (2000).
16. www.ordenjuridico.gob.mx/Documentos/Federal/pdf/wo83120.pdf.
17. Annex A.
18. A supervisory body over the Federal Police in the rank of a Sub-Secretariat of the Ministry of the Interior.
19. These experienced a high level of operational fragmentation under the Calderón administration contrary to the declared goals of governance as well as a lack of coordination between these remits (Bailey 2014: 153–56).
20. An institution of vigilantism as system of indigenous self-justice with a relatively low level of violence, especially in the state of Guerrero.
21. See, for instance, Mandel (2001); Horton (2014: 5) on the utilization of vigilante groups by government officials in the Mexican state of Michoacán for the purpose of enhancing legitimization of (illegal) institutional violence.
22. The National Public Security System is the main consultative framework for the implementation of public security policies and plays no role in operational coordination (see Bailey, 2014: 156; Quezada, 2012: 141)

23. Justice in Mexico Project (2014a: 24) (on the definition of OCG homicides: 13–17). Also see Justice in Mexico Project (2013, July: 1–2).
24. Justice in Mexico Project (2012).
25. *Ibid.*: 3–5. Strictly speaking, this term describes the splintering of the four former large drug cartels (the Gulf Cartel, the Juarez Cartel, the Sinaloa Cartel and the Tijuana Cartel) into a considerably greater number of smaller criminal organizations and gangs. These were then increasingly involved in violent struggles against each other, and they also diversified their criminal activities to secure the financial means necessary to consolidate their criminal power. Viridana Rios (2012) places the emergence of this effect within the context of a political decentralization in Mexico (see below for more details).
26. See Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI) 2014a; also see UNODC, 2013: Annex, S. 127 ff.; Justice in Mexico Project, 2014a: 31, Justice in Mexico Project, 2015: 19). According to the ONC (2015), an increase in the homicide rate to approximately 17.7 was expected for 2015.
27. As listed explicitly in Justice in Mexico Project (2014a: 45).
28. According to the most recent numbers from the UNODC homicide statistics, Mexico was even among the top 15 worldwide in 2015 (the most recent year that can be used as a reference for comparing countries). The statistics for 2012 include (albeit very small) countries in the Caribbean, placing Mexico among the 20 most violent countries. In 2012, the Mexican homicide rate was more than three times the global average and more than seven times the European average (UNODC, 2013: 21–23). On the overall correlation between the murder rate and violent crime, see also: Justice in Mexico Project (2014a: 6–8).
29. During the period from 2008 to 2012, the average murder rate (murders per 100,000 residents) in Chihuahua was 113.2; in Guerrero, 55; in Michoacán, 17.8; in Morelos, 23; in Nuevo Leon, 23; in Sinaloa, 56.6; in Tamaulipas, 24.8; and in Mexico City, 11.4 (author's own calculations; INEGI (2014). For 2013, the rate of abductions (number of reported abductions per 100,000 residents) in Chihuahua was 0.88; in Guerrero, 5.87; in Michoacán, 4.28; in Morelos, 8; in Nuevo Leon, 0.93; in Sinaloa, 1.16; in Tamaulipas, 6.1; and in Mexico City, 0.67 (ONC, 2014).
30. Also see El Universal Nación (2014).
31. INEGI (2015). One exception is the number of car thefts (expert interview in Mexico City on October 31, 2014).
32. ONC (2014: 53).
33. See Justice in Mexico Project (2015: 17–18).
34. Justice in Mexico Project (2014a: 29–31).
35. Justice in Mexico Project (2014a: 31); INEGI (2014).
36. After the intentional homicide rate decreased in 2014 by approximately 27.5 percent compared to the previous year, it once again rose by over 30 percent between October 2014 and October 2015 according to the ONC (see ONC, 2015; Justice in Mexico Project, 2015: 18; INEGI, 2014).
37. ONC (2014: 70).
38. INEGI (2015).
39. On victims of the institutional use of violence in civil society in 2014 in Guerrero and Michoacán see Justice in Mexico Project (2015: 33–36).
40. Justice in Mexico Project (2014b: 15–16).
41. See Justice in Mexico Project (2013: 4).
42. Defined as a violent form of vigilante groups for armed self-defence, particularly in the state of Michoacán.
43. Justice in Mexico Project (2014a: 3).
44. See Althaus (2014); Horton (2014: 6–7); CNN México (2013).
45. See Horton (2014); Justice in Mexico Project (2014a: 31–32).

