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Claremont McKenna College

Mano Dura and Beyond: An Analysis of Police Reform in Latin America

submitted to
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by
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for
Senior Thesis
Fall/Spring
April 25, 2022

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Bill, from the bottom of my heart, for encouraging me, holding me accountable, providing insight, and giving me choice of pen color. I would like to thank my friends, and especially my roommates, for giving me energy when it was sorely lacking, and a sanctuary to come home to every night. I would like to thank Professor Tinker-Salas, Professor Portillo, Professor Aristizabal, and Professor Valencia, for engendering in me a love of Latin America. Finally, I would like to thank my family: Mom, Dad, Becca, Matthew, Sarina, Max, and Sadie. This thesis was only possible because of your unending and unconditional love and support.

Abstract

Physical insecurity and high rates of crime plague Latin America. The problem is economically costly, detrimental to physical and mental health, and damaging to political legitimacy, while also fueling a migration crisis and negatively impacting societal views on human rights. The police are tasked with responding to and investigating crime, but have been historically ineffective at doing so. In recent decades, many countries in the region have implemented significant police reforms in pursuit of decreasing crime and insecurity. This thesis will analyze reforms in Brazil, Colombia, Chile, and Mexico to determine regional themes of reform. The lessons from those case studies will then be synthesized into a list of eight implementable and generalizable policy recommendations.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Defining the Problem

Violence is highly prevalent in Latin America. Latin America is the only region in the world where violence has been increasing steadily since 2000 (Luhnow 2018). When taken together, just four countries, Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, and Venezuela, account for a quarter of all murders on earth (Erickson 2018). In 2017, 43 of the world's 50 most dangerous cities were in Latin America, and the region filled out the entire top ten (Luhnow and Frank 2018). Where the average global homicide rate sits at 6.1 victims per 100,000 people (UNODC 2019), in Latin America, the number is around 24 victims per 100,000 people (World Bank 2018). In Mexico, the second most populous country in Latin America, 2018 saw over 31,000 murders, a record at the time (Al Jazeera 2020). Then, in 2019, there were 35,000 murders. It is expected that those numbers are undercounting the problem, as "many victims are tossed into unmarked graves, burned or put through sugar-cane grinders" (Luhnow and Frank 2018). Importantly, the quality of life is impaired for even those who escape homicide.

The problem of crime and violence in Latin America negatively impacts the economies of various Latin American countries. On the personal level, the daily insecurity that comes with crime and violence often prevents participation in elements of life such as school, work, and leisure. When youth are prevented from going to school, it is more likely that they will join a gang, a replacement for age-appropriate socialization, and go on to perpetuate the violence by which they were victimized. It is estimated that 14.2 percent of regional GDP is lost due to crime and violence (Heinemann et al. 2006). On a larger scale, it is estimated that up to five percent of GDP is spent on addressing the

health consequences of violence. Meanwhile, a one percent increase in homicide in Latin America is associated with a reduction of up to one percent in foreign direct investment.¹

Physical insecurity has also led to a thriving private security sector in Latin America, currently costing around 30 billion dollars (Blackwell 2015). It is estimated that nearly four million citizens work in the private security sector in Latin America and the Caribbean, and in Central America, private security guards outnumber police in every country except in El Salvador (Blackwell 2015). The existence of private security as an industry takes people away from more productive activities that would be feasible if not for the high levels of crime that necessitate the private security industry in the first place. The scope of private security in areas of Latin America with high concentrations of violence suggests that in those areas, the state has lost not only parts of a potential labor force, but also its claim to sole arbitration of legitimate use of force. This is made problematic by the comparatively lower accountability standards applied to private security firms and employees in Latin America. Private security personnel have no standardized training or scope-of-action protocols, making them potentially even more vulnerable to bribery and wanton use of violence. Even if all private security personnel were trained well and uniformly, the costs of hiring them would still be incurred by Latin American citizens, a net economic loss.

The widespread problem of violence in Latin America affects the mental health of citizens, regardless of if they have been personally victimized. A survey analyzing the responses of over 7,000 adults in 83 cities in Latin America found a direct correlation between the rate of violence in a neighborhood and the rates of reported internalized and

¹ The range of impact on FDI was 0.5-1%

externalized mental disorders (Benjet et al. 2019). While being the victim of an assault or witnessing one were both related to the onset of mental disorders, simply living in a neighborhood with high rates of violence was enough to elicit higher levels of mental disorders as well. Worse mental health can also be linked to a less stimulated economy, as depression and anxiety impact productivity.

Criminal violence also negatively impacts regime legitimacy. Political support of a government is often dependent on the government's performance. When the economy and security are problematic, the belief in the competence of a government decreases. That decrease opens up the possibility of an extralegal change in government, bringing in a more authoritarian regime, as the promise of security can push aside concerns of upholding human rights. While much of Latin America's regime-change history has close ties to 20th century US foreign policy, loss of faith in democracy by Latin American citizens is also observed today. A 2018 survey found average satisfaction with democracy in Latin America at 24 percent, sharply down from 44 percent in 2010 (Razvan 2019). In Brazil, the country with the lowest average belief in democracy in Latin America, that statistic was reflected in the election of Jair Bolsonaro, a politician who is open about his dislike of democratic processes and his admiration for the country's past military dictatorship (Muggah 2021). The 2018 survey found only two countries, Costa Rica and Uruguay, to be fully democratic.

Another notable outcome of prolific violence is migration. A 2015 survey of people in Mexico migrating from Northern Triangle countries² found that 39 percent of respondents cited attacks or threats to themselves or family members as the reason for

² Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador

leaving. It has been found that “a sustained increase of one homicide per year in an area caused an increase of 0.9 apprehensions of unaccompanied minors per year in the US from that area” (Bermeo 2019). In Brazil, over seven million people have been internally displaced since 2000 by development projects, natural disasters, and organized violence (Muggah et al. 2020). Migrants also face victimization from violence once they reach their destinations. Because they tend to have a less complete understanding of the neighborhoods that are most dangerous, or they have no choice but to reside in those neighborhoods, migrants make easy targets for criminals. Drug cartels throughout Mexico are notorious for kidnapping migrants and holding them for ransom, knowing that they likely have a friend or family member that can be called and extorted. Police and other government officials inflict sexual violence on migrants with the threat of deportation preventing accountability or recourse. And as mass migration sparks a xenophobic backlash, seen in Colombia with nearly two million migrants arriving from Venezuela in the last decade (Migration Data Portal 2020), local residents may begin perpetrating violence as well. The home economy also suffers as migration removes people from the workforce. Additionally, the family separation caused by violence fueled migration breaks down community support networks and can adversely impact mental health.

Violence also results in the hardening of opinions towards crime, because the public begins to support harsher sentencing. This exacerbates the problem. As more young people end up in prison for longer, they find themselves forced to join prison gangs to survive. These prison gangs become more sophisticated over time, and their

spheres of influence grow larger. In Brazil, the Primeiro Comando da Capital³ (PCC), a prison gang that was founded in São Paulo in the 1990s, has demonstrated the capacity to meaningfully fund political candidates and affect the passage of legislation (InSight Crime 2020). The PCC's success has inspired the adoption of their organizational model by other criminal groups in South America. This phenomenon further undermines state legitimacy, continues to create an atmosphere of insecurity, builds resistance to the effectiveness of law enforcement, and perpetuates more violence as organizational capacity builds and criminal enterprises diversify.

Military Involvement in Domestic Security

When evaluating how best to secure the physical wellbeing of the citizenry, it may be helpful to consider the effectiveness of alternative security apparatuses. Latin America has seen significant involvement of armed forces in domestic security operations. In 2014, the bulk of Latin American armed forces regularly performed operations related to internal public security, more than half had a program related to citizen security, and many possessed regular programs for combating drugs and crimes (Pion-Berlin and Carreras 2017). This level of involvement is perplexing at face value.

Military training does not conform to the needs for which domestic security operations frequently call. Effective policing often requires an intimate knowledge of the community where policing occurs, whereas armed forces expect to be deployed in various unfamiliar locations.

Armed forces neglect restraint in training due to the aggressiveness of expected combat situations, but effective policing requires a more restrained approach due to the

³ First Command of the Capital

immediately implicating and complex web of consequences that can result from overly aggressive policing. Military personnel are trained to take orders from above, not collaborate with citizens from below, as is also required in effective policing. This has the potential to lead to an antagonistic relationship with a constituency that possesses the most relevant knowledge of where, when, and how criminality occurs. Military personnel may see police work as demeaning and beneath them, undercutting the effectiveness of public security by the military. Additionally, many Latin American countries have painful histories of mass atrocities carried out by armed forces during military dictatorships,⁴ the effects of which are felt to this day. Due to the lack of inter-state armed conflict in the region, many armed forces in Latin America are readily available for policing duties. It is then worth examining whether it may be preferable to shift more domestic security responsibilities to armed forces altogether.

David Pion-Berlin (2017) suggests that the effectiveness of domestically deploying military personnel is contextual. When deployed in rural areas, such as for the purpose of destroying illicit crops, the sparse population limits the amount of harm that can be done to non-combatants while maximizing the organizational benefits of military professionalism. In more densely populated urban areas, the conclusion is murkier. While the previously mentioned community buy-in may be lacking, some “mid-level” criminal threats such as drug cartels and transnational criminal organizations require the involvement of state armed forces. These mid-level threats can have their own armed forces that rival host country militaries in scope and lethality, and local police forces often have neither resources, know-how, nor inter-regional coordination to effectively

⁴ See Brazil, Mexico, Peru, Colombia, Chile, and Guatemala, to name a few.

strategize and operate against them. Additionally, police officers have been shown to be more vulnerable to bribery and intimidation by these mid-level threats than the military. Therefore, this thesis will also consider how the resources, structure, and ethos of armed forces, where integration into domestic security has been observed, can potentially bolster or hinder police effectiveness.

Defining Police Effectiveness

Effective police do not simply prevent crime, they also engender trust and safety within the communities they purport to serve. Without that trust, crime prevention is much more difficult. If people view the police as corrupt or do not trust them to adequately investigate crime and pursue justice, they will stop relying on the police for help. Unfortunately, the public rarely has other public safety options, thus, crime proliferates. On that account, this thesis will consider a variety of factors when assessing the effectiveness of police in Latin America. Those factors include: societal perceptions of police corruption, citizen perceptions of physical insecurity, the percentage of investigations that result in conviction, the rate of crime reporting versus the rate of actual crime, the extent of human rights abuse perpetrated by police, public satisfaction with the police, and crime rates.

Chapter 2 - Case Studies

Brazil

Background

Policing in Brazil is highly decentralized. The two main policing bodies are the federal police and state police. The federal police are comparatively small, and consist of several bodies responsible for monitoring and investigating federal crimes such as terrorism, border control, federal fiscal crimes, organized crime, and crimes against indigenous people. State police forces exist for all 26 Brazilian states, and are further divided into military and civil police. Military police are broadly responsible for maintaining public order through patrolling the streets, while civil police serve an investigative and judicial function (Uildriks 2009). Policing as an institution has a tumultuous history in the country. Police-like groups in the 19th century explicitly functioned as security for the white, landed elite, seeing the often Afro-Brazilian poor as dangerous and to be protected against. When the military dictatorship took power in the 20th century, the police were a highly repressive force that worked in conjunction with the military to carry out disappearances and widespread torture (Uildriks 2009). Brazil reclaimed democracy in 1985, but a report published in 1997 by the Organization of American States (OAS) found it was common for military police officers to express the preference of killing criminals rather than turning them over to civil police, then the prosecutor's office (Uildriks 2009). Paired with statistics from the past two decades which show alarmingly high levels of police violence directed at civilians, along with vocal resistance by police forces across the country to an ideology of demilitarization, the OAS report indicates the authoritarian mentality that viewed citizens as potential

subversives rather than partners working towards a common goal of reducing crime has remained.

Major police reform efforts in Brazil began in the mid-1990s, riding the wave of community-oriented policing programs that found promising results in countries such as the United States and Canada. Community-oriented policing projects were piloted in Brazilian states such as Espírito Santo, Pernambuco, Rio Grande do Sul, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Minas Gerais (Husain 2007). Results were predictably mixed, as community-oriented policing was developed in the context of high income western democracies with already effective, accountable, and responsive policing institutions. Low income countries, meanwhile, face weak and corrupt policing institutions, distrust of government, substantial civil violence, and lingering authoritarian legacies in security apparatuses. Those legacies create mentalities in high ranking officers that undermine faith in community-oriented strategies, leading to weak oversight and implementation.

Still, community-oriented policing strategies have been meaningfully and successfully implemented in several Brazilian cities, lending themselves to analysis. Community-oriented policing is defined by its close ties between the police and the community, and its flexible, creative, and proactive approaches to problems deemed most important by community members, local government, and civil society (Uildriks 2009). This section will examine three community-oriented policing projects which have occurred in Brazil in the previous three decades: Grupamento de Policiamento em Áreas Especiais⁵ (GPAE), Unidades de Polícia Pacificadora⁶ (UPP), and Fica Vivo.⁷

⁵ Policing Group in Special Areas

⁶ Pacifying Police Unit

⁷ Stay Alive

Grupamento de Policiamento em Áreas Especiais

The GPAE was a type of police unit created within the city of Rio de Janeiro's military police in 1995. Rio de Janeiro had been experiencing (and continues to experience) far more violent crime than it did in the military dictatorship, police were heavily militarized, and they largely used force as a default rather than a last resort (Uildriks 2009). Within this context, GPAE units, composed of officers trained to respect human rights, were formed and deployed. Basic tenets of the program included keeping small arms out of reach, steering children away from the drug trade, and preventing police abuse. GPAE units were meant to have a more constant and visible presence in high crime neighborhoods so as to increase the accessibility of police officers.

The program included a *Café da Manhã Comunitário*,⁸ *Conselho Comunitário de Segurança*,⁹ and *Policiamento Comunitário*.¹⁰ The *Café da Manhã Comunitário* happened on the first Monday of every month, and served as a breakfast meeting between police and community organizations such as churches, schools, businesses, residence associations, and clubs. The initiative's goal was to allow officers and community members to get to know each other on a more personal level, with the aim of strengthening trust and therefore facilitating greater cooperation. *Conselho Comunitário de Segurança* were a series of consultative meetings between the civil police, military police, and various local associations. This was to serve as another, more formal channel of communication between the community and the police. *Policiamento Comunitário* were the on-the-ground expression of GPAE units. They were defined by their capacity to

⁸ Community Breakfast

⁹ Community Security Council

¹⁰ Community Police Patrols

act with more decision making autonomy, outside the rigid military police hierarchy so as to facilitate more creative problem solving. Other characteristics of the program included the commanding officer of each GPAE unit possessing a criminal justice degree, the creation of a hotline for tips about criminal activity, and the personal cell-phone number of the GPAE unit's commanding officer being provided to community members.

