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The Mexican War on Women

DISSERTATION

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by

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DEDICATION

Canción Sin Miedo

Por todas las compas marchando en Reforma,
Por todas las morras peleando en Sonora,
Por las Comandantas luchando por Chiapas,
Por todas las madres buscando en Tijuana,
Cantamos sin miedo,
Pedimos Justicia,
Gritamos por cada desaparecida,
Que retumbe fuerte,
Las Queremos Vivas!

Vivir Quintana

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Mexican War on Women

By

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This research project explores how a militarized national security strategy to fight the war on drugs is transnationalized from the U.S. to Mexico and how it affects women's security in Mexico. I decided to construct three different causal graphs to clarify this research's path. The first model connects the USA's militarist war on drugs to the current strategy utilized by the Mexican government to combat drug trafficking. This model helps expose the transnational nature of this policy and provides background information on why and how militarization has become the preferred strategy in Latin America to combat drug trafficking. The second model helps trace how the militarized policy leads to increased violence against women committed by the military, DTOs and the symbiotic relationship and interaction between both the military and DTOs. The third model shows how the government's narrative of a successful militaristic drug war leads to an inadequate response to increased violence against women that only perpetuates the problem.

I trace how the current militarized policy to combat the drug trade in Mexico has led to a symbiotic relationship between the military and DTOs. Each side's strategies and processes lead

to an increase in physical and psychological non-domestic violence towards women. I argue that the need to create a narrative regarding the successes of the military strategy in combating DTOs leads the government to cover up or deny the increase of violence against women due to the current strategy.

I use process tracing methodology to establish a detailed timeline to establish temporal precedence to reveal how the Mexican government enacts the current militarist drug war policy in Mexico. I also use process tracing methodology to clarify and trace how the militarist war on drugs affects women's security in a variety of ways and expose the mechanisms behind the rise of violence against women. My study focuses on reports that compile government data, non-governmental institutions working on violence against women and academic research to link increasing contact points between women and the military and violence perpetrated by the military against women. My study also includes open-ended interviews to gain further leverage for my analysis, triangulate my results and provide first-hand accounts by leaders on the subject of violence against women.

Introduction

1.1 The Problem

This dissertation asks whether and if so, how, U.S. and Mexican strategies to fight the war on drugs affect Mexican women's security. It argues that strategies to fight the war on drugs have become both transnationalized[1] and militarized,[2] increasing violence and insecurity for women in Mexico. The war on drugs relies on the military to perform public policing duties and places troops on the ground to fight drug cartels and manufacturers at the source of production. This militaristic strategy has become the standard approach to policing drug traffickers across Latin America. As the administrator of the DEA under President Ronald Reagan, John C. Lawn, stated during a budget meeting to Congress: "It is important to also address the worldwide nature of this problem. Controlling drugs within the source country, or as close to the source as possible, is the most effective approach to reducing the vast majority of illegal drugs in this country" (Lawn 1984, 6). At the same time, the US's certification process (which grades countries based on their collaboration to fight the war on drugs) can punish any country that does not cooperate with the US strategy against drugs.

[1] I use the term transnational to explain the transference of a military policy from one country to another, rather than "international," which only describes the involvement of more than one nation.

[2] I use the term militarized or militarization as an extension of the definition of militarism defined by Cynthia Enloe: "Militarism refers to a complex package of ideas that all together foster military values in both military and civilian affairs. Militarism justifies military priorities and military influences in cultural, economic and political affairs" (Enloe 2016, 26). Proponents of these ideas also classify men as natural protectors and insinuate that women should be grateful for men's protection (Enloe 2016, 26). This mindset frames having an enemy as normal in human affairs (Enloe 2016, 26). Arturo Sotomayor provides another useful definition of militarization, which he describes as the "adoption and use of military models, methods, concepts, doctrines, procedures, and personnel in police activities, thus giving a military character to public safety (and public space) questions. Militarization is not restricted to policing and may include judiciary matters, natural-disaster rescue missions, and public-health issues. To some extent, militarization is part of a broader political process." These definitions can be taken together to trace the concept of militarization in Mexico specifically. In the Mexican context, the government seeks to justify its value as a protector by promoting a national security project that naturalizes the idea of having an enemy (the cartels). Elected officials in Mexico have become reliant on the military for tasks the military is neither trained for nor capable of doing, and as a result are overstretching and weakening the military as an institution.