46. A well-known incident occurred on February 10, 2012 in Chalco, Estado de México, in which three people, two of whom were adolescents, were lynched by a vigilante group of 23 people, as they had been accused of committing abductions. According to media reports, the two 16 year olds and a 26 year old were taken from a station of the Policía Municipal, where they previously had sought protection from the mob, and then burned alive. The alleged perpetrators were apparently innocent. See *El Universal Edomex* (2012).
47. See *Fox News* (2013).
48. To date, only one of the 43 students has been identified as a murder victim.
49. *La Jornada* (2014).
50. *IGIE* (2015: 13-14).
51. *Milenio* (2014a and 2014b).
52. In December 2011, two students from the *Escuela Normal Rural Isidro Burgos* in Ayotzinapa were victims of deadly police violence. Both students and teachers of this teacher training college are known for their radical protests of the national education policy.
53. See Article 115 VII of the Mexican Constitution.
54. See Rowland (2005: 189); expert interview on October 31, 2014 in Mexico City. The notion of public order usually refers to institutionalized standards of behaviour according to shared moral values, which are sanctioned by police authorities without, however, being relevant in criminal law or for crime prevention. In general, incidents against public order commonly include incivilities, like begging, public noise or parking violations, which are regarded as mere disturbances in the public sphere without leading to a damage of a legally protected interest or to victimization at the individual level. In most Western democracies, disruptors to public order are not charged with guilt, there is no public prosecution and police work is terminated as soon as the order incident is cleared. As soon as certain incivilities become criminalized (which heavily depends on the specific criminal justice system), they become part of so called "public order crimes" (see, for instance, Siegel, 2016) and thus the object of crime prevention within the provision of public security.
55. On the national average, municipalities in Mexico receive 71.8 percent of their budget from federal subsidies (data from 2012; Sabet, 2012: 69-70).
56. Meyer (2014: 9).
57. For an overview of the municipalities receiving funding as well as the declared criteria for awarding them, see *SEGOB* (2014).
58. In this context, see the statement of the general secretary of the *Federación Nacional de Municipios de México*, Sergio Enrique Arredondo Olvera (see *Justice in Mexico Project* [2014b: 11-12]). Also see Davis (2006: 73).
59. *El Universal* (2014a). Also see: *Tageszeitung Online* (2014).
60. See Bailey (2014: 147), who reports that police units in individual states as well as at the municipal level are usually passive and ineffective when implementing programs to fight criminal activities.
61. I consider security risks as dependent on agency that brings persons into exposure to latent threats. Agency of this kind could either be located in the implementation of policing strategies on the level of concrete measures, in the physical reactions of criminal actors or in the physical reactions of the citizens with different abilities to evade exposure to aggression. Even if those three kinds of agency seem to be closely interdependent, the focus of this analysis, however, is on the implementation of policing strategies. Different levels of resilience against crime could be considered as a further mechanism that transforms risks into damages as security failures.
62. The State police in each of the Mexican federal states.
63. Even police forces in Germany adhere to such pathologies. The problem there mainly lies in the fact that smaller police forces that have less staff see incentives to withhold information in exchanges with authorities in other states in order to preserve their chance of distinguishing themselves by their own rate of success. The same applies

to the cooperation between police authorities and the generally much smaller intelligence services (interview with Waldemar Kindler, former head of the Bavarian state police, on November 25, 2015 in Munich).

64. See, for instance, El Universal (2016a).
65. See, for instance, Stratfor (2016).
66. Corcoran (2014); also see El Universal (2014b).
67. Plans for police reform, which involve the establishment of standard police command structures by dissolving and integrating units of the Policía Municipal into 32 newly created state police forces in the 31 states and D.F.
68. Justice in Mexico Project (2014b: 11).
69. El Universal (2016a).
70. See, for instance, Animal Politico (2016).
71. El Universal (2016a).
72. See, for instance, Stratfor (2016).
73. Animal Politico (2016). A modified version of mando unico, which contains the possibility of preserving municipal police forces in cases of good results and evaluations on the individual level.
74. El Universal (2016b).