The program was first piloted in the beachside neighborhood of Copacabana. Police officers were noted to have an increased visual presence, not just in patrol cars but also standing on street corners and walking down the sidewalks. Although police were supposed to be made more accessible, community members complained that they felt alienated from the GPAE units. This was, in part, because only higher ranking officers attended the monthly breakfasts. Higher ranking officers were also more likely to transfer between municipalities for promotions, forcing the community to constantly rebuild their relationships with the next person. Rank-and-file police officers shared the community's frustration about alienation. Crime rates in Copacabana went down, but perceived insecurity increased (Uildriks 2009).

Another notable pilot of the GPAE program was in the Pavão-Pavãozinho-Cantagalo favela. The initial rollout faced several obstacles. One-third of the GPAE force was fired within the first several months for robbery, bribery, and assault of community members. The lingering authoritarian mentality explains why this may have happened in the favela but not Copacabana. Copacabana is populated by the White elite of Rio, the political base of the former dictatorship, but the favelas are universally poor and predominantly Afro-Brazilian, the dictatorship's "subversive class." Nevertheless, increased police presence and access to police where there previously was

none resulted in a significant decrease in homicides. High profile GPAE abuse cases in Pavão-Pavãozinho-Cantagalo and other favelas continued, however, and demonstrations calling for accountability were met with violent crackdowns by the governor of Rio de Janeiro. Traditional policing units also continued to do raids in the favelas, causing confusion among the populace, undercutting citizen trust, and complicating the relationship between GPAE and traditional police units. Ultimately, the GPAE program was discontinued due to continued reports of bribery, political disputes, and accusations of graft (Muggah 2017).

Unidades de Polícia Pacification

The UPP were formed in Rio de Janeiro shortly after the GPAE were dissolved. All UPP officers, similar to the GPAE, are trained in human rights and conflict mediation, and receive bonuses depending on the extent of violence reduction in their areas of operation (Muggah 2017). The human rights training received by UPP officers is reportedly more extensive than what GPAE officers received. UPP consists of a policing component and a social welfare component. The policing component begins with a traditional Special Operations Battalion clearing the target area of drug traffickers, where an informal base of operations for the UPP is then established. The UPP, similar to the GPAE, seeks to become a regular presence in the neighborhood to deter crime and increase access to police resources. The social welfare component of the UPP, originally named UPP Social but changed to Rio+Social in 2015 with hopes of breathing new life into the initiative, seeks to provide lacking social services through police attendance of community meetings. This aspect of the UPP has seen little success. This is likely

because the police do not receive training on social work, and the program's mandate is too ambiguous.

Initially, homicide rates fell by 65 percent across the city and up to 75 percent in targeted areas. However, while homicides, robberies, and police shootings fell, disappearances, intentional injury, domestic violence, threats, rape, pickpocketing, and drug related crime all increased. Additionally, homicide rates in Rio de Janeiro began rising again in 2013, and peaked in 2019. While some of the increase in other types of crime can be attributed to a greater police presence lending itself to easier crime reporting, the increasing homicide rate as well as increased drug related crimes point to a structural flaw of the program.

Semi-structured interviews with community members where the UPP have been implemented suggest that relations between the community and police are still tense. Rio+Social failed to develop trust within the community, and community members can tell that non-lethal crime has gone up, accompanied by increased perceived insecurity (Richmond 2019). Researcher Matthew Richmond conducted field research in the Rio favela of Tuiuti, where the UPP were implemented. He found that the Red Command (one of Brazil's largest criminal organizations) is still operating, just less overtly. Community members know it, and so do police officers, but a combination of bribes and the necessity of evidence to carry out arrests prevents them from addressing the matter. In contrasting current UPP presence with former Red Command control, community members say that the Red Command had better control of petty crime. Police have a higher threshold for addressing crimes than the Red Command did. This allowed the Red

Command to act as a more effective deterrent, instilling fear with threats and summary executions.

Funding cuts in Rio following the 2016 recession caused cuts to the UPP. Wilson Witzel's election to the governorship in 2018 also undermined the ethos of the UPP. A fervent Bolsonaro supporter at the time of his election, Witzel encouraged more violent police responses to crime in favelas, increasing police killings while homicides continue to increase as well (Reuters 2021).

Fica Vivo

Belo Horizonte, the capital city of Minas Gerais, began implementing a program called Fica Vivo in 2002. The preceding decade had seen a 446 percent growth in homicides (Beato 2005), compelling drastic action. Fica Vivo is similar to the UPP, but with a far more robust and differently structured social program. Originally targeting six hot-spot crime neighborhoods, it combines community-oriented policing strategies such as regular forums and increased police presence with social programs specifically targeting at-risk youth (12-24). These social programs consist of workshops discussing violence prevention, professional training, sports events, art classes, and psychological counseling. While a small number of social workers are employed to direct the social program at the neighborhood level, most of the classes themselves are run by local residents who volunteer. This builds links between the community and the Fica Vivo program, providing information to the policing component which helps resolve local conflicts and addresses the needs of residents more effectively (Alves and Arias 2012). Additionally, because many who volunteer to hold workshops are young adults

themselves, a new generation of community leaders is created, committed to the success of Fica Vivo.

The policing component includes a General Coordination Group, created to coordinate between different government agencies, civil society groups, and members from academia. The General Coordination Group is further divided into a Community Mobilization Group and a Strategic Intervention Group. The former includes community leaders, local officials, NGO representatives, the private sector, and members from the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais¹¹ (UFMG). The latter includes police agencies (military and civil), members of the local judiciary, the public prosecutor's office, and members from UFMG as well. The program was later expanded to other parts of the city, and now includes child welfare agencies and schools in the General Coordination Group.

Fica Vivo has been highly successful, especially in comparison to its Carioca¹² counterpart. Estimates vary between a 47 and 69 percent (Alves and Arias 2012, Muggah 2017) decrease in homicides. Its success can be explained by two examples. The first is Morro das Pedras, a favela in Belo Horizonte. The targeted police intervention component happened before the social program was implemented. Homicides fell immediately following intervention, but then began to rise again a few years later, with less funding and reports of poorer quality policing. However, when the social programs began, homicides fell once again and have remained at a stable, lower rate ever since. Cabana do Pai Tomás is another favela that implemented the program. Here, the GEPAR (Fica Vivo patrol units) were at first overly aggressive, leading to mistrust in the community and cases of police abuse. Once the social programs began picking up,

¹¹ Federal University of Minas Gerais

¹² A person or thing from Rio de Janeiro

though, the residents leading workshops were able to facilitate a wider community meeting. Community members and police both expressed their grievances, and the changes they wanted to see. Successive meetings proved fruitful, and homicides were eventually reduced by 50 percent.

Comparing Reforms

While differences in the political landscape between Rio de Janeiro and Belo Horizonte have some bearing on the outcomes of the police reform programs, the clearest difference is the social welfare and engagement element. Where GPAE had no social welfare component, and UPP aspired to one without clear goals or knowhow, Fica Vivo actively cultivated the creation of stronger civil society within the target neighborhoods, along with existing civil society engagement. The focus on youth and a stronger commitment to the creation of coordination mechanisms such as Fica Vivo's General Coordination Group, were other important differences between the programs.

The success of Fica Vivo's social welfare and engagement elements suggests that effective police reform requires community input and buy-in to the reforms. The increase in homicides after a brief drop when Rio de Janeiro's UPPs were first implemented mirrors what happened in Morro das Pedras. It can be extrapolated that, just as homicides in Morro das Pedras only fell again once effective social welfare was implemented, the UPP program would see more success if it could implement similarly robust social welfare elements. The logic goes that although criminal activity is momentarily broken up by the sudden imposition of a highly visible police presence in the neighborhood, criminals will learn to eventually work around it. However, if police presence is paired with initiatives that can help people escape poverty, and the target community is able to

help craft these initiatives themselves, then people will no longer be in a financial situation which necessitates their participation in crime.

The focus on youth and better coordination between police, the citizenry, and other relevant stakeholders displays Fica Vivo's more successful manifestation of lateral accountability, an organizational structure that allows civil society to consistently engage with high-ranking state officials to push them to improve a program over time (Moncada 2009). The GPAE and UPP programs both had vertical accountability structures; community members were to talk with a revolving door of high ranking officials if they wanted to voice their concerns about the programs. The coordinating bodies created by Fica Vivo, meanwhile, institutionalized regular dialogue between multiple civil society representatives and the police, necessitating constant cooperation.

Colombia

History of Organized Violence

Problems of Colombian policing and citizen security more generally have been shaped by a severe history of organized violence. From 1985 to 1995, homicide rates in the country increased by almost 160 percent, largely attributed to organized violence (Heinemann and Verner 2006). This violence has come from leftist insurrectionary political militias, right-wing paramilitary forces, transnational drug cartels, and gangs (Muggah 2016). From 1948 to 1958, Colombia was in a civil war known as La Violencia, largely driven by political partisanship and fought in the countryside. A consociational national front was formed between the two major parties in 1957, returning the country to civilian rule. When the state in the early 1960s sought to eliminate the Communist guerrilla groups that had fought during the civil war, the groups concentrated into the

Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia¹³ (FARC) (Hartlyn 1993). The FARC, from then on, was officially at war with the state until a peace treaty was signed more than 50 years later, in 2016. Before that treaty, the FARC would influence gang activity in major city slums in the 1990s to establish a presence in those areas (Godoy et al. 2018). This brought professionalization and sophisticated recruitment models to local gangs that had before existed less formally. After the peace treaty, the FARC dissipated into the political party Comunes. The FARC's impact on organized crime today is unknown.

Citizen self-defense groups that had been created to fight the FARC and combat criminality overall united in 1997 to form the right-wing paramilitary group Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia¹⁴ (AUC). Both the guerrillas and paramilitary groups engaged in extrajudicial violence and drug trafficking, sometimes leading to urban war in large cities like Bogotá (Godoy et al. 2018). When the AUC was disbanded in 2006, several criminal groups were created, known broadly by the Colombian government as *Bandas Criminales*¹⁵ (BACRIM). These groups are less politically motivated than the AUC was, and sometimes collaborate with existing guerrilla groups such as Los Pelusos and the Colombian National Liberation Army in the drug trade (Center for International Security and Cooperation 2019). These groups also have conflict with one another over territorial control, leading to violence that spills over and impacts Colombian citizens. While drug cartels such as the Cali cartel and Medellín cartel (infamously led by Pablo Escobar) seemingly have less power than they did in the 1980s and 1990s, drug cartels

¹³ Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia

¹⁴ United Self Defense Forces of Colombia

¹⁵ Criminal Gangs

continue to proliferate violence and undermine the legitimacy of the state throughout Colombia.

Police in Colombia

The National Police of Colombia is the country's primary police force. Though not part of the military force, the National Police is controlled by the Defense Ministry (Pappier 2020). The nature of policing in Colombia blurs the line between police work and military work, as policing operations are often either militaristic in nature or include military participation when fighting narco traffickers or militias that operate on a regional-to-global scale. As David Pion-Berlin points out, national military forces can be better equipped to deal with mid-to-high level threats such as the FARC, the AUC, and the Colombian cartels than municipal police officers (2017). The lines between police officers and the military in Colombia are blurred further by the police historically wearing green uniforms, similar to the military (Rueda 2021), and by some police facing military courts rather than civil ones when being investigated for human rights abuses (Pappier 2020).

In 1991, constitutional reforms devolved more decision making authority of the police to the municipal level (Muggah 2016). While still subordinated to the Defense Ministry, this reform gave mayors more room to reform policing from within their own popular mandates. In 1994, a police crackdown on corruption resulted in the discharge of over 7,000 officers. More recently, reforms to the police have been adopted in response to protests against police brutality. These reforms include mandatory human rights courses, the usage of body cameras by 11,000 patrol officers, stricter penalties for officers found to have violated human rights, and new navy blue uniforms to differentiate the police

from the military, including the display of officer license numbers and a QR code to identify the specific officer (Rueda 2021).

Plan Cuadrantes

In 2010, the National Presidential Advisory Board on Safety was created to define a national policy program that could be integrated into major Colombian cities to stymie crime and violence (Muggah 2016). That program was called Plan Cuadrantes, and it initially targeted Bogota, Medellín, Cali, Barranquilla, Cartagena, Bucaramanga, Pereira, and Cucuta (Muggah 2016). It gave more autonomy to local police units in contextually responding to crime without the need for as much police chief approval, and divided municipal police into substations known as Centros de Atención Inmediata¹⁶ charged with developing public safety protocols specific to cuadrantes,¹⁷ composed of a few neighborhoods. Substations maintain short, medium, and long term goals for the area, and regularly evaluate the achievement of those goals. Each police station has an executive officer tasked with maintaining detailed statistics on the cuadrante. They work with substation commanders to use this data for personnel deployment and preventative program development. Initially, 9,000 officers were trained in new protocols emphasizing more community contact and improved interpersonal skills (Muggah 2016). Patrol work in the cuadrantes is divided into three eight-hour shifts, with at least two officers on duty at each shift (Collazos et al. 2020). Patrol pairs are required to always be together, and when leaving the cuadrante for matters such as registering an arrest, the closest patrol must take over (Collazos et al. 2020). Weekly meetings define activities for substation officers by the hour.

¹⁶ Centers of Immediate Attention

¹⁷ Quadrants

While the homicide rate rose slightly from 2010 to 2013, it has declined from 34 homicides per 100 thousand people in 2010 to 25 per 100 thousand people in 2018 (World Bank 2018). That said, it is difficult to primarily attribute the decline to Plan Cuadrantes. Patrols are instructed to target “hot spots,” the streets and city blocks that receive the most incident reports. Analysis of Plan Cuadrantes implementation has found that these instructions often go unmet. This is due to a variety of causes, from misunderstanding the directives, to lack of knowledge on where hot spots actually are, to a lack of personnel available for every hot spot, to even a lack of willingness because of cooperation between patrol officers and criminals (Collazos et al. 2020). Additionally, the two-level management structure of police reporting to the Defense Ministry and subnational political authorities influences reform efforts in both directions. It can be stymied by discontinuity at the local level as easily as it is motivated by public interest at the national level.