This dissertation begins by analyzing the construction of the US's militarized strategy to policing the war on drugs, and their efforts to use economic measures to pressure other countries to apply similar military strategies. After a period of economic difficulty, the Mexican government strengthened its ties with the US in the 1980s and subsequently began to militarize drug enforcement. As a result, Mexico also militarized its drug enforcement strategy. I critically analyze the government's responses to the increasing rates of violence against women associated with the militarized approach to the war on drugs and examine whether these responses perpetuate the violence or address women's security issues. I argue that drug militarization policies have increased violence against women both directly and indirectly. This includes violence against women who are directly in military custody, drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) fragmentation & diversification into sex/human trafficking, government campaigns that frame violence against women as a domestic (private) issue and reallocation of resources from social welfare to military spending.

My dissertation focuses on the period from 2006 to 2020, which encompasses an acceleration of militarization to fight the war on drugs in Mexico. I trace the ways the current militarized policy to combat the drug trade in Mexico has led to a symbiotic relationship between the military and DTOs. Each side's strategies and processes lead to an increase in physical and psychological non-domestic violence towards women. Finally, I argue that the government has prioritized the creation of a narrative which portrays the military strategy in combating DTOs as successful, which leads officials to cover up or deny the increasing violence against women that occurs as a result of the current strategy.

Mexico has increasingly militarized its war on drugs since the late 1980s. In 2006, President Felipe Calderón formalized this transition by declaring war on the Mexican cartels and

placing the country's public security in the military's hands. Handing over public security tasks to the military and the intensification of the war on drugs in Mexico has triggered several unintended consequences, ranging from the diversification and fragmentation of DTOs to militarized public security, severely impacting women's lives in Mexico. The Mexican government's responses to violence against women has exacerbated the problem; the government has defunded shelters for battered women and promoted an ad campaign that constructs violence against women as a private matter that should be addressed at home (Carretto 2019).

Research has found that although recent militarization strategies have led to some arrests, they've also fueled the drug trade and the collateral violence associated with it. Gabriela Calderón et al. highlight the fact that "the sharp increase in homicide rates coincides approximately with the onset of President Felipe Calderón's administration and his militarized campaign to debilitate DTOs" (Calderón et al. 2015, 1456). This campaign was unique as it accelerated the use of the military in Mexico's public security and placed the military in a direct confrontation with all major DTO's. The authors highlight how Calderón's strategy successfully eliminated DTOs' leadership "from 2006 to 2012, capturing or killing 25 capos and 160 lieutenants. Still, the cost was an escalation by almost 300 percent of drug-related violence" (Calderón et al. 2015, 1480). According to Data Cívica, the same strategy that increases homicide rates is also responsible for increasing public violence against women. The report finds that since 2009, when the militarized national security strategy against drug trafficking began, homicides against women in the public sphere have overtaken those in the home. The rate of these public homicides continues to rise, along with homicides of women in the private sphere (Data Cívica 2020, 19).

Studies found that much of the violence occurs at the hands of the government forces, rather than DTOs; one report by the National Committee for Human Rights found that between 2006 and 2017, Mexico's armed forces were responsible for as many as 68.7% of human rights violations, including torture, forced disappearances, and extrajudicial executions (Equis 2019, 24). An Enpol survey found that women taken into custody by Mexico's navy marines were raped in 41% of cases, compared to 5% of men who were raped under the navy's custody. For those detained by the army, 21% of women reported being raped compared to 5% of men (Equis 2019, 29). This violence occurs alongside growing human trafficking networks operated by DTOs. Ioan Grillo explores how drug traffickers are "involved in human trafficking along with many links on the chain. Cartels control most of Mexico's smuggling networks by deploying victims, while they also take money from pimps and brothels operating in their territories" (Grillo 2020). After working with hundreds of sex trafficking victims in Mexico, Ulloa concludes that DTOs were involved in 70% of cases (Grillo 2020). One of the DTO's that is heavily involved in human trafficking in Mexico is the Zetas cartel that was itself formed by corrupt members of the armed forces and police. In this sense, the militarization strategy jeopardizes women's safety by triggering the diversification of DTOs into human trafficking, the corruption of the armed forces, and the intensification of the drug war. The diversification into more human extractive businesses is a reaction by the DTOs to the current militarized strategy which fragmented the cartels and made subnational control a vital strategy. This means that cartels became fiercely involved in all sectors of the economy and life in the territories they control and smaller territories became far more important.