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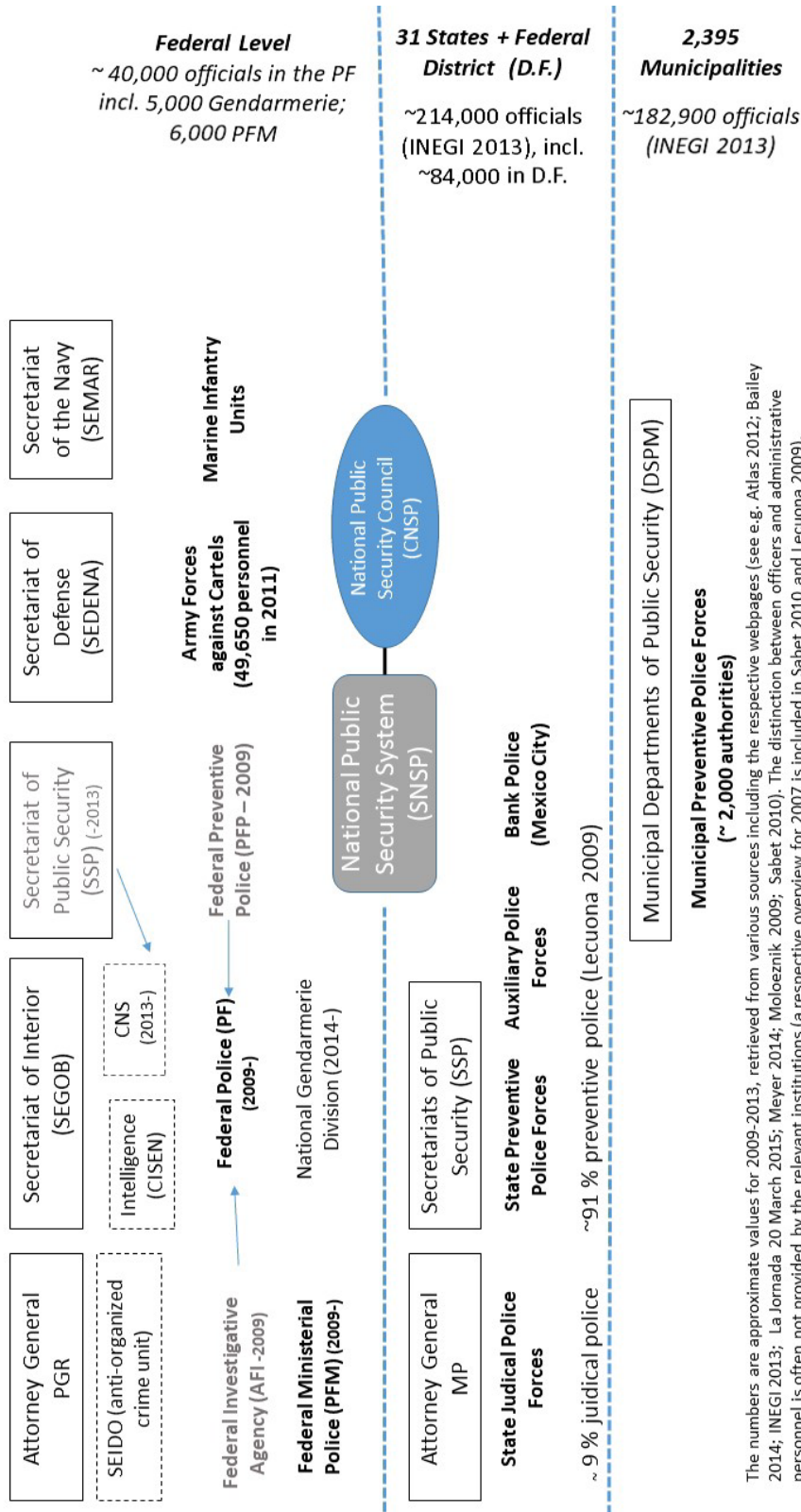
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ANNEX A: OVERVIEW OF THE POLICE SYSTEM IN MEXICO



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