An explanation of the challenge tracking causal factors behind lower homicide rates in Colombia will be explored through the case studies of Bogotá and Medellín.

Bogotá

Homicides in Bogotá have decreased since 1993 (Moncada 2009), hitting 15 victims per 100 thousand people in 2018 (Godoy et al. 2018). This decline highlights how security and police reforms in Bogotá long precede Plan Cuadrantes. In the second half of the 1990s, there was a serious effort in Bogotá to establish stronger vertical and lateral accountability between the mayor, police, NGOs, and citizens. To counteract the discordant effects of Defense Ministry control on local police policy, Bogotá politicians sought to pair lateral accountability with vertical social mobilization strategies (Moncada

2009). Lateral or horizontal accountability describes checks and balances among state officials whereas vertical accountability describes the relationship between society, state institutions, and officials, most commonly in elections but also through civil society mobilization (O'Donnell 1999).

In 1995, the Sistema Unificado de Información de Violencia y Delincuencia¹⁸ (SUIVD) was created to standardize crime statistics that had, until its creation, been dispersed between the Institute of Legal Medicine, the district attorney's office, and the police (Moncada 2009). Crime statistics from SUIVD were regularly disseminated through monthly newsletters, press conferences with the mayor, community briefings and presentations, and media releases (Moncada 2009). This made changes in public security more accessible, lowering the barrier to entry for community engagement, as people became more aware of Bogotá's public security status quo. In 1996, the Escuelas de Seguridad Ciudadana¹⁹ initiative was launched, consisting of weekend classes at the city's public universities "where citizens could learn more about services and practices the police were supposed to provide...and steps citizens could take to increase security. By 2004 more than 37,000 citizens from across Bogotá had attended the classes" (Montes 2004). The classes increased expectations of the state and police from citizens to address crime and violence. In 1996, Frentes Locales de Seguridad²⁰ (FLF) were established, neighborhood watch-style groups composed of neighborhood residents and local police forces (Mocada 2009). There were more than 10,000 of them by 2004. By 2006, more than 50 percent did not meet regularly and 20 percent were "inactive," though it is

¹⁸ Unified System of Information about Violence and Delinquency

¹⁹ Schools for Citizen Security

²⁰ Local Security Fronts

unclear if this stasis was the result of less political will or less need for the FLF. Between 1996 and 1997, almost 400 community meetings including around 18,000 citizens and local police representatives were held throughout Bogotá. These meetings were about how the police could engage in more vertical accountability, with citizens encouraged to stop by government offices to submit recommendations (Moncada 2009).

Community-level public workshops were also held that included sessions on “conflict resolution and training in alternative methods to resolve intra-community disputes” (Moncada 2009). The sale of liquor past 1:00 a.m. was banned due to statistical evidence of a positive correlation between drinking, fatal crime, and traffic accidents. Less conventional policies included a citywide “women's night out” in 2001, where only women were allowed in the streets and men had to stay home to start public discussion “about men as the principal perpetrators of violence.” There was also a “vaccination against violence,” in which 45,000 city residents met with mental health specialists to address trauma from past acts of violence that had victimized them (Moncada 2009).

These reforms, all before the implementation of Plan Cuadrantes, were important in not only lowering incidences of violence in Bogotá, but also in fostering a culture where the public expected police to act seriously in addressing crime and violence. In the most recent decade, worrying indicators have suggested that Plan Cuadrantes is falling short of its goals. While homicides have continued decreasing, robberies have increased dramatically since 2015 (Godoy et al. 2018). The Bogota Chamber of Commerce reports that 77 percent of all reported crimes are robberies, and robberies reported by the police have increased by 133 percent in the last three years alone. While higher rates of reporting across the board explain that figure to an extent, the robbery victimization rate

is thought to have increased by seven percent in the same amount of time (Godoy et al. 2018). Since 2015, there has been an 18 percent increase in the amount of residents who feel unsafe, 87 percent in 2017 (Godoy et al. 2018). These increases can be explained through the displacement of crime in hot spots to neighboring streets (Blattman et al. 2017). With jails exceeding capacity on average by 63 percent (Moreno 2017), creating a breeding ground for the formation of criminal networks within jails themselves, and over 200 thousand private security companies operating in Bogotá (Supervigilancia 2017), the security environment looks, at best, only marginally impacted by Plan Cuadrantes.

Medellín

Medellín used to be considered one of the most dangerous cities on the planet, with a homicide rate in 1991 estimated on the low end at 385 people per 100 thousand (Doyle 2017) and on the high end at 422 people per 100 thousand (Collazos et al. 2020). That rate declined by 90 percent from 1991 to 2015. Much of this decline happened, similar to Bogotá, before the implementation of Plan Cuadrante. Mayors Luis Perez and Sergio Fajardo were both internationally lauded for their work of improving public spaces in high poverty and violence neighborhoods, and improving relations between local administration and the national police force from 2001 to 2009 (Muggah 2016). Dubbed “Integral Urban Projects,” Mayor Fajardo especially built more public transportation infrastructure to connect poor areas with economic centers of Medellín, as well as “Library Parks” that included the construction of community centers and childcare facilities with new libraries (Doyle 2017). With a quality of life index for Medellín measuring a thirteen point improvement in targeted neighborhoods compared to an eight point improvement in non-targeted neighborhoods from 1997-2007, and a 32

percent reduction in homicides from 2004 to 2007, Integral Urban Projects appeared effective at addressing what had been a dire security crisis (Doyle 2017). This belief was bolstered by a report from the Presidential Council for Medellín and the Metropolitan Area, published around the time of Integral Urban Project implementation, that found structural issues such as high levels of poverty and inequality, high unemployment rates, low educational and health levels, and high levels of informal housing to be contributors to violence and insecurity (Doyle 2017). Doyle writes, “Thus, according to these perspectives, improving the welfare of the poor and marginalized reduces the incidence of violence. The structural impediments to leading a better life are removed and crime, including violence, is reduced” (2017).

This analysis sounds promising, but Doyle goes on to critique the trend of Latin American citizen security specialists overattributing reductions in criminal violence to public infrastructure investments with scant explicitly causal links. No doubt, these general welfare investments provide resources to citizens that, in some cases, prevent the conditions for criminality from arising. That said, the policy implications of Integral Urban Projects as a violence reduction strategy leave little guidance as to how much policing reform is still necessary, and what form it should take. Additionally, it under-scrutinizes the crime statistics collected and publicized by the police and mayor’s office, and nearly ignores the impact of organized criminal violence in Medellín.

A 2020 study of hot-spot policing (a key component of Plan Cuadrantes) in Medellín found only a linked decrease in car theft, with no impact on motorcycle theft, homicides, robberies, or assaults (Collazos et al. 2020). While security perceptions among Medellín citizens had increased, satisfaction with the police had not. Three

notable reasons Plan Cuadrantes has not achieved its desired outcomes in Medellín are improper implementation, misleading crime statistics reporting in relation to Plan Cuadrantes more generally, and organized crime.

While Bogotá has only three and a half times as many people as Medellín, it has about four times as many police officers (Garcia et al. 2012). Though Plan Cuadrantes ended up being relatively ineffective in Bogotá as well, the resource imbalance presented a challenge for Medellín from the start. After the program's implementation, Medellín senior police officers reported that patrolling activities were being inefficiently allocated (Garcia et al. 2012), undercutting policy effectiveness even further. When police officers were being monitored by researchers, patrolling goals were met, but when monitoring stopped, compliance with patrolling goals dropped sharply (Garcia et al. 2012). The compliance drop suggests that, more problematic to Plan Cuadrantes' effectiveness than inefficient patrolling allocations is a more general lack of willingness on the part of police officers to carry out the allocations they receive.

The Plan Cuadrantes model itself has been left relatively unchanged, despite its aforementioned shortcomings, due to official crime statistics showing decreases in homicides and increases in citizen perceptions of security across the board in Colombia. One state report on Plan Cuadrantes claimed "it has been successful in reducing crime across all major cities where it has been introduced and implemented (Fundación Ideas Para La Paz 2012)." But these statistics warrant higher scrutiny; independent research and media organizations have found increases in the same crime categories, time periods, and jurisdictions where official Plan Cuadrantes evaluations declare success (Leon 2019). The discrepancies have several explanations. Cartagena experienced one of the sharpest

increases in crime in Colombia after Plan Cuadrantes was implemented, yet its data is omitted from Colombian National Police reports because of “improper implementation,” though no explanation for how it was implemented improperly can be found in the police reports (Leon 2019). In 2007, Colombia passed *The Law of Small Crimes*, limiting the prosecution of crimes that carry a less than four year minimum sentence. The law in turn limits offenders from being brought in front of a judge, as well as exposure to traditional sentencing guidelines, leading to the appearance of lower crime rates (Leon 2019). One Plan Cuadrantes evaluation relied on a four month comparative window to estimate the program's effectiveness (Leon 2019), suggesting data analysis methodologies that rely on sample sizes too small to be accurately reflective of broader effectiveness. The rhetoric surrounding Plan Cuadrantes can also prove unfalsifiable. The reports put forth by the Colombian government imply that when crime rates decrease, it is proof of the model working, and when crime rates increase, it is the result of higher trust in the police leading to higher rates of reporting, also affirming the model. All these components present obstacles to good faith evaluations of Plan Cuadrantes, insulating it from potentially helpful changes.

Organized violence in Medellín, relatively unaddressed by both Plan Cuadrantes and public infrastructure investment, appears to be the factor most influential in the reduction of homicides. Homicide rates in Medellín were high in the 1990s largely because of violence between the Medellín and Cali cartels and the state, and clashes between leftist militias and right-wing paramilitary groups. When homicide rates dropped around 2005, organized criminal activity had not been erased, it had rather been standardized, limiting conflicts over territory and influence (Doyle 2017). When in 2008

the criminal leader Don Berna was extradited to the United States, the equilibrium was interrupted, and homicides doubled (Doyle 2017). Lower rates of homicide today, through ethnographic research, are attributed to another *pax criminales* rather than a *criminales absentia* (Doyle 2017). The Secretariat of Security estimates two-thirds of the city's neighborhoods are under various levels of control by organized crime, and 60 percent of homicides are somewhat related to organized crime (Collazos et al. 2020). These revelations lead to the same conclusions as those reached in the analysis of Bogotá; Plan Cuadrantes has had a negligible effect on violent crime in Medellín despite being championed for over a decade.

Current State of Colombian Police

The last couple of years in Colombia have reignited dissatisfaction with the police. Protests against taxation hikes in Colombia turned into protests against police abuse when the protestors were met with arbitrary arrest and torture (Turkewitz and Villamil 2021). One lawyer alleged that while wearing a gray vest with orange lettering reading "legal team" when police surrounded and began bludgeoning him. The lawyer reports that the captain, in response to assertions about being a human rights defender, said "You're not a human rights defender, you're a [expletive] guerrilla fighter and I'm going to show you how to faint for real (Turkewitz and Villamil 2021)." The murder of a lawyer named Javier Ordonez by police in September of 2020 sparked more protests, mirroring the George Floyd protests that happened in the United States a few months earlier. Thirteen protestors were killed in protests around the country (La Silla Vacía 2022), further souring Colombian perceptions of the police, and potentially undoing trust that had been built by the community-policing efforts of Plan Cuadrantes, where those

efforts were at least successful. In response to the upset, plans to create a human rights directorate that will report to the National Police Chief, and will be led by a retired colonel, were announced (Rueda 2021). It will gather complaints from citizens and produce two reports each year on human rights issues. It appears unlikely that this directorate will have an impact on either organized crime or improper crime statistics reporting.

Chile

History of Carabineros

Chile's national police are primarily divided into two bodies, the Carabineros and the Investigative Police. There is also a maritime and border police force, but the majority of police officers in Chile are Carabineros. The Carabineros were created in 1927, initially as a part of the army, to prevent crime in Chile. The investigative police were created in 1933 as a civilian body to conduct criminal investigations (Dammert 2009). Under the military dictator Augusto Pinochet, both forces were subordinated to the Defense Ministry, whereas they had previously been under the Interior Ministry (Dammert 2009). In this time period, the Carabineros acted as Pinochet's fists, with the army conducting police training and using police for civilian suppression. Policing ethos saw civilians as potential insurgents, with security policies prioritizing the maintenance of order over the preservation of human rights or the integrity of civic institutions. The Carabineros were responsible for hundreds of disappearances before the Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional took over that work (Bonner 2013). Police maintained order and civil compliance first and foremost. The means by which this happened was flexible, often dependent on the political persuasion, indigeneity, and socio-economic class of the person targeted. Within

Chilean society, this caused severe mistrust of Carabineros for a few years after the dictatorship. Following the transition to democracy, most reforms were focused on decreasing the political power of Carabineros, with far less attention paid to community-oriented policing reforms (Dammert 2009).

One of Pinochet's final acts was passage of the Ley Orgánica de Carabineros, a law granting high levels of political autonomy to the police and military (Esparza 2015). This law has vested the Carabineros with more organizational autonomy than the average police force in the region, and has long prevented meaningful civilian control. Several presidents after Pinochet have sought to curtail the Carabineros' political power. Patricio Aylwin, the first president of the newly democratic Chile, increased salaries of the Carabineros by 100 percent in an effort to professionalize them, and therefore more effectively implement other potential reforms. Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle, the president proceeding Aylwin, further improved police budgets to this end. Frei attempted to move the Carabineros back to the Ministry of Interior, but failed to do so, as the political power of the military and police was still too strong (Esparza 2015). Frei further increased professionalization by "introducing an internal framework to incorporate an academic aspect of human rights into all police training" (Esparza 2015). The new framework made career advancement dependent on competency and professionalism, with human rights abuses used as a basis for the prohibition of any further career advancement, and in some cases enough for termination (Esparza 2015). During the dictatorship, many of the armed forces became heavily involved in government. In practice, this meant people who had been trained as police officers ended up working office jobs. Frei moved those officers back into policing duties, and introduced civilian professionals to the office, causing

more authoritatively horizontal interactions between civilians and police (Esparza 2015). In Michelle Bachelet's first presidential term (2006-2010), she promised to move the Carabineros from the Ministry of Defense to the Ministry of Interior (Dammert 2009). Although this did not end up happening during her presidency, the following administration of Sebastian Pinera did finally transfer the Carabineros to the Ministry of Interior and Public Security in 2011, with Law 20502 (Esparza 2015). This process was helped by a constitutional reform in 2005 that removed several senators representing the military and police, as well as by Pinochet's death in 2006 (Esparza 2015).