1.2 Relevant Literatures: Drug Trafficking, Violence Against Women and Statistics, Security and Silencing

This dissertation analyzes three bodies of literature, the first on drug trafficking, the second on the relationship between militarism and violence against women and the third on issues related to statistics, security and silencing of women's experiences. The literature on drug trafficking includes prominent names such as Peter Andreas and Richard Friman, who explore the historical connection between war and drugs. They note that the US has always used a source model[3] to fight the drug war in other countries, so militarization is not a new strategy component. Andreas argues that what is unique about the militarized approach to the present war on drugs is an increase in Latin American military's involvement since the 1980s in places like Mexico. Further analysis shows that the participation of the Mexican army in public security has increased since the beginning of the formalized war on drugs during Felipe Calderón's presidency. In the last year, the military's role has expanded into customs. However, the impact of the military's involvement in combatting drug trafficking on women's security is not mentioned in this literature. Andreas and Friman discuss prohibitionist regimes and how they require enforcement and regulation by the government. Both authors mention a symbiotic relationship between smugglers and the government, who grow more robust and organized in response to their counterpart's efforts to enforce or benefit from the prohibitionist regime. The literature does not go far enough into analyzing how the prohibitionist regime has led to a new wave of militarization that marginalizes and facilitates violence against women.

The second body of literature analyzed is a compilation of feminist authors who analyze the relationship between violence against women and militarism. These include Spike Peterson, Jacqui True, Cynthia Enloe, Catia Confortini, Brooke Ackerly, and Maria Stern. These sources analyze the ways inequality leads to violence against women and how the military as an

[3] A source model refers to fighting the war on drugs at the origin of production, rather than implementing a strategy to curb the demand for drugs.

institution excludes women. These authors introduce feminist discourse on security and discuss the sources of inequality and violence that produce insecurity for women. Taking insights from both literatures aids analysis of the militarization of the Mexican war on drugs, and the effects of this policy on women's security. Although socioeconomic conditions have improved for women in Mexico, violence against them persists. The feminist literature criticizes the military's role in perpetuating violence against women, I build on this existing literature by examining the government's efforts to manipulate statistics to justify militarization, frame itself as victorious, and erase evidence of gendered violence. The third body of literature analyzed looks at silencing as a tool to disempower and dominate others. This section includes authors such as Marsha Houston, Cheris Kramarae and Kamal Sadiq as well as feminist scholars like Jacqui True, Maria Stein and Brooke Ackelry and scholars on prohibitionist regimes like John Lawn and Peter Andreas. All these scholars taken together help thread the needle regarding how silence is used as a tool of domination within prohibitionist regimes with military strategies that affect women's security. The literature shows how different forms of silencing can be utilized to present the military strategy to combat drug trafficking as successful while suppressing data that shows the negative consequences of this strategy.

I examine the militarization of Mexico by analyzing state efforts to render the violence experienced by women invisible, which in turn becomes a new form of violence against women. I also trace the transnational nature of the war on drugs, which has led to militarized responses in several countries outside of Mexico and show the generalizability of the prohibitionist regime and the issues tied to its militarized strategy. Few address the drug war policy in Latin America

as a form of violence against women or critically analyze governments' responses to said violence.[4]

Taken together, however, the literature reviewed exposes how a prohibitionist regime created by the US is transnationalized to other states using the drug certification process as leverage. The scholarship reveals the mechanics underlying the militarized policy which directly and indirectly provoke violence against women. An interpretivist approach provides a framework to critically analyze the narrative of success justifying a military response to the war on drugs and reveals how statistics cover up or mask the relationship between drug policies and an increase in violence against women. As Jaqueline Urla notes, the interpretivist approach allows one to look beyond the simple understanding that statistics reflect reality and look at the construction and manipulation of statistics as a form of violence. The government's response to violence against women reinforces the narrative of the militarist policy's victory in the war on drugs. Statistics and programs purportedly designed to tackle violence against women have been transformed into mechanisms that perpetuate abuse and hide the violence they experience.

