

LUCY CONGER, **The Private Sector and Public Security: The Cases of Ciudad Juárez and Monterrey**

Between 2008 and 2012, murder, extortion, and drug and human trafficking rose to unprecedented levels in the important northern manufacturing and industrial cities of Ciudad Juárez and Monterrey.

Private sector leaders and organizations confronted their grim reality and staged protests, made concrete demands of authorities, and launched a host of civic initiatives aimed at reducing crime.

The private groups that arose to battle for improved citizen security are distinctive because they are hybrids. In both Juárez and Monterrey, the most important and successful private, civic groups working on security issues were organizations that brought together business leaders and business and industrial organizations with civic organizations that included medical associations, human rights defenders, academics, and other activists. Umbrella organizations like these that cut across sectors are highly unusual in Mexico. Pp.172-173

The two cities are “isolated cases” in that business and civil society groups were able to work together, especially in a country where the government is “not an impartial arbiter,”

Insecurity was so pervasive “it was at the point of destroying the city, and that placed it in the interest of everyone” to take action, says Fernández.<sup>2</sup>

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

The results of this activism are most evident in drops in crimes such as extortion, kidnapping, auto theft, and other robberies.

A classic example is the police force. “Here we have no career as a policeman, we don’t know what that is,” says Jorge Tello Peón, former executive secretary of Mexico’s National Public Security System (SNSP).<sup>3</sup>

## **Monterrey**

The bonds that tie this group together go far beyond business interests. The links are familial and intimate; many of the heads of the multinationals are cousins, relatives or are

related through marriage. The strength of the city in the national economy and the power of Mexico's leading multinationals headquartered there carry leverage with the national government and open doors in Mexico City. Beyond that, the Monterrey executives and the president in office and cabinet officials are well known to each other. This has meant that when violence and crime struck Monterrey, businesses got and will get a hearing immediately with the highest-ranking federal officials.

Some business leaders say the city was a “paradise” of security. Until 2006, the city was considered the safest in Latin America by business publications.<sup>24</sup>

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

In 2008, members of the Beltrán Leyva trafficking group started settling in Monterrey and setting up business. They soon forged ties with local political leaders and businessmen. About this time, the Beltrán Leyva group had developed a partnership with the Zetas, based on the Gulf Coast, and the Zetas had already begun to move into Monterrey.<sup>26</sup>

Murders in the city doubled during 2008, to more than 5,300, fueled by rivalries stemming from the splitting off of the Beltrán Leyva group from the Sinaloa Cartel in early 2008, the state attorney general reported.<sup>27</sup>

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

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The afternoon of August 25, 2011, eight gunmen carrying automatic weapons and gasoline burst into the Casino Royale in Monterrey, poured gasoline, and set the gaming machines afire. Fifty-two people died in the brutal attack. Among the five suspects initially rounded up by authorities, one was a state policeman who confessed to being a Zeta.<sup>30</sup>

In August, 2008, alarmed civic leaders organized a march called “Let's Illuminate Nuevo León”, and 25,000 adults, children, and youth, dressed in white and carrying candles marched to a central plaza to protest violence and crime. Their demands: a police reform and improved security. The Illuminate Nuevo León protest

in 2008 was an unprecedented event for conservative, business- focused Monterrey, and marked a watershed in civic life because it showed that mobilizing citizens was possible.

The protesters placed four specific demands before authorities. First, they demanded the governor dedicate three hours a

day to security matters. They also called for a cleanup of the police force, a revamping of the process for denouncing crimes to make it reliable and, lastly, a reform of criminal investigation offices and courts. “The march drew a sharp line, and showed the only way to defend citizens was with institutions,” recalls a businessman who presides over a leading civic group.<sup>32</sup>

One month after the march, the Crime Stoplight (Semáforo Delictivo) was launched. It is a civic intervention to monitor the trends in murder, carjacking, thefts in homes and businesses, and family violence in each municipality of greater Monterrey, including Monterrey itself, which is the state capital.

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

The Consejo Cívico is a hybrid organization, a non-partisan association that brings together business chambers, professional associations, civic and charity organizations, neighborhood organizations, human rights groups, and sports clubs.

Based on the Stoplight, the Consejo Cívico sets goals for reducing crime. “We put pressure on municipal and state authorities so they meet the goals, and we make specific assessments each month,” says Sandrina Molinard, manager of government evaluation with the Consejo.<sup>35</sup>

Following meetings with the state government, agreement was reached on a five-point pact to regain security by reforming the police, implementing the federal judicial reform, investing in social programs, and promoting a civic culture and respect for the law.

Nuevo León set out to create a new police force, Fuerza Civil, beginning in late 2010. Two urgent needs were to recruit quickly a cadre of new agents and give them proper training in a short time.

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“We established a consortium with businesses to carry out the vetting and recruiting of clean entry-level police,” says a Nuevo León security official.<sup>37</sup>

Five universities offered their talent to prepare training programs for the police. The goal was to recruit and train 1,900 police during 2011. Despite the offer of a high salary of more than U.S. \$1,000 per month—nearly double the entry level elsewhere in Mexico—plus a benefit package including housing, insurance, and a pension, few people applied for the dangerous job of patrolling Monterrey which, at the time, was experiencing its most violent year ever.

As Fuerza Civil was being formed, the state government led an effort to establish coordination between all agencies involved in security. A coordinating group was formed that included the chiefs of the Nuevo León contingents of the army and navy, the state police, attorney general's office, state intelligence agency,

and mayors of the townships with the highest crime rates.

An outgrowth of this dialogue was that the private sector overcame its distrust of government to such a degree that businesses also committed to investments in urban programs aimed at rebuilding the social fabric such as building parks, supporting training for youth, and cultural activities, backing addiction prevention programs and strengthening a culture of law and order.

An important tactic of the Consejo Cívico has been to create instruments that measure progress in combating crime.

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Cemex rose to this challenge by backing the creation and operation of a nonprofit organization that assembled an innovative technology platform to help fight crime and rebuild a sense of community relying totally on citizen reporting.

The Center for Citizen Integration (CIC in its Spanish acronym) web platform seeks to bring together the collective knowledge of citizens and put it to use for improving Monterrey's communities.

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

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