The 1990s, the first decade of democracy after military rule, saw the relationship between the police and civilians shift dramatically from one of mistrust to collaboration. Carabineros leadership deployed political rhetoric about efforts at professionalization and depoliticization, and publicly denounced their previous human rights violations under the dictatorship (Dammert 2009). "Detention Based on Suspicion," a policy that mirrors New York City's former "Stop and Frisk" policy, was abolished in 1998. Importantly however, there was a public backlash to the abolition with civilians demanding a more *mano dura* (hard handed) approach to crime. Since then, the policy has effectively been reimplemented (Dammert 2009). The Carabineros have since become the most trusted public institution in Chile.

Crime in Chile

Chile consistently has the lowest homicide rate in Latin America, with some estimates never going above five homicides per one hundred thousand people (Vilalta et al. 2016). The homicide by firearm rate is also lower than the regional average, sitting at only 27 percent (UNODC 2014). That said, property crimes such as thefts and robberies

have been steadily increasing for the past several decades. Robberies rose by 700 percent between 1973 and 2003 (Dammert 2009), and they doubled from 1990 to 2007 (Vergara 2012). A National Urban Victimization Survey in the early 2000s found that 43 percent of households had at least one member victimized by crime in the last year (Dammert 2009). The number had fallen in the early 2010s to 35 percent reporting a member of the household victimized by crime (Vergara 2012).

In terms of criminal patterns, Metropolitan Santiago, hosting 40 percent of the country's population, sees robberies clustered in the North-East region. Homicides are comparatively geographically sporadic (Vilalta 2016). Areas with higher levels of schooling suffer from more property crimes. Counterintuitively, there appears to be a negative correlation between the presence of young males in Santiago neighborhoods and assaults (Vilalta 2016). The national unemployment rate appears to be an indicator of crime incidence, with an increase of one percent unemployment correlated to an increase in robbery complaints by 21 per 100 thousand in the short term, and 42 per 100 thousand in the long term (Vergara 2012). Youth drug abuse is also a notable issue in Chile. In 2009, Chile reported the highest prevalence of cocaine use among secondary school students in the Americas, at 6.7 percent compared to 4.6 percent in the United States (Muggah 2016).

Fear of crime in Chile is very high. A 2004 survey found that 48 percent of the general population feared they would be victims of crime in the next 12 months (Dammert 2009). In the mid-2010s, insecurity against crime was considered the third most important issue in the country, and 80 percent of people surveyed thought crime had increased since the previous year (Vilalta 2016).

Carabineros as Model Police

The Carabineros are seen as a model police force by their Latin American peers (Bonner 2013). One reason for this is the low levels of general corruption in Chile. By some metrics, slightly lower than the United States, and slightly higher than France and Italy (Dammert 2009). Transparency International found in 2008 that 81 percent of Chileans had not paid a bribe of any kind in the last 12 months (Bonner 2013). Regarding the police, 94 percent of Chileans surveyed responded that neither they, nor anyone living with them, had bribed a police officer in the last 12 months, the highest of that response in Latin America (Bonner 2013). While corruption is seen as culturally unacceptable in Chile generally, it is even less acceptable within the institution of the Carabineros, as only another reason the Carabineros are seen as a regional model is that police forces from other Latin American countries often train in Chile (Dammert 2009). While this is done due to the Carabineros existing status as an exceptional police force, the status quo is in part self-perpetuating. Another reason the Carabineros are looked at favorably within Chile is because of their role as social services providers, particularly in times of national crises such as natural disasters (Dammert 2009).

Satisfaction with the Carabineros is higher for people who are older, widowed, less educated, and not from Chile (Dammert et al. 2021). This is likely because those with more education have higher expectations of the police and of their role in society. Migrants meanwhile often view the Carabineros favorably for several reasons. There are typically higher levels of police abuse in their countries of origin, such as in Venezuela. Migrants also tend to participate less in protests and political movements, therefore they are not exposed to as much police repression (protests being the main source of abuse at

the hands of Carabineros). Also, there is a separate police force for border enforcement in Chile, meaning the Carabineros do not have an antagonistic relationship with undocumented migrants (Dammert et al. 2021). Survey respondents who have had previous contact with the police are more likely to be satisfied with them than those who have not (Dammert et al. 2021). While a student-led protest movement beginning in 2005 has resulted in numerous instances of police abuse directed towards protestors, in 2009, only 3.7 percent of citizens had reported having been assaulted, verbally or physically, by the Carabineros (Esparza 2015). This rate is very low compared to Argentina's 8.7 percent, the highest percentage in South America.

Police Reforms

Most reforms to the Carabineros have been related to their political power, not to democratic policing, therefore it is not widely believed that democratic policing-type policies are the reason for positive views of the Carabineros (Bonner 2013). There have nonetheless been a few criminal justice related reforms to the Carabineros of note. Around 2006, the Carabineros were dealing with a shortage of manpower. In response to accusations of corruption, police violence, and general ineffectiveness, the Carabineros began employing more specialists, and began requiring higher levels of education to work in various Carabineros positions (Dammert 2009). More reforms around that time emphasized greater transparency, public participation, delicacy when handling victims of violent and sexual crimes, and due process (Dammert 2009). The Public Defense Ministry must send an attorney to police stations within 24 hours of criminal detainment, in an effort to limit the potential for police abuse (Dammert 2009). Public officers from the National Human Rights Institute must now be allowed to enter buses of people

detained during demonstrations, also in an effort to limit potential for abuse (Bonner 2013). Impressions vary among policing experts as to the impact of these policies, as no formal evaluation has been conducted to assess policy effectiveness (Bonner 2013).

Two policing plans have been implemented in Chile that have elements of democratic policing, Plan Cuadrantes and Programa Comuna Segura,²¹ implemented in the late 1990s to early 2000s, respectively (Vergara 2012). Plan Cuadrantes was similar to Colombia's Plan Cuadrantes, with areas of Chilean cities divided into "quadrants" for which small policing units are responsible, within which a patrol presence is always required. The goal was to form closer relationships between the police and communities. In 2008, nearly 75 percent of Chile's population was covered by Plan Cuadrantes (Vergara 2012). In 2013, no strong links were found between Plan Cuadrantes and increases in police accountability (Bonner 2013).

Programa Comuna Segura invites communities to propose crime reduction projects to the federal government. The projects are in competition with one another for funding, with the hope of incentivizing well thought out proposals. Comuna Segura requires the creation of Citizen Security Councils headed by the mayor, police staff, municipal council members, and community representatives (Vergara 2012). Proposals have included youth community centers, improved lighting in public places, and sports centers (Vergara 2012). Not enough evaluative followup exists for the proposals, and money is sometimes used to fund local authorities' pet projects (Vergara 2012). The program was restructured in the late 2000s to require an evaluation report and to remove the competitive aspect of funding. Crime steadily increased during the time these

²¹ Communal Security Program

initiatives were launched, in large part due to the recession in the early 2000s. Even after the recession though, robberies continued to rise (Vergara 2012).

General Structure and Principles

While little corruption is an important reason for the Carabineros' positive profile, the question remains as to why they have such little corruption in the first place, and why crime is so comparatively low in Chile, but still highly concerning for Chileans. Because police reform appears to be minimal in Chile, this thesis will analyze the structure and general organizational principles of the Carabineros themselves.

Compared to other Latin American countries, Chile has a low police-to-population ratio (Dammert 2009). This may be because of the stricter-than-average Carabineros entrance requirements. One must be a Chilean aged 18 to 25, with a high school education, without children or a spouse, and above a minimum height (Esparza 2015). Recruits must undergo entrance exams covering history, math, and grammar. They also undergo physiological, psychological, and dental health exams. Finally, they must complete a "declaration of personal history," listing all family members, immediate and extended. The Carabineros then investigate to make sure no one listed is tied to drug trafficking or any other criminal enterprise (Esparza 2015). The median acceptance rate into the Carabineros training school from 2005 to 2013 was 24 percent (Esparza 2015). Carabineros training is different between troops and officers. Officers go through four years of training and end with a Public Security Administration degree. Troops, the Carabineros responsible for day-to-day activities such as transit, patrols, and security detail duties, go through one year of training. There is a human rights component for the first three years of officer training, and for the entire year of

troop training. (Esparza 2015). The highly professionalizing training surpasses in length the amount of training required to be a soldier in the Chilean military (Esparza 2015).

Compensation at base salary is low for Carabineros. The Chilean minimum wage is 356 USD per month, but Carabineros make only 276 USD per month at the outset (Esparza 2015). There is a pay increase every three years regardless of rank, though. Carabineros also have very strong benefits in the form of pensions, healthcare, vacations, housing, child-care, education discounts, loan approval, and geographic mobility (Esparza 2015). Pensions are roughly six times higher than the Chilean national average (Esparza 2015).

There is a litany of sanctionable offenses for Carabineros, including accepting bribes, dressing inappropriately, leaking information, losing documents, and insubordination, among other infractions (Esparza 2015). The disciplinary system for Carabineros takes various forms, from getting a write-up on one's permanent record (which can hamper career advancement), to the withholding of certain benefits, and eventually termination. An average of 256 Carabineros, roughly 0.007 percent of the total number of officers, have been fired every year from 1990-2010. Forty percent of the total were fired for "poor conduct," thirty five percent for poor annual performance reviews, and twenty percent for "violating ethical norms or disciplinary regulations." When being prosecuted for violating a civilian's human rights, Carabineros are tried in mostly secretive military courts (Dammert 2009). These courts have been shown to heavily favor Carabineros in their outcomes.

Public Relations

The high degrees of militarization and professionalization present within the Carabineros likely helps to decrease corruption within the institution. Formalized, tiered penalties, tied to specific infractions, issued by a dispassionate administrative bureaucracy, creates an environment that discourages internal corruption. This zero tolerance is, in turn, communicated to all officers working within the Carabineros. It is plausible that low levels of corruption result in more effective crime prevention and higher levels of approval from the citizenry. Some scholars have suggested that these traits are not the primary reason for the Carabineros' adulation, though. Michelle Bonner posits that the high approval enjoyed by the Carabineros is more so a product of image reform than policy reform (2013). In interviewing police officers, politicians, and members of various civil society organizations, Bonner concludes that the Carabineros are viewed so favorably, in part, due to significant public relations campaigns aided by cooperative mainstream Chilean news media.

After a scandal in 1985 known as "Caso Degollados" implicating the Carabineros in the murders of several activists and opposition party leaders, the Carabineros' General Director was forced to resign along with four senior officers (Bonner 2013). The new General Director, Rodolfo Stange, appointed a Carabiniere with a degree in journalism to head the communications department. Stange also hired public relations specialists to assess Carabineros' communications strategies as well as how the public viewed them as an institution. The public relations specialists became advisors, and they began training Carabineros on how to speak with journalists (Bonner 2013). The Carabineros were also the first government institution in the military junta to begin speaking with journalists

from newspapers critical of the dictatorship, in an effort to appear more transparent, principled, and civilian focused (Bonner 2013).

Public safety campaigns in the years following the use of public relations expertise began to include more rhetorical elements of community-oriented policing. For example, from 1986-1987 the Carabineros led a traffic accident prevention campaign with the slogan “Un Amigo en Su Camino” (A Friend on the Road), featuring a cartoon character who talked with a Carabinero about traffic safety. The campaign was successful in both reducing car accidents and giving the Carabineros a more family-friendly image, strikingly different from the previous associations of disappearances and repression of protests. In the final year of the military dictatorship, only a couple years after the traffic accident prevention campaign, the Carabineros were found in polls to be, for the first time, the most respected government institution (Bonner 2013). While Carabineros no longer have communications advisors, they continue to have a large budget for public image “lobbying,” according to an investigative police officer interviewed by Bonner (2013). Importantly, none of these communications changes were accompanied by significant policing practices reforms.

The Carabineros communications strategy is helped by a media ecosystem that highlights the problems and successes preferred by the Carabineros, especially at the mainstream news level. Chilean media is dominated by a duopoly, El Mercurio and COPESA. The owner of El Mercurio media group formed a well-funded NGO, Paz Ciudadana, after his son was kidnapped in 1991 (Bonner 2013). Paz Ciudadana is given a large platform by El Mercurio. Most crime statistics published in the paper come from Paz Ciudadana, not government agencies. Paz Ciudadana proffers citizen security

recommendations that are given elevated legitimacy from El Mercurio's coverage. The politicians who promote Paz Ciudadana's recommendation are then rewarded with positive press. Chilean politicians highly value attention from El Mercurio; one of Bonner's interviewees states, "For politicians, to exist is to be covered by El Mercurio." This forces politicians to emphasize the need for greater citizen security, and positions the Carabineros as its arbiter. Some journalists interviewed by Bonner said that if they do not write positive stories about the Carabineros or follow Carabineros advice on wording, they might not be invited to press conferences or be given exclusive access to crime stories (2013). This lack of access can feel crippling within a news media ecosystem that places so much emphasis on crime prevention.

Bonner's analysis is valuable in its presentation of an alternative explanation for widespread social approval of the Carabineros, but is this alternative really an indictment? If public relations lobbying is what leads to high approval ratings and, potentially, more effective crime fighting as a result of Chileans being more willing to work with the police, is lack of citizen-security policy initiatives something to critique?

Scandals and Criticism

The positive image of Carabineros has become fractured in recent years. This section will divide criticism of the Carabineros into long-standing criticism and more recent criticism.

Trust in the Carabineros has been class divided in recent history. Diego Portales University found from 2008-2010 that 42-45 percent of lower class people have little to no confidence in the police, where only 25-30 percent of upper class people feel the same (Bonner 2013).

Some of this distrust comes from lack of transparency surrounding police abuse. As was mentioned earlier, civilians can be subject to closed military courts for infractions against a Carabinero, but the Carabinero can never be subject to a civil court, regardless whether the infraction was outside the scope of their job as a police officer (Dammert 2009). Military courts do not allow for public hearings in any case, no matter on what side of the trial is the civilian. The judges in these trials are members of the armed forces beyond the Carabineros, and they do not need legal training to preside over cases (Bonner 2013). This opaqueness-induced fear is supported by an interview Bonner did with a member of the Carabineros communications department. When asked about the respect afforded to Carabineros in Chile, the communications official stated that a female Carabinero could stop a truck driver to ask for documentation, and if the driver argued too much, he could get taken to the military courts (2013). The interviewee then backtracked and insisted that the driver would cooperate because of respect, not fear, but the example belies the ostensible takeaway.