[4] See the following texts: H. R. Agnew, (2015). "Reframing Femicide: Making Room for the Balloon Effect of Drug War Violence in Studying Female Homicides in Mexico and Central America," in *Territory, politics, governance*, *3*(4): 428-445. Heather Agnew discusses the rise of violence against women due to the militarization of the drug war, I take this literature further by looking at the broader implication of the policy and how it has continued to affect women.
Jennifer Piscopo, "State Capacity, Criminal Justice, and Political Rights. Rethinking Violence against Women in Politics," *SciELO* 23, no. 2 (2016), http://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?pid=S1665-20372016000200437&script=sci_arttext&tlng=en. Piscopo also links the drug war to violence against women in politics but misses the broader implications for women's security due to the strategies undertaken to fight the war on drugs.
Gustavo Fondevila, Ricardo Massa, and Rodrigo Meneses-Reyes, "War on Drugs, War on Women: Visualizing Female Homicide in Mexico," *Women & Criminal Justice* 30, no. 2 (2020/03/03 2020), https://doi.org/10.1080/08974454.2019.1653812, https://doi.org/10.1080/08974454.2019.1653812. Fondevilla, Massa and Meneses-Reyes ran a statistical analysis which "confirms that, from the declaration of the War on Drugs in 2006, the female population began to experience increasing levels of homicidal victimization, particularly by firearms. Moreover, the data presented indicate that this female population's vulnerability became more pronounced during the period of 2007–2010 because proportionally the number of women murdered with firearms increased in greater measure than for the case of men." (Fondevilla, Massa and Meneses-Reyes 2020, 153).

The escalation of the war on drugs increases pressure on the cartels, which leads to fragmentation and diversification of their illicit business. Drug traffickers diversify into several illegal activities, including commercializing women's bodies by entering the human trafficking business. At the same time, the military engages in abuses against women, and the government's response to violence against women perpetuates the problem, which has been worsening since the intensification of the drug war in 2006. The government's response has been to privatize violence against women by placing the violence as well as the solution for the violence at home. As a result, the war on drugs has become a war on women, one in which the government silences their experiences and in turn propagates and normalizes their victimization.

1.3 Methodology

Process Tracing and critique

Categorizing sources of violence against women is necessary to eliminate incidents unrelated to the militarist national security policy, and therefore analyze the impact of this policy on women's security. I place the remaining cases of violence against women into two categories: incidents which resulted from increased contact with the Mexican military and navy due to their role as providers of public security, and incidents resulting from the diversification of DTOs into human trafficking and an overall increase of public violence. The goal of this methodology is to analyze direct forms of physical and psychological non-domestic violence, paying special attention to sexual violence and physical torture committed against women in police and military custody. To do this, I examine the transnationalization of the current militarist strategy, focusing on the evolution of militarized public security in Mexico. I also analyze the development of a symbiotic relationship between the military and DTOs, and explore how this has exacerbated violence against women. The symbiotic relationship between DTOs and the military used to fight them is

based on the idea that as either actor grows in power and strength so will the other actor in response. In a sense the security forces and cartels are entangled into an arms race which strengthens each side as they attempt to catch up with each other's fire power and tactics. If the DTOs grow in strength, the government's response is to strengthen the military to combat them, which only increases the profits derived from illicit trade and forces DTOs to better arm and train their members in response. This leads to an inescapable relationship between the DTOs and the military which by strengthening themselves force the other side to catch up to be able to achieve their goals. It becomes an arms race in which either side is trying to catch up to the other in order to continue operating.