More recently, the Carabineros have been embroiled in multiple corruption and abuse scandals. In 2017, a corruption scandal involving dozens of high-ranking officers who took part in fraudulent activities that amounted to more than USD \$15 million was made public (Dammert et al. 2021). The institution was rocked by media investigations of the scandal, and then, in early 2018, a group of high-ranking officers were linked to an intelligence operation that sought to falsely accuse a group of indigenous Mapuche of violent acts (Dammert et al. 2021). This scandal resulted in changes within police leadership. At the end of the same year, the murder of a young Mapuche person turned into yet another police scandal, during which it was discovered that the Carabineros had

attempted to develop a cover-up strategy aimed at labeling the homicide as a violent confrontation (Dammert 2020). Then, in 2019, a protest movement about economic discontent among young Chileans highlighted violent police practices of public-order management that generated national and international accusations of human rights abuses. Abuse allegations included torture of a 14 year old (Bartlett 2020), sexual harassment and assault of women in custody, widespread illegal detentions, forced confessions, interrogations without a lawyer present (Human Rights Watch 2019), and generally disproportionate force in dealing with crowds at protests (Amnesty International 2020).

These scandals have had a significant impact on how the Carabineros are viewed in Chile. One survey found that the approval rating of police had fallen to 36 percent since 2016, the last year that the Carabineros were the most highly regarded public Chilean institution (Bartlett 2020). This decline in approval is corroborated by findings from Paz Ciudadana (Dammert et al. 2021). While it remains to be seen whether this decline in approval will have an impact on the effectiveness of fighting crime in Chile, the seemingly sudden outpour of abuse allegations and scandals speaks to the consequences of a reform process led by marketing instead of policing policies. The Carabineros demonstrate that while community-policing is not necessary for high levels of citizen security in Latin America, its absence can leave police-citizen relations in a fragile state.

Mexico

Police Structure

While the organizational specifics of police in Mexico are in a constant state of flux, police are generally divided by function and government level. The *policía preventiva*²² do patrol work to prevent crimes or respond to them as they happen, while the *policía investigadora*²³ investigate crimes after the fact. Mexico also has transit police (like state-level US highway patrols) and border police, but the vast majority of police are either preventive or investigative. At the federal level, the recently created Guardia Nacional²⁴ has taken over preventive policing responsibilities from the now dissolved Policía Federal.²⁵ The federal investigative police are called the Policía Federal Ministerial²⁶ (PFM).

There is a state police force for each of the 31 states, two state forces for the Federal District of Mexico City,²⁷ and about 1,807 municipal police departments (Arista 2019). Roughly 650 out of 2,457 total municipalities, representing 4 percent of the national population, have no municipal-level police (Executive Secretariat of the National Public Security System 2019). On average, there are 0.9 municipal police officers for every 100,000 people, though that ratio changes depending on the size of the municipality (Arista 2019). As the municipality gets smaller, the ratio of police-to-population gets smaller too. It is difficult to ascertain an exact number of police officers in Mexico due to conflicting information provided by federal agencies. It is also somewhat common for smaller municipalities to not officially employ all those working

²² Preventive Police

²³ Investigative Police

²⁴ National Guard

²⁵ Federal Police

²⁶ Federal Ministerial Police

²⁷ Unlike other states, the federal district has a preventive police force under the command of the Secretariat of Public Security, and a separate investigative force under the Office of the Attorney General

as police officers due to lack of funds. That said, a report by the Executive Secretariat of the National Public Security System found that, in 2019, there were roughly 339,060 police officers in Mexico (Arista 2019). In 2011, 40 percent of Mexico's total ~360,000 police officers were municipal police. More recent official statistics about what percentage of Mexican police are municipal, state, and federal were not readily available.

The structure of police funding in Mexico may explain why, despite municipal officers comprising a plurality of total police, many municipalities have few officers or none at all. The only revenue generated specifically for municipal governments is through property taxes (Ochoa and Tomas 2020). Most other funds received by municipalities are the remnants of federal and state government budgets. Despite a relative lack of meaningful municipal funding, local governments are still in charge of facilitating public works, maintaining infrastructure, providing potable water, and maintaining public security (Ochoa and Tomas 2020). A few municipal police funding programs have been created by the federal government (Asch et al. 2011), but the funds are typically conditioned on organizational and procedural reforms that are not always realistically implementable by municipal police forces.

Police History

To understand Mexican policing today, one must first come to know the volatile history of policing and police reforms in Mexico. The rurales were a police-like force created by president Benito Juarez in the mid-1800s that both discouraged crime and repressed political opponents (Sabet 2012). Beginning in 1929, after the Mexican revolution (1910-1917), the Partido Revolucionario Institucional²⁸ (PRI) won the

²⁸ Institutional Revolutionary Party

presidency and became the only political party in power at the federal level until the end of the century (Asch et al. 2011). While this period was marked by authoritarianism, corruption, weak economic and judicial institutions, and extremely limited political competition, there was political stability (Asch et al. 2011). Towards the end of the century, the PRI's base was eroded by an inflow of migrants from Central America, some harmful neoliberal free trade reforms, and a decade of stagnant economic growth (Asch et al. 2011). In 2000, Vicente Fox was elected president, ending the PRI's grip on government. This change was disruptive for policing policy. Under the PRI's one-party rule, police forces were overseen by state governors. In 1983 however, a constitutional amendment allowed municipal governments to create their own forces, which became popular among the few opposition mayors (Moyano 2020). Once the PRI lost the presidency and the legislature, police standards and protocols became even more discordant within Mexico.

Although notable police reform in Mexico began under the Zedillo administration (1994-2000), there were a few reforms beforehand. The Hurtado administration (1982-1988) dismantled the Dirección Federal de Seguridad,²⁹ a highly corrupt and abusive intelligence agency and secret police force (Sabet 2010). The Salinas de Gortari administration (1988-1994) then created the National Human Rights Commission, a body that monitored abuse by governmental institutions, such as the police (Sabet 2010).

When Ernesto Zedillo first came into office, in 1994, there were over 2,000 police departments throughout Mexico but only 41 police academies, with only 14 requiring education up to the 9th grade. As a result, 55.6 percent of the policía preventiva in the

²⁹ Federal Security Directorate

country had either only primary school education, or no education at all (Sabet 2010). President Zedillo made police reform a top priority when he created the Policía Judicial Federal³⁰ (PJF) and the Policía Federal Preventiva³¹ (PFP). These were the first iterations of a federal investigative and preventive force. The two police forces were created to “provide security in federal areas (such as highways) and coordinate with local authorities to prevent crimes and maintain order. (Asch et al. 2011)” Zedillo also created the Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública³² (SNSP), a national data collection and coordination mechanism (Sabet 2010).

Vincente Fox (2000-2006) maintained the SNSP and PFP, though the PFP was moved from the Interior Ministry to the newly created Secretaría de Seguridad Público³³ (SSP) as an attempt at depoliticization (Moyano 2020). By the mid-2000s, the PFP had 11,000 officers (Sabet 2010). Of those 11,000, 1,000 were new recruits from a recently created national police academy. The other 10,000 were composed of former military and former federal highway police (Sabet 2010). Fox did a poor job of integrating the two groups, causing a rivalry within the PFP that harmed its efficacy (Moyano 2020). An already existing Public Sector Support Fund to transfer money to states for public security grew in scope under Fox. One important project of the fund was the development of an emergency response system similar to 911 in the US (Sabet 2010). Though the fund was meant to be shared with municipalities, states tended to use up most of the money, as was the case in Baja California, Sonora, and Chihuahua (Sabet 2010).

³⁰ Federal Judicial Police

³¹ Federal Preventive Police

³² National System of Public Security

³³ Secretariat of Public Security

The PJF was dissolved in 2001 due to widespread corruption and ineffectiveness (Sabet 2010). It was replaced by the Agencia Federal de Investigación³⁴ (AFI). The AFI introduced reforms to the federal agency, including professionalizing civil service procedures meant to discourage political promotions along with “improved selection criteria, emphasis on education and training... improved salaries, and improved equipment and facilities” (Sabet 2010). The AFI also restructured to further prioritize planning, tactical analysis, and investigations, its intelligence gathering operations were bolstered by a new database, and internal procedures became in line with International Standards Organization (ISO) guidelines (Sabet 2010). The AFI also created several accountability offices, including one to investigate officers, another to conduct vetting, and another to “oversee the agency as a whole” (Sabet 2010). Fox attempted municipal policing reform with the Preventative Police Standardization Program that sought to create, in coordination with the AFI, model police units. Of 500 officers selected for the pilot program however, only 42 passed vetting procedures (Sabet 2010). In 2005, the Office of the Attorney General announced that nearly 20 percent of officers in the AFI were under investigation for connections with organized crime (Asch et al. 2011).

The Calderón administration (2006-2012) wanted to create a national, unified police force by dissolving the state and municipal police to foster better coordination and resource sharing. This desire was not politically feasible, so the administration sought to merge the two federal police units into one. This, too, was not politically feasible (Sabet 2010). Eventually, the administration dissolved the AFI in 2009 due to continued systemic corruption and replaced it with the PFM (Sabet 2010). In the same year,

³⁴ Federal Investigation Agency

Calderón replaced the PFP with the Policía Federal (PF). The PF had both preventative and investigative functions, absorbing some of the former AFIs preventative policing capabilities, and was created with the hope of replacing military personnel that were at the frontlines of the drug war (Asch et al. 2011). PF officers had higher pay, more stringent screening procedures, and required a college degree (Asch et al. 2011). The PF also had improved equipment, creating some friction with the military that now, in some cases, had worse equipment than the PF (Moyano 2020).

To better support municipal police departments, Calderón created a conditional fund called the Subsidio para la Seguridad en los Municipios³⁵ (SUBSEMUN). SUBSEMUN required the municipality to match 30 percent of funds allocated, and use the funds for “communication technology, equipment purchases, infrastructure improvements, and police professionalization” (Sabet 2010). These requirements included connecting to a system of databases such as the national police registry and the national crime database. Municipalities also had to adopt civil service protections and procedures that determined criteria for selection, training, promotion, and discipline with the aim of preventing patronage in police forces. Funds were also conditioned on municipalities adopting a national police operations manual and a standardized police reporting mechanism to further standardize municipal police procedures throughout Mexico (Sabet 2010).

Although Calderón wanted to replace the military with the PF to fight cartels, he did not want to remove the military from the drug war entirely. He attempted to create a ten-thousand personnel elite unit to combat cartels, then downsized the proposed unit to

³⁵ Subsidy for Municipal Security

five thousand after encountering political opposition. This also required more political capital than he possessed, as he settled for deploying the marines in 2011 to Veracruz, Jalapa, Tuxpan, and Coatzacoalcos to fight cartel activity (Moyano 2020).

The Peña Nieto administration (2012-2018) created a national security force called the Gendarmería Nacional³⁶ in 2014 (Moyano 2020). This force was modeled off the Colombian National Police, with Peña Nieto going so far as to hire former Colombian National Police General Oscar Naranjo as his security advisor. Though it was originally to be military-led, it became civilian-led after encountering political resistance. Meanwhile, Peña Nieto increased the role of the navy in national security, rendering his Gendarmería Nacional relatively neutered as it ended up mostly protecting farm workers and tourists (Moyano 2020) before being dissolved by the next president.

Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) was elected in 2018, and is the president of Mexico today. He dissolved both the Gendarmería Nacional and the PF, once again because of corruption and ineffectiveness. In place of the PF, he created the Guardia Nacional (GN), combining personnel and equipment from the armed forces and the PF (Moyano 2020). The GN is the fourth addition to the military's Army, Navy, and Air Force. To the disappointment of human rights activists hoping for a civilian leader, it is led by Brigadier General Luis Bucio (Moyano 2020). In July of 2020, the GN had 90,000 troops, of whom over 60,000 were from the military (Amnesty International 2020). The exact mandate of the GN is unclear. It checks backpacks on Mexico City's subway one day, and guards oil pipelines the next, before rounding the week out with abusive migrant detentions (Meyer 2020).

³⁶ National Gendarmerie

Crime in Mexico

Mexico has some of the highest crime rates in Latin America, largely fueled by the drug war. The Citizen Institute of Insecurity Studies estimated that, in 2008, 11.5 percent of Mexicans were victimized by crime. Of victimized citizens surveyed, 78 percent responded that they did not report the crime to the police (Sabet 2010). Low rates of reporting can be explained by both distrust of the police due to widespread corruption, and lack of faith in the ability of police, as the prosecution rate for homicides in Mexico hovers around two percent (Felbab-Brown 2022).

The constant dismantling of federal police agencies by successive administrations only hurts crime fighting efforts, especially efforts to combat cartels. Because organized crime and drug smuggling is a federal crime in Mexico, the federal police are the only ones with the authority to investigate most cartel activity (Felbab-Brown 2022). Whenever an agency is dissolved, investigations are interrupted. The elimination of an agency also carries the risk of budget cuts for its replacement. This was true of the PF and GN; despite adding tens of thousands of new officers, the investigation budget was slashed, and researchers estimate that federal investigative capacity dropped by 70-75 percent as a result (Felbab-Brown 2022). The new hiring process also provides openings for cartel infiltration. The legitimacy of police in Mexico is undermined further when cartels provide social services to communities in the absence of functioning government agencies, in an effort to strengthen control over a town (Ochoa and Tomas 2020).

Direction of Reform

Police reforms in Mexico struggle to find coherent implementation at the federal level due to constant dissolutions of federal police agencies. That said, the direction of

reform is consistently modernization and professionalization at the federal, state, and municipal levels. Police forces in Mexico have increased greatly in size, budgets have grown dramatically, vetting processes are far stricter now than they were two decades ago, and information collection and sharing mechanisms are more widely used.

Yet, corruption continues to plague police, despite numerous reforms intended to improve transparency and accountability. Policing is perceived as one of the most corrupt occupations in the country (Asch et al. 2011). Although households report paying bribes more often to transit and border police than preventative and investigative police (Asch et al. 2011), all police officers suffer from perceived lack of integrity. A panel of criminologists in the late 2000s concluded that, despite myriad police reforms under Zedillo, Fox, and Calderón, there was no noticeable decline in corruption due to the outsized influence of cartels and other political influence money (Larose and Madden 2009; Asch et al. 2011). This conclusion is supported by a 2017 survey that found an average of 1,688 corruption cases filed for every 1,000 active-duty officers in the country (Jaramillo 2019). While the implementation of civil service protections in police agencies may decrease political promotions within the force, corruption and lack of accountability rears its head in police training, in interactions with civilians, and in engagement with criminals. Sabet found multiple reports of “stealing with professionalism” taught in police ethics classes, where the young officer does not actively extort, but rather waits for the citizen to offer a bribe (2012). Though promotions can be controlled by the civil service protections, younger police are still sometimes required to bribe their commanding officers if they want the job assignments that allow for the most bribes from citizens.

Another trend in reform is the militarization of police. In the late 90s, Zedillo removed 700 PJF officers and replaced them with 1000 military personnel (Asch et al. 2011). The PFP's creation, meanwhile, was formed in part by drawing on military personnel. By the time Calderón dismantled the PFP, its constituency was almost half military. The PF that replaced it also had a large military constituency. Calderón increased the role of the military in fighting drug cartels, an expansion in mandate that Peña-Nieto carried even further. AMLO then militarized the police further by turning the federal preventative police agency into a military branch. Apart from so many personnel and Bucio coming from the military, a large percentage of the GN's funding and equipment is from the armed forces, as are all of the GN's commanders, with recruitment centers all on army bases (Meyer 2020). This was despite AMLO campaigning on demilitarizing public security.

The militarization of policing in Mexico has not been wholly beneficial to fighting crime. The threat posed by cartels in Mexico calls for a response requiring high levels of professionalization, inter-regional coordination, and state-of-the-art equipment. In many countries, this would make the military an ideal candidate. This is not entirely true, however, in Mexico. Federal police agencies in Mexico are national bodies, therefore already capable of inter-regional coordination. Federal police also have access to high quality equipment, sometimes better than that of the military, as was the case with the PF. And although the military is more professionalized than police in Mexico, militarization is not the only path towards professionalization. The GN, meanwhile, has been implicated in scandals including extorting drug traffickers in Sonora on video, dining with a criminal family in Puebla, drunkenly misusing firearms in Jalisco, and

partying with sex workers during a COVID lockdown in Guanajato (Amnesty International 2020). Additionally, although armed forces are traditionally seen as less corruptible, former Mexican National Defense Secretary Cienduegos was arrested in 2020 by the United States for connections to criminal organizations. Furthermore, a 2016 government survey found that armed forces are more likely to abuse detainees than the police at the federal, state, and municipal levels, with 88 percent of Navy detainees and 86 percent of Army detainees reporting torture or ill-treatment (Amnesty International 2020). In November 2017, a report found that “97 percent of the crimes and human rights violations committed by soldiers against civilians that were investigated by the federal Attorney General’s Office between 2012 and 2016 had yet to be punished by the time of issuing the report. Of the 505 criminal investigations that were launched, only 16 convictions had been secured” (Meyer 2020). Police, on the other hand, tend to have a better understanding of the localities in which they operate. This informational asymmetry was on display in Tijuana when criminal groups used simple tactics such as removing street signs to confuse deployed soldiers (Sabet 2012).

Some police reforms come with the explicit intention of improving human rights protocols, “medical doctors examine arrestees, detention facilities are video monitored, police receive human rights training... and rules restrict police from firing their weapons unless shot at” (Sabet 2012). These reforms, however, lose potency when they jump from paper to personnel. The Mexico City-based think tank Fundar found 51.7 percent of those interviewed in Mexico City reported some kind of abuse or mistreatment at the hands of the police³⁷ (Sabet 2010). Preventative police were most often accused of threatening to

³⁷ Insults included.

charge on false grounds, and investigative police were most often accused of threats to obtain false confessions (Sabet 2010). Between May of 2019 and August of 2020, the National Human Rights Commission fielded complaints about the GN including arbitrary arrests, inhumane treatment, torture, unlawful killing, and forced disappearances (Amnesty International 2020). A high profile case of abuse was that of Jessica Silva, a woman murdered by the GN in Chihuahua while driving home from a protest (Amnesty International 2020). Though state and municipal agencies usually have accountability offices, there exists no specialist independent watchdog for the GN (Amnesty International 2020).

Case Study: Chihuahua City

Though federalist systems can make coordination between regional government bodies more difficult than in unitary systems, federalism allows for small-scale experiments in good governance less possible in unitary systems. In Mexico, that looks like municipalities trying police reform strategies that lack either political will or political feasibility at the state and federal levels. One such example of municipal police reform is Chihuahua City.

Chihuahua City, the capital of Chihuahua State, was host to a slew of professionalizing police reforms in the 2000s that were looked on favorably by the police. Notably, Chihuahua City's police force was the first police department in Mexico to receive CALEA accreditation (Sabet 2010). CALEA, the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, is a US-based accreditation agency that assesses the implementation of best practices by police forces in the United States and Mexico. Chihuahua City receiving the accreditation in 2007 was an important first step on the path

of bringing Mexican police forces up to international professional excellency standards. Accreditation required compliance with 458 standards. These standards include the requirement of a high school education to enter the force, the creation of an office to receive complaints about police conduct, and a mandatory annual week of retraining on basic policing tactics for every officer, regardless of experience (Sabet 2010). Although CALEA accreditation was not the only impetus for professionalization of the police force, a senior officer called it the “icing on the cake” (Sabet 2010). CALEA accreditation is still sought after by departments in Mexico, with the Chihuahua State police force beginning the accreditation process in 2021 (González 2021).

The Chihuahua City police also implemented reforms not called for by the CALEA accreditation process. These include a 12 percent monthly bonus for each officer if they have not missed work nor have faults on their record, access to medical coverage beyond state employee insurance, life insurance, a pension, and access to housing credit (Sabet 2010). Access to credit is significant because police in Mexico are not eligible for credit from Mexican banks (Sabet 2010). Officers are eligible for promotion following a minimum education attainment and a minimum number of years serving in their current position. Promotions are determined by performance at the end of a two-week promotion course (Sabet 2010).

The level of community involvement in Chihuahua City policing is also notable. A citizen committee oversees the promotion process to ensure transparency before the promotion results are publicly posted (Sabet 2010). A Citizen Public Security Committee of Chihuahua also mobilizes resources such as discounts on local goods and services for police officers (Sabet 2010). The city is replete with accountability mechanisms,

including a State Human Rights Commission, an Internal Affairs Office, an Office of Citizen Attention, and an Honor and Justice council (Sabet 2010). The Honor and Justice Council is the only body with sanctioning authority, while the other bodies are investigatory.

Despite these various accountability instruments, corruption continued to be an open secret, with one of the years Sabet (2010) examined, including 94 complaints of extortion but no charges brought against any officers.

Around the time Sabet ended his research, the drug war began ramping up. In 2007, there were 62 murders in Chihuahua City. Then, in 2008, there were 412 (INEGI Database). 2010 was the bloodiest year on record, with a mass shooting at a drug clinic contributing to that year's 1,100 murders. From 2011 to 2021, there was an average of 449 murders per year. Attributing the dramatic increase in homicides to failures of the Chihuahua City police would be unfair, as the drug war is a federal issue, meant to be addressed by federal police. That said, it makes analysis of reform success difficult. Increased homicide rates of this magnitude severely impact citizen perceptions of physical insecurity. The negative outcomes of increased crime and insecurity were elaborated on in Chapter 1, with diminished perceptions of police effectiveness regardless of policy reform of particular relevance here. Additionally, increased physical insecurity typically inspires a more *mano dura* approach to crime fighting, often in conflict with community policing and professionalization. As the crime landscape gets worse, political leaders are pressured to change tactics. This was true in Chihuahua City. In response to a panicked electorate, resources were funneled to more lethal weaponry policing technology. Several initiatives that required significant human resources were rolled

back, including extra education opportunities for officers and collaboration with the Citizen Public Security Committee (Sabet 2012). Despite these setbacks, as well as the weakness of accountability mechanisms before the drug war began to worsen, the Chihuahua City municipal police having led the charge in national police professionalization is laudable. Figuring out what made this police department different from others in Mexico is worthwhile; the answer could provide a blueprint for other departments in both the country and the region.

Chihuahua City, at the time of Sabet's research, was a relatively wealthy municipality (2010). This allowed for the hiring of more officers, more time for training, and greater access to advanced equipment. Before 2008, the city was also generally unaffected by organized crime. In addition, Chihuahua City experienced higher degrees of continuity in political leadership and policy than the average Mexican municipality from 1998 to 2009. Only two men led the police force over a combined five mayoral terms (Sabet 2010). When one party took power from another, the CALEA certification process continued. This policy continuity should not be taken for granted, as in Mexicali, Baja, Hermosillo, and Sonora, ISO-9000 certifications (another procedural accreditation) would be achieved by one administration but lapse without attempts at renewal by the next, placed within a tradition of successive politicians decrying the policies of their predecessors. At first, this seemed to be what was waiting for Chihuahua when the PAN mayoral candidate beat his PRI adversary in the mid-2000s. The soon-to-be-mayor said during the campaign that Chihuahua City police should focus on getting accreditation from the people, not an international organization (Sabet 2010). He did, however, maintain the accreditation process when elected.

The fate of Chihuahua City's police can be viewed as a microcosm of Mexican policing on the whole. When the police chief resigned in 2009 due to rising crime rates, he was replaced by a retired military general (Sabet 2010). Increased cartel activity and violence derailed several reforms, and distorted the picture of reform effectiveness. Policy continuity was Chihuahua City's special asset, and the cartels ended that continuity. Successful local reform requires a lack of interference from non-local forces. As long as federal police agencies are rebranded every administration, injected with new officers and mandates while losing others, their continuity will be compromised, and cartels will continue to operate successfully, harming reform efforts in every state and municipality where the cartels operate.

Chapter 3 - Conclusion

Recommendations

Four themes have emerged from the analyzed case studies that typify Latin American policing: increased professionalization, increased depoliticization, militarized versus community-oriented police, and centralized versus decentralized police. Increased professionalization is embraced by each examined police force, though implementation strategies and successes vary. Depoliticization, defined here as the movement away from policing as a tool for the achievement of a political agenda, and towards public safety regardless of the political climate, is also present in each police force, but the factors working against it are different in nature than those working against professionalization. Militarization entails strict adherence to organizational hierarchy and chain-of-command decision making, reliance on internal and autonomous crime-suppression resources rather than civil coordination, and usage of military-grade technology in crime fighting efforts. Militarization and community-oriented policing appear incompatible, though they work towards similar goals. Centralization and decentralization of policing are the least related to intentional reform strategies but are nonetheless worth discussing insofar as they affect the other three themes. Once these four themes have been analyzed, this thesis will proceed with a recommended general police reform strategy for Latin America, accompanied by specific policy prescriptions towards that end.

In the global North context, police professionalization has historically meant the use of scientific and quantitative methods to suppress crime, directed by a centralized authority in each department (Sklansky 2011). In the context of Latin America, Niels Uildriks details professionalization as,

...[1]³⁸ improved selection criteria so that those entering the police are not abusive...[2] better training, [3] improved working conditions and increased access to resources, access to technology and a better use of that technology to cut down on the excessive use of force, and [4] improved supervision and accountability mechanisms to hold police officers accountable for their behavior.³⁹

Uildriks' criteria for professionalization differ from, and are more specific than, Sklansky's due to limited resources at the disposal of Latin American police departments compared to their global North peers, as well as a shorter overall history of police reform efforts necessitating procedural optimizations already more widely implemented in the global North. Uildriks' professionalization criteria will be applied to the case-study countries for the purpose of determining which components are most influential towards policing success, and which should therefore be prioritized in an environment with limited access to professionalizing resources.

In Brazil, professionalizing selection criteria took the form of commanding officers in GPAE units requiring a degree in criminal justice. Requiring higher education to either join or take an authoritative role in policing also has become more common in Mexico. In Chile, to become a Carabinero officer, the more authoritative counterpart to a troop, already requires multiple years of education, culminating in a Public Security Administration degree. Aside from higher education, Mexican police forces at every level of government also have more often been requiring at least a high school education. The reasons for requiring a minimum level of education go beyond ensuring competency and tightening selection criteria, although that is an important motivating factor. Requiring

³⁸ Brackets added in thesis.

³⁹ Page 60.

higher education increases the likelihood that police officers see public security as a career rather than a temporary job, likely ensuring more commitment to their responsibilities, and investment in the long-term success of their work. It also raises the prestige of policing, a move that can impact corruption. Where police work in Mexico is still largely seen as disreputable, Carabineros in Chile are thought of as professionals. Offering a bribe communicates lack of respect for both the integrity of an officer and the integrity of the police more generally. It is therefore no surprise that citizens in Mexico are far more likely to offer a bribe to police than are citizens in Chile.

Improved selection criteria go beyond degree requirements. In Mexico, reforms have often included the requirement of asset declarations, psychological tests, drug tests, medical examinations, background checks, and polygraph tests to either enter a police force or receive a promotion. In Chile, recruits undergo general-knowledge entrance exams, physiological, psychological, and dental health exams, and must also declare all family members for the purpose of an extensive background check. These additional selection criteria are less strict in Brazil and Colombia. Background checks can ensure that a department is not hiring a former officer that was fired by a different department. The effects of additional selection criteria are similar to education requirements, particularly ones such as dental health exams and polygraph tests, in that they add costs to the application that filter for candidates that are more serious about doing the job. These additional costs, however, can be counter-productive. In Colombia, the costs are literal, as candidates must pay thousands of dollars to “apply, enter, and graduate from police academy” (Department of State 2020). This discourages low-income candidates from applying, potentially skewing the ideology of police against the Colombian poor,

negatively impacting citizen-police relations in an environment that already demonizes the poor for historic associations with revolutionary criminal organizations such as the FARC.

Once candidates are accepted, professionalization takes the form of improved training. In Mexico, training requirements have become dramatically stricter in the last two decades, and are still disparate based on location and level of policing. Sonoran state law, for example, used to make training optional. As a result, the city of Hermosillo consisted of a police force of only 15 percent formally trained officers. At the federal level, police training has recently been facilitated by the United States through the Merida Joint-Security Initiative. Some municipalities such as Chihuahua City, meanwhile, implemented one week of retraining per year for every officer, in compliance with CALEA accreditation standards. In Chile, training for Carabineros is longer than for the armed forces, another potential explanation for perceived professionalism. Training length is variable in Brazil, and neither notably long nor short in Colombia. The type of training is also worth discussion. The Colombian National Police emphasize in-class, theoretical training in police academies, counter to international policing best practices (Department of State 2020). While there exists no optimal length of time for police training, or a perfect ratio of theory versus practical training, required formal training is imperative to a professionalized and effective police force.