I argue that the militarist drug war policy promoted by the US and enacted by Mexico is positively related to higher levels of violence against women. The violence against women comes in many forms, including human rights abuse during detention, homicide, forced disappearances, sexual exploitation, and the government's denial about the prevalence of these issues. I use process tracing methodology[5] to create a detailed timeline and establish temporal precedence, which reveals how the Mexican government enacts the current militarist drug war policy in Mexico. I also use process tracing methodology to clarify and trace the ways the militarist war on drugs affects women's security and expose the mechanisms behind the rise of violence against women. The process tracing is critical to an interpretive critique as it allows one to see beyond what the official measurements and statistics say and see what is being made invisible.

[5] See Ricks, Jacob I., and Amy H. Liu. "Process-Tracing Research Designs: A Practical Guide." [In English]. *PS, political science & politics* 51, no. 4 (2018): 842-46. As explained by Jacob Ricks and Amy Liu, I use parts of process tracing methodology to explore the chain of events by which the initial case conditions are translated into case outcomes. This methodology is chosen as it can help thread out complicated relationships between militarization and violence against women.

The military's involvement in the drug war has also led to corruption at the highest levels of command, which perpetuates impunity and denies justice by protecting men involved in drug trafficking.[6] The strategy to eliminate drug kingpins "sparks change—consolidation or fragmentation, succession struggles, and new competition—leading to instability among the groups and continuing violence" (Beittel 2013). This fragmentation contributes to higher levels of violence against women as DTOs seek to establish subnational control to diversify into extractivist industries of human wealth (Trejo and Ley 2020). Increased competition between the State and established and newly formed cartels has pressured the groups to diversify their DTOs by expanding into other illicit ventures, namely human trafficking, to make up for lost profits. Mexican cartels force human traffickers to pay a tax to operate in a given region or in some cases cartels have taken over operations completely. The expansion of cartels into human trafficking is a major catalyst for the increased victimization of women, as traffickers now have access to the resources of established DTOs.

The failure of the Mexican state to create a comprehensive legal framework to combat trafficking fuels this trend; penalties for traffickers are low, and the burden of proof is higher for human trafficking than it is for drug trafficking, making this a natural choice for cartels. The government's response to this trend is to deny that it exists, further victimizing women by ignoring the increasing rates of violence against them. The reasoning behind this response is that the government has become over-reliant on the military which is both directly and indirectly responsible for the increase of violence against women. Exposing issues with the military or the militarized strategy to fight the war on drugs then becomes a critique of the government itself as

[6] Levels of corruption in the military were recently brought to light again, this time by the arrest of general Cienfuegos in LAX for collaborating with the Beltran Leyva cartel. His subsequent release due to the pressure from Mexico to protect the image of the military shows how there is a growing dependence on the military that necessitates ignoring its corruption and inefficiency.

it continues to reinforce the idea that the military is the solution for Mexico's security issues. The government of President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO) introduced a new campaign in 2020 to battle violence against women; however, the campaign constructs violence against women as a domestic issue that should be addressed within the family. Some parts of the campaign even portray women as the aggressor. The government's reallocation of resources from social welfare to the military has further marginalized women by defunding shelters for battered women (Carretto 2019).

I constructed three causal graphs to illustrate this research's pathways. The first model connects the USA's militarist war on drugs to the current strategy utilized by the Mexican government to combat drug trafficking. This model demonstrates the transnational nature of this policy and provides background information on why and how militarization has become the preferred strategy to combat drug trafficking in Latin America. The second model traces how the militarized policy has increased violence against women. This model helps build on existing feminist theories pointing to the negative effects of militarization on women. It also helps dispel the alternative explanation of economics as being the most important indicator for violence against women in Mexico. The third model shows how the government's narrative of a successful militaristic drug war leads to an inadequate response to increased violence against women, which exacerbates the problem. This model helps build on existing feminist theories on militarization and women's security by showing how the active neglect of the Mexican government is a form of violence itself that helps perpetuate violence against women.

I analyze how these government responses to violence against women privatize violence against women, rendering it invisible. This strategy allows for the exploration of different forms of violence, including physical and psychological torture, human trafficking, and homicides. I

also focus on the types of militarization that become sources of different kinds of violence, which necessitates the exclusion of some cases of violence against women that cannot be linked to this policy.