Specialized human rights training is another across-the-board professionalization effort. Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Mexico all have implemented human rights training in various contexts. Sometimes it was in response to human rights abuses perpetrated by the police, while other times implementation was proactive, in concert with larger

community-oriented policing initiatives. Analyzing the effectiveness of these human rights training courses is difficult, as the specific material is rarely accessible to the public. Additionally, when implemented reactively, human rights training can be more of a public relations effort than a good faith attempt at changing the culture and practices of the police force. In Brazil, for instance, after the GPAE in Rio de Janeiro failed at increasing perceived security or bettering relationships between citizens and the police, the replacement UPP program reportedly included even more human rights training than was the case with the GPAE. Without publicizing how the human rights training would be different, or why more hours of it was expected to produce better results, its inclusion may be no more than a symbolic gesture. The failure of the UPP program to meaningfully decrease reported police abuse reifies that perception, acknowledging that aspects other than facile human-rights training contributed to the failures of the UPP program as well. Recent systematic human rights violations have been perpetrated by police forces in each studied country, indicating that either the human rights training courses themselves are still ineffective, or cannot overcome other forces within the police departments working against human rights minded policing.

Uildriks mentions improved working conditions and better access to resources. The clearest way access to resources has improved is in the use of more advanced technology and policing-related equipment throughout Latin America. In Mexico, the inadequacy of vehicles, detention facilities, and weapons has historically harmed the ability of police to suppress crime. For example, municipal police departments often claim worse access to weapons than the cartels. This discourages police from arriving at a hot crime scene, leaving citizens in danger and damaging public perceptions of the

police. Reforms such as SUBSEMUN have attempted to give municipalities better access to technology and higher grade weapons. The creation of new federal policing agencies also tends to introduce better quality technology and weapons, as was the case with the AFI and the FP. In Brazil, “model police stations” were created in Rio de Janeiro with glass exteriors for transparency, air conditioning and working facilities, and computers (Uildriks 2009). These steps were intended to increase the perception of professionalism among both the police officers while working and the public when they came to report crimes. The results of the model police stations were mixed. Factors such as racism, classism, and varying levels of managerial competency affected the desired outcomes. Improved equipment, in Brazil and Mexico, requires improved or already effective policing practices, culture, and training to have a notably positive effect. That said, the lack of basic functioning equipment is an impediment to effective policing, with a straightforward solution.

Access to and usage of policing databases and software is another professionalization effort that falls under improved access to resources. In Mexico, both Fox and Calderón sought to introduce widely used crime and intelligence gathering databases with AFInet and Platform Mexico, respectively (Sabet 2010). In Brazil, the model police stations included crime reporting software that required special training to learn and use. In Brazil and Colombia, crime databases that employ georeferencing technology have been adopted for hot-spot policing. These databases improve the effectiveness of police by limiting presence to blocks with high rates of crime within high-crime neighborhoods. The Colombia case is helpful in assessing the effectiveness of these efforts. Plan Cuadrantes has not lived up to its expectations or announced

successes, and one reason is because crime is sometimes displaced from one block to another nearby. Similar to physical equipment, access to policing databases and improved software can be helpful in suppressing and investigating crime. Long-term effectiveness, however, requires responsible and intelligent usage of new digital infrastructure, not just access alone.

Improved on-the-ground working conditions apart from improved equipment and infrastructure are limited. The nature of police work, unpredictably violent one day and potentially monotonous the next, renders any other working condition improvements difficult. Conditions of employment, on the other hand, have gotten better throughout Latin America. Police salaries in the region trend low compared to high-skilled labor and private security alternatives. Be that as it may, Mexico has attempted to raise police salaries across the board through various reform initiatives. In Brazil, officers that went through the training to be involved with the UPP received bonuses tied to the extent of crime reduction in their assigned patrol areas. In Chile, a 100 percent salary increase for the Carabineros was one of the first efforts at professionalization following the end of military dictatorship. Still, increased pay is an uphill battle; the public sector in most countries pays worse than the private sector. This fact makes competing with private firms to attract the best talent for the job difficult. Chile overcomes this challenge by offering an impressive spread of benefits for Carabineros to make up for the low base salary, from high-paying pensions to cost-free child care. The Chihuahua City police in Mexico also offered benefits such as loans for housing and opportunities for further education, though some of these benefits were pared back in the wake of the drug war. Because private sector salaries will more often than not be more competitive than the

public sector for similar jobs, a robust benefits package for Latin American police officers is crucial to recruit top talent.

Uildriks' last professionalization criteria, improved supervision and accountability mechanisms, have seen progressive implementation with mixed results. Ideally, police supervision and accountability should be achieved laterally, vertically, internally, and externally. Lateral supervision and accountability means civil-society has the power to demand changes in police practices, where vertical supervision and accountability places power at the hands of politicians to change policing. The police themselves play a smaller role in facilitating these types of supervision and accountability than they do in internal and external cases. Internal supervision and accountability means officers are held responsible for faults in service by the department in which they work. Chile's Carabineros have an extensive internal supervision and accountability system via multiple and specific sanctionable offenses and accompanying punishments ranging from write-ups to termination. In Mexico, Brazil, and Colombia, internal supervision is less detailed. Colombia and Chile both use military courts in some or all cases of criminal police misconduct. This accountability mechanism hurts transparency and limits external supervision. External supervision and accountability mean the public serves as police watchdogs and can effectively demand reforms where deemed necessary. Military court proceedings are typically secretive. The result of the proceeding is usually the only thing publicized, making it impossible for the public to know why an officer was found innocent (as is usually the case), and if that explanation holds up to civil scrutiny. In Mexico, various public bodies meant to gather and investigate complaints or forward complaints to an investigatory body have been created, such as the National Human

Rights Commission and Chihuahua City's Office of Citizen Attention and Honor and Justice Council. The Colombian National Human Rights Directorate, announced in 2021 after systematic police abuse was spotlighted during nationwide protests, appears as if it will operate similarly to the Mexican external accountability offices. If its outcome is similar to the ones in Mexico, this accountability mechanism will be largely symbolic and unable to change the abusive policing culture. If the Carabineros infractions list demonstrates the importance of specificity and comprehensiveness towards effective internal supervision and accountability, their military courts demonstrate why accountability in its most serious cases must be a public exercise.

Supervision and accountability reforms are applicable in cases of reward as well. These are personnel management reforms. The most notable case of personnel management improvement is Mexico, where waves of police reforms have incorporated the implementation of civil service protections and procedures to ensure fair and transparent promotion practices. In Chihuahua City, the bonuses officers received for avoiding infractions and missing work is another personnel management technique. The Brazilian case of officers receiving bonuses for effective crime suppression in assigned patrol areas is a personnel management technique that rewards officers in the short term. In Chile, the Carabineros' promotion system is already comparatively clear and institutionalized. There is little literature on personnel management in Colombia, although reports of Cuadrantes units not meeting their patrol quotas once researchers stopped observing the units in action suggests the police has yet to develop an effective supervision system. While the examined promotion-oriented personnel management reforms aim to decrease corruption, the bonuses for good work seek to replace human

supervision with feedback from crime statistics, preferably unnecessary in a police force where every officer operates at their highest capacity. Corruption is still widely present in Mexico, but this should not count against the importance of civil service promotion standardization and adoption. Rather, the takeaway is that while transparent promotion practices are an important safeguard against corruption, they can only go so far in a climate of weak democratic institutions and pervasive, widespread police malfeasance.

Unlike the other identified themes of Latin American police reform, professionalization efforts are rarely politically contested. The general sentiment among politicians, academics, and the public is that, in the context of Latin America, professionalization is a key step towards effective policing. The caveat to professionalization is that many of these efforts require weighty investments in human, material, and digital resources. In a world of limited public safety resource access, one effort can sometimes undermine another. For instance, investments in modern infrastructure and high-tech equipment can pull money away from providing officers with access to further education, as was the case in Chihuahua City after 2009. This predicament calls for sound prioritization of certain professionalization measures over others. Chihuahua City police argue that better technology and equipment is the most important professionalization measure (Sabet 2010). This is unsurprising, because this area of professionalization is the one with which officers interact the most on a daily basis. If the patrol car is always breaking down and the system used to digitally file police reports keeps crashing, the effects of better equipment are obvious. Still, each aspect of professionalization merits significant investment. Strict selection criteria ensures the best candidates get the job, comprehensive training prepares police to respond

to high-stakes situations calmly and rationally while relating to their work and the citizenry responsibly, working equipment and technology allows police to actually carry out their daily functions, pleasant conditions of employment encourage good officers to stay on the force, and sound personnel management can root out habitually ineffective police while maintaining healthy relationships with the public. The recommendations section will detail what professionalization strategies should be emphasized, and what that emphasis ought to look like.

On depoliticization, separating police work from politics cannot be done entirely since physical insecurity and crime rates often shape the political climate. Nonetheless, progress towards separating contemporary police from their previous positions as tools of political suppression by military dictators or authoritarian political regimes is measurable. Depoliticization itself does not appear to actively increase the effectiveness of police, but refusal to depoliticize can indirectly harm reform efforts. This is most evident through politicization of marginalized social classes, and refusal to separate the police from politically influenced government agencies.

Under the military dictatorships of Chile and Brazil, as well as the one-party rule of 20th century Mexico and the National Front period of Colombia, the poor and indigenous were systematically victimized by national security forces. The mechanics of victimization varied, but in each case it was due to the ruling political class feeling threatened by poor and indigenous (or afro-descendant) communities. Because the police were typically street-level appendages of dictatorship, police officers viewed these communities with inherent suspicion. Additionally, it was common for officers to disregard democratic norms such as due process when it came to policing these

communities, even after the reintroduction of free and fair elections. This has resulted in police who fail to apply reforms evenly across all social classes. In Rio, GPAE officers continued to abuse community members in the Pavão-Pavãozinho-Cantagalo favelas, even though they had implemented democratic policing principles in the wealthier Copacabana. Demonstrations against this continued abuse were met with more police violence, and the program was determined to be a failure. In Mexico and Chile, cases of police abuse against indigenous people, such as the frequent false accusations of criminal organizing levied against the Mapuche, continue to undermine community-police cooperation. If police do not take active steps to change their politicized views of historically marginalized communities, police reform will still be stymied by fragmented implementation.

Police must also depoliticize at the governmental level. Before the reintroduction of democracy, police in Latin America were often under the control of their respective country's defense ministries. This was because the police and the military served similar purposes, guaranteeing citizen compliance with regime policies. Moving police from the Ministry of Defense to a Ministry of Interior or its equivalent has been seen as a step towards depoliticizing the police at the highest level. Doing so not only communicates a commitment to moving past the previous status quo, but also changes the way police see themselves within the apparatus of government. Working within the Ministry of Defense makes reform more difficult because reformists come up against the wills of military leaders that still have remnants of 20th century political influence. Sometimes the political influence is even more explicit, such as in Chile before 2005 where the police and military were granted seats in the senate, encouraging them to see themselves as

separate political entities. Eventually, the Chilean government moved the Carabineros to the Ministry of Interior (where they resided before Pinochet) more than two decades after the end of dictatorship. Police in Colombia are still under control of the Ministry of Defense, although power has been in part devolved to the mayoral level as well, creating a two-tiered system of control over the police. In Mexico, the *Guardia Nacional* operate under the military, a move that in fact politicizes the federal police agency's replacement, even though the Mexican military enjoys higher degrees of public trust than the police. Nevertheless, separating the police from previously powerful government bodies is helpful in changing the public's perception of the police, as well as the police's view of themselves.

Two themes that often work against one another, though not inevitably so, militarization and community-oriented policing, have both seen wider implementation in Latin America in the last two decades. Militarization is sometimes used as a professionalizing shortcut because it entails a built-in style of personnel management and requires a high base-level of functional equipment. Community-oriented policing is often used as a strategy to increase trust between the police and the communities they serve. These two functionalities are not inherently contradictory, and in terms of policy, both policing strategies can be partially implemented simultaneously. There is a contradiction, however, in ethos. Above all else, community-oriented police see community members as partners in the collective effort to maintain citizen security, while militarized police see community members as neutral bystanders, or potential adversaries, in the police's independent goal of neutralizing threats to public order. The police forces of Colombia, Brazil, and Chile were already structurally militaristic exiting the 20th century. While,

with Brazil as an exception, the internal policing structures in those three countries have not demilitarized, all three have implemented policies meant to make policing more community-oriented. Mexico, on the other hand, has consistently increased the militarization of its police structure and practice since the Zedillo administration. Differences in community-oriented policing implementation and environment in Colombia, Brazil, and Chile have led to different results worthy of analysis. In Mexico, where community-oriented policing has been largely unimplemented, it is worth considering if it would have been more suited to the citizenry's desired outcomes than militarization.

Brazil and Chile's police were both deeply integrated actors in the countries' military dictatorships. Both patrol-focused, non-investigative police forces, the Military Police and the Carabineros, respectively, are therefore militaristically hierarchical with ranks including Captain, Major, Colonel, and General. Colombia's National Police has long done the military-grade work of combating cartels and revolutionary political groups. In turn, its structure is militaristically hierarchical as well. While all three countries have implemented initiatives that can be described as community-oriented policing, Brazil is the only one that has attempted to relax its strict, chain-of-command style with the GPAE units in Rio. These units were meant to have more decision making flexibility in the name of creative problem solving. Colombia's 1991 constitutional reform somewhat demilitarized the National Police structure by having mayors share vertical decision making power with the Ministry of Defense, but it did not change the hierarchy within police units themselves. Even in the case of Brazil, the change did not apply to the entire Rio de Janeiro police force, as the GPAE units were always a

specialized group within the larger force. The leeway these officers were given appears to have been abused in the Pavão-Pavãozinho-Cantagalo favelas. This suggests that the demilitarization of internal police structures may be helpful in cutting decision-making red tape, but does not meaningfully or always positively affect police-public relationships.