1.3.1 Data Sources: Primary Data

To investigate these questions, I examined the following sources. My study includes semi-structured interviews providing first-hand accounts by leaders on the subject of violence against women. Unfortunately, this project was conducted during COVID-19, so there were limitations to the types and number of interviews I could conduct. I obtained interviews with the heads of NGOs working on violence against women, such as REDIM, Red Nacional de Refugios, Equis, and Data Cívica. These organizations are all part of a network of NGOs that produce shadow reports on violence against women using government data, investigators from CIDE, and their own hands-on experience with survivors to expose the violence experienced by women in Mexico. Members of these organizations represent a wide range of specialists who shed light on the violence against women due to the war on drugs. For example, REDIM focuses on children's rights in Mexico and exposes the rise of disappearances among girls aged 12 to 17 in particular. Red Nacional de Refugio's focuses on shelters for survivors of violence, and Equis, Intersecta, and Data Cívica focus primarily on violence against women and the creation of reports on violence which expose the government's data and policy limitations. I also did interviews with members of the Mexican Commission for the defense and promotion of human rights, who have hands-on experience working with survivors of violence caused by the militarization of Mexico, and an interview with the president of the Mexican branch of Amnesty International, which leads investigations into violence against women committed by the security forces. I also met with researchers working at Intersecta, which focuses on militarization and violence against women.

I also interviewed academics and researchers affiliated with institutions like the *Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas* (CIDE) and the *Universidad Autónoma de México* (UNAM), who are experts in violence against women and militarization in Mexico. Several of these academics, such as Rita Canto, work directly with families of women who have disappeared, and are at the forefront of the feminist movement in Mexico. CIDE is the university that collaborates with Equis, Intersecta, and Data Cívica. It is the academic home for experts on militarization and violence against women, such as Laura Atuesta. Some of my interview requests were rejected, including those from organizations such as Data Cívica, *Equis Justicia para las Mujeres*, *Centro Prodh*, *Derecho Infancia*, and several experts. These organizations and researchers simply did not respond to my interview requests. These interviews would have given me further insight into the diversification of DTOs into human trafficking and more insights regarding violence against women in Mexico. Fortunately, the interviews collected provided experts that covered the angles and experience of those who were not able to be interviewed. The ten interviews collected from experts in the subject matter provide valuable firsthand insights that confirm and go beyond the information found in the secondary literature and data regarding violence against women in Mexico. These interviews led me into discovering new problems and questions that were not present in the secondary literature and that helped me come up with new lines of investigation. I was able to uncover specific solutions that are built on the success of many of these organizations due to the hands-on experience of the interviewees.

My dissertation also focuses on triangulating reports on violence against women from different sources to locate inconsistencies and problems with the data or research. It also traces the relationship between increasing contact points between women and the military and the increase of violence perpetrated by the military against women directly and indirectly.

Specifically, I use data from the organism in charge of National Statistics in Mexico (INEGI), a conglomeration of national and international non-profits working with the survivors of human rights abuses, and reports and interviews with researchers from the *Centro de Investigacion y Docencia Económicas* (Research and Academic Centre for Economics—CIDE) and the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico (UNAM). Of particular importance is a report published by an organization called Equis, which details the work of 87 non-profit organizations in 23 states under the banner of "*Red Nacional de Organismos Civiles de Derechos Humanos*" (National Network of NGOs for Human Rights). The report also includes international organizations, spanning from the *Organizacion Mundial Contra la Tortura* (Global Organization Against Torture) and the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims. The Equis report includes data triangulation from governmental statistics and surveys like the *Encuesta Nacional de Poblacion Privada de la Libertad* (National Survey for Imprisoned Populations). This report highlights the trends of sexual violence and physical torture committed against women under police or military custody.

I also utilize Amnesty International reports focusing on violence against women in Mexico at the hands of the police and the military. The reports discuss intimidation techniques used by Mexico's security forces to prevent women from speaking about the violence they have experienced. Another important resource is the CIDE-PPD database, which compiles leaked government data, organized and verified by CIDE researchers. The data proves that the statistics made public by the Calderón administration were edited and censored to hide the number of casualties caused by the militarized war on drugs during his years in power. Data from the SEMAR (marines) and the SEDENA (army) is also analyzed to expose deficiencies in data-collection regarding the drug war policy. This data also reveals how the current drug war strategy

has caused higher levels of violence; when their reported numbers are contrasted with the CIDE-PPD database. The data also shows the lack of coordination with police forces, low rates of detentions, and a high rate of casualties emerging from the confrontations between the military and civilians or cartels. All these factors taken together show a lack of judicial support for the militaries' actions.