Brazil, Chile, and Colombia have pursued community-oriented policing with different focuses. In Brazil, the emphasis has been two-fold: integrate police within the community and proactively decrease potential criminality with coterminous anti-poverty workshops. Examples of integration were the GPAE Community Breakfasts, the provision of the GPAE commanding officer's phone number to the community, the increased physical presence of officers in targeted neighborhoods, and the joint councils created for GPAE and Fica Vivo that coordinated policies between police, civil society, professional and business organizations, and local politicians. The UPP program and Fica Vivo both tried to include social welfare components, but Fica Vivo's was more specific and invited more community input, and was likely therefore more effective at reducing criminality. It should be noted that Brazil is not the only country to have tried implementing skills workshops and anti-poverty programs into its policing strategy. One of the few community policing examples from Mexico is its *Sembrando Vida* program, an initiative that included teaching impoverished youth in high-crime neighborhoods trade skills as a way out of poverty-induced criminality (Felbab-Brown 2022). For example, boys were paid to learn how to cut hair from local hairdressers, who were also paid to teach. *Sembrando Vida* failed in this regard; the boys would either pay off or threaten the hairdressers to report attendance. What made Fica Vivo different was its reliance on

community members to, without compensation, volunteer to teach workshops about what they thought their neighbors ought to learn, with social workers connected to the program dropping in occasionally to assess progress. Because there was no money provided, all who participated did so due to genuine interest and commitment to the goals of Fica Vivo. The success of the community workshops engendered collective investment in community safety, and provided tools to escape poverty. This approach was also different from Rio's UPP program, one that charged police officers with figuring out how to alleviate social strife rather than relying on members of the favelas to take the lead themselves. This approach did not work. Lack of community input in the program is also clear from how it ended up raising home prices, pushing the poorest favela members further into the city's periphery, and further into physical insecurity. Fica Vivo also enjoyed more policy continuity. Budget cuts resulting from the 2016 Brazilian recession forced Rio de Janeiro to scale down the UPP program, and when a governor was elected in 2018 that did not believe in community-oriented policing, he functionally ended the program entirely.

Colombia's flagship community-oriented policing program, Plan Cuadrantes, has included Brazil's focus of increased and continuous presence of police officers in a neighborhood, but does not include social work. Plan Cuadrantes uses crime data to target hot spots in high-crime neighborhoods, and has trained upwards of 9000 officers on improved interpersonal skills in preparation for increased community contact. Recall that crime rates appear largely unaffected by Plan Cuadrantes over the last decade, and where government-published reports point to decreased crime, independent third parties contest these findings. One potential reason for the failure of Plan Cuadrantes is that

crime was displaced to the surrounding streets of targeted neighborhoods and intersections. Another potential explanation is the reported lack of buy-in from police officers themselves. For this, existing militarization may be the culprit. Similar to how the Organization of American States found Brazilian police officers after the dictatorship to hold due process in low regard, Colombian police officers may have little faith in community-oriented policing as a holdover from battling organized criminal groups for so long. This theory is supported by the excess force used against protesters in Colombia in the past few years, for what human rights groups in Colombia and around the world blame on a militarized view of the citizenry.

On the other hand, lack of consistent implementation by officers may also be due to inadequate personnel management. Though this seems unlikely considering the military character of the National Police, the case studies of Medellín, and especially Bogotá, suggest that Plan Cuadrantes was implemented against the backdrop of a police force already more community-oriented than its military structure would have one believe. Bogotá was the location of myriad programs in the 1990s and 2000s meant to involve citizens in the public safety process. These included widely disseminated monthly crime reports (the SUIVD), citizen-led neighborhood safety committees (FLFs), classes to inform the public on what they ought to expect from the police (*Escuelas de Seguridad Ciudadana*), and hundred of community meetings held throughout Bogotá to discuss how police could be more accountable to the city's residents. Medellín's "Integral Urban Projects," meanwhile, intentionally improved public infrastructure as a means of lifting people out of poverty and consequently decreasing crime. Then again, while these efforts may have magnified the role that citizens feel they can play in public safety,

Caroline Doyle suggests that changes in the country's crime rates had more to do with how criminal organizations related to each other throughout the years. When these organizations were at war with one another, crime rates went up, and with a *pax criminalis*, crime rates went down (2017).

Both lack of buy-in from police officers and the micro-displacement of crime can be accounted for by Plan Cuadrantes having been pushed onto police and the communities they serve by the National Presidential Advisory Board on Safety. Had residents of neighborhoods targeted by the plan been as involved as they were with public safety in Bogotá during the 1990s and 2000s, perhaps the police would have put more faith in the initiative, and the displaced crime problem could have been accounted for by those that it impacts the most. A social welfare component may have also fought against the power of organized crime, taking impoverished youth out of the criminal groups' spheres of influence.

Chile's Carabineros implemented a similar Plan Cuadrantes before Colombia, along with Programa Comuna Segura. The Chilean version of Plan Cuadrantes, however, focused more on the georeferenced crime data aspect and less on improved interpersonal skills between officers and community members. Programa Comuna Segura, the initiative that had city councils submit proposed public works projects intended to reduce criminality, did not have effective follow-up mechanisms and was therefore used to fund political pet projects. The funding mechanism was reworked, but it never received much acclaim in terms of increasing public safety. The more meaningful strategy to increase public confidence and trust in the police was the Carabineros public relations campaign. From hiring public relations specialists to creating a cartoon mascot and running a radio

station directed at youth, the Carabineros sought to increase community confidence without significant officer-to-citizen interaction. This strategy was, for roughly two decades after Pinochet's dictatorship, a success. Having said that, lack of actual policing policy to this end meant the foundation of trust was hollow. The Carabineros do not enjoy nearly the amount of admiration in Chile today that they once did, largely due to constant scandals and widespread police abuse in the 2010s, extending into the early 2020s. Additionally, satisfaction with the Carabineros was starkly class stratified even while they were highly regarded in Latin America, suggesting that the poor and indigenous' frequent negative encounters with police outweighed the Carabineros' public relations strategy. The temporary success of a hands-off, community-oriented signaling approach speaks to the importance of gaining community trust as a goal in and of itself, and the ease with which this can be accomplished when the police do not actually increase their interactions with the community.

Mexico has been militarizing the police with nearly every wave of reform, often as a shortcut to more effective personnel management and higher quality equipment. Aside from the newly created *Guardia Nacional* existing as a fourth branch of the Mexican military, replacing the former *Policía Federal*, federal police reform initiatives have required a militarized restructuring of municipal police forces. SUBSEMUN, the federal program that sought to increase municipal police capacities and access to resources, required municipalities to organize their police departments into a hierarchical system of 13 officer ranks (Asch. et al 2011). SUBSEMUN also required the adoption of a national police operations manual, with the goal of standardizing both how police interact with communities and how they operate internally. The standardization manual

and improved equipment could be nothing more than an effort at professionalization. These changes become militaristic, however, when placed within the context of the Merida Initiative. This US-Mexico cooperative security campaign, until being replaced by AMLO and the Biden administration in 2021, both increased the role of the Mexican military in fighting the drug war, and included Mexican police in security operations targeting cartels. To address a trans-regional security threat as large in scope as the cartels requires militaristic counter-insurgency tactics. But while militarization is a reasonable reaction to cartels, the mentality of counter-insurgency has been negatively turned against the Mexican people. The murder of Jessica Silva, a water rights activist, by the *Guardia Nacional* in Chihuahua reflects a militarized view of the citizenry, one that sees them as potential adversaries rather than partners. The dramatic increase in police and military presence in Ciudad Juarez during the early 2010s had some hallmarks of an occupation. In pursuit of decreasing cartel influence, increased police and military presence turned the city into a war zone. The murder rate quintupled, kidnappings became more frequent, and most revealing, there was a surge in police violence directed at the public (Paley 2014). These outcomes imply that police did a poor job delineating community and cartel members. Additionally, while homicide rates did increase in the mid-2010s, they are now back up to 2008 levels (Kladzyk 2022). While a degree of militarization is called for to address the magnitude of cartel violence, and can be helpful to professionalize and acquire more functional equipment, doing so with little emphasis on what the desires and needs are of the relevant community being ostensibly served can end up doing more harm than good.

The applicability of militarization versus community-oriented policing is dependent on the existing security environment. Community-oriented policing has the potential to increase trust between police and the public, a necessary condition for crimes to be reported. By achieving procedural justice—the trust that when a crime report is filed, it will be treated seriously and produce a good-faith investigation—police can more effectively do their jobs. Even so, trust between police and community members is eroded by the inability to effectively neutralize the threat of organized crime. In Colombia and Brazil, it was found that sophisticated organized criminal networks can easily operate around the increased presence of police officers in a neighborhood. The most effective way to account for this was by keeping youth away from criminal organizations through implementation of anti-poverty programs alongside community-oriented policing. Because of how deeply integrated some criminal groups are within the communities they endanger, militarization's lack of community collaboration is not an effective, long-term solution. In Chile, where organized crime is less of a threat than in Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia, anti-poverty programs should also be implemented alongside meaningful community-oriented policing initiatives to resolve the class-stratified view of the Carabineros. Additionally, community-oriented policing ought to be internally emphasized as much as it is emphasized in externally facing policy. Doing so has the chance to transform the way police view historically marginalized groups, an imperative to decrease systematic abuses against protestors in every country. In Mexico, where police militarization is an understandable reaction to the militaristic might of cartels, collaboration with the community is crucial to effectively targeting

cartels without including the public in the crossfire. Collaboration also undermines the efforts of cartels to appear more legitimate and citizen-facing than the state.

The last theme, centralization versus decentralization of police, is meaningful in how it affects efforts at police reform on the whole. Apart from the social welfare component, Brazil has potentially seen more success implementing community-oriented policing than Colombia's National Police because it is decentralized. When police personnel come from and stay within the communities they serve, they have more sensitivity to the problems impacting locals. This potentially helps with buy-in to programs that increase interactions between police and community members.

Decentralization also allows for more policy innovation because the implementation of it requires less coordination and political influence. This was seen in the case of Chihuahua City's police force. On the other hand, Chile and Colombia's police are likely more professionalized because the police are a national force. Brazilian and Mexican state and municipal police forces do not commonly share crime data with each other, and often record crime data differently. Although professionalizing initiatives in Mexico and Brazil have sought to change this, the countries still have a way to go before comprehensive standardization is achieved. Chile and Colombia are better able to standardize practices and share crime data because the police operate as a single national entity. This reduces inefficiencies in crime control, and boosts the sense of procedural justice among the populace. Accordingly, Chile and Colombia have historically had higher views of the police than Mexico and Brazil.

Key Recommendations

1. Police should receive competitive employment benefits to account for low salaries. Governments are better equipped than private firms to offer employment benefits such as loan approval, education opportunities, healthcare, housing, and large pensions. Doing so raises policing's prestige and viability as a long-term career. This attracts high quality talent, improves cooperation between police and the public, and potentially decreases corruption.
2. Quality of police recruits should be prioritized over quantity, whenever possible. The absence of an adequate number of police officers makes public safety more difficult, generally, to ensure. Still, relaxing entry requirements necessitates more rigorous and costly training, and increases the likelihood of infiltration by criminal organizations. Once infiltration occurs, the effectiveness of the police rapidly deteriorates. If police begin receiving better benefits, more people will naturally apply. Prioritizing quality is more effective at ensuring long-term success of policing.
3. Personnel management should be standardized and modeled off the Carabineros, except for cases of criminal police malfeasance. The Carabineros have done an excellent job of transparently utilizing detailed conditions for promotion and penalization. By removing ambiguity from personnel management, in most cases, the Carabineros decrease the likelihood of corruption within their ranks. Importantly though, when the infraction is criminal, police must be tried in non-military courts, preferably made accessible to the public and the media. This increases accountability in cases of serious abuse, and enhances trust in the public that the police do not see themselves as above the law. By removing the safety

that police feel in perpetrating abuse due to opaque accountability processes, abuse is less likely to occur.

4. Community-oriented policing initiatives should be architected from the ground up. Gaining community trust is helpful in its own right, and is possible without much involvement or input from the public. But, community-oriented policing should primarily be concerned with solving problems the community wants to be solved, with trust coming as a result of effective collaboration. Where community-oriented policing neglects input from the community itself, initiatives are operating with a handicap. The people that live in a neighborhood, especially one at a city's periphery, will more often than not have a better understanding of how to reduce local criminality than bureaucrats. Plan Cuadrantes and Fica Vivo illustrate this concept well.
5. Where militarization is called for, there must still be meaningful community participation. Local intelligence is an invaluable asset to the effectiveness of urban security initiatives. By contrast, when police antagonize the residents of a targeted neighborhood, criminal organizations are legitimized and the necessary cooperation of community members is lost.
6. Police should not operate under the Ministry of Defense or its equivalent. The legacy of military dictatorship in many Latin American countries has empowered defense ministries throughout the region. This heightened political influence can act as an obstacle to necessary police reform that defense ministry officials are against. Officials in a Ministry of Defense, naturally self-advocating, can have perverse incentives in terms of limiting the power of police for the sake of societal

benefit. Furthermore, the counterproductive mentality of seeing citizens as potential insurgents is more likely to linger in the average Ministry of Defense and be passed down to officers, than in a Ministry of Interior or other non-military ministry.

7. Countries with decentralized police should have national coordination and collaboration mechanisms. The drawbacks of decentralization can be partially overcome by establishing these mechanisms. This can take the form of annual best practices conferences, joint training initiatives, and a common inter-department communications system, among other possibilities.
8. The abandonment or significant overhaul of police reform initiatives should be up to a non-political committee composed of civil society representatives, police officers, members of the public, and public safety researchers. Policy continuity is a key factor of ensuring the success of police reform. When a politician ends the security policies of their predecessor as a means of political signaling rather than in response to the policy's demonstrated effectiveness, it becomes extremely difficult to get an accurate picture of what does and does not work. Conversely, politicians will sometimes maintain domestic security policies despite demonstrated ineffectiveness to save face. It is thus necessary to remove this power from politicians altogether. This recommendation is unlikely to be implemented anywhere, despite its merit, on account of the enormous political will required to convince politicians to relinquish control over the police.

Limitations

This thesis was limited by the author's lack of Spanish fluency. Spanish language news-media and policy analysis literature likely includes greater insight into how the public feels about police and the discussed police reforms than do English language resources. Spanish fluency would have aided data collection efforts as well. The scope of analysis was also limiting. Including more case study countries would have allowed for a clearer understanding of the security status quo. Choosing three countries for their extraordinarily high levels of physical insecurity, while helpful in providing multiple examples of police reform and expert analysis to draw from, skewed the applicability of recommendations towards countries suffering from especially high rates of criminality.

Conclusion

The elevated prevalence of violent criminality in Latin America is detrimental to nearly every level of society. Police are the first responders to crime, and so it follows that police reforms are called for to reduce crime and violence in the present day. By analyzing the case studies of police in Brazil, Colombia, Chile, and Mexico, this thesis has provided eight actionable recommendations applicable to police agencies and governments in Latin America. The application of these recommendations is likely to reduce crime and physical insecurity in the region. Beyond that, though, long-term and sustainable change to the region's domestic security environment requires significant investment in the social welfare of Latin America's most marginalized groups. These recommendations can only go so far without recognizing how structural inequality is directly contributory to the cycle of poverty-induced criminality.

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