1.3.2. Why Mexico?

Violence against women in Mexico has been steadily rising as a result of a war on drugs that has placed the Mexican military in a position to provide public security. The militarized strategy has contributed to the rise in violence that currently sees ten women a day being murdered in Mexico (Intersecta 2020). For each confrontation involving the military, the number of women murdered three months after the confrontations increased by an average of 2.12%. If the marines conducted a confrontation three months later the murder rate for women would increase by 12.5% (Intersecta 2020). Mexico is not the only country facing this issue, but it does have a strong group of civilian organizations that have helped collect a lot of data regarding violence against women. These organizations are invaluable as they allow for a deeper analysis of governmental data on violence against women and helps pinpoint the areas in which the government is manipulating data or research on the subject. Taken together the increased use of the military to fight the drug war in particular during and after president Calderon presents a perfect opportunity to trace its effects on women's security.

To analyze forms of violence resulting from the interactions between the military and DTOs, I first establish how the militarized strategy was adopted by ex-President Felipe Calderón, leading to the fragmentation and diversification of DTOs into human trafficking and overall higher levels of public violence. For this section, I focus on homicides committed against women

in public to represent a reliable measure of the higher levels of public violence experienced by women. I also focus on human trafficking as another form of indirect violence caused by militarization against women. It is difficult to find reliable data on human trafficking in Mexico due to the nature of the crime[7] and the government's disinterest in accurately measuring violence against women. I argue that the failure to measure statistics about violence against women becomes a separate type of violence, as it denies women's experiences, perpetuates the problem, and allows the government to avoid responsibility for the violence. To establish the connection between DTOs and human trafficking, I rely on reports from NGOs, legal charges of human trafficking against individual cartel leaders, and experts who write on human trafficking in Mexico. Reports which compile government data, NGOs working on violence against women, and academic research have all found evidence of an increase in public violence against women. For example, reports published by Data Cívica in collaboration with researchers from CIDE use governmental data to analyze the overall trends of femicide in Mexico and highlight weaknesses in data collection by the government.

This study analyzes how the government's response perpetuates violence against women by privatizing, ignoring, or disqualifying the issue. To establish this last point, I will use an interpretivist critical lens to analyze how Mexican policy makers ignore the impact of their current approach to combatting DTOs on women's security. I then review the Mexican government's use of statistics to "measure" violence against women, and the ways these statistics are manipulated to obscure and normalize the violence against women resulting from the war on drugs. For example, the government stopped measuring incidents of violence caused by the military's involvement in policing the drug trade. The Mexican government uses similar

[7] human trafficking is difficult to prosecute and many times is not reported because of fear or familiar connections with the perpetrator

strategies of obfuscation when it comes to terminology; for example, there is no federal definition of femicide, which is defined and prosecuted differently in each state. I critique the government's campaign to combat violence against women in Mexico, which presents violence against women as a domestic issue, beyond the domain of the government. The campaign's slogan is “violence can be avoided by counting to ten,” according to this campaign violence by men and women can be controlled inside the home by simply counting to ten to let the anger pass away as if abuse of women would be solved by individual emotional control. Finally, I analyze multidimensional measures of poverty for Mexico, to argue that rising violence against women in Mexico is not the result of worsening socioeconomic factors.

1.4 Map of the Thesis

This dissertation proceeds with an examination of the methodology of the entire dissertation. The dissertation categorizes violence against women by perpetrator, in order to eliminate cases unrelated to the militarization of the drug war and identify incidents related to the military and interactions between the military and DTOs. The **second chapter** reviews a) feminist literature concerning militarization and violence against women, b) the literature on drug trafficking, which discusses prohibitionist regimes and strategies fueling the drug war, and c) literature that focuses on processes of invisibility and its effects on women. I will expose the limitations of these three kinds of literature, combining insights on prohibitionist regimes, invisibility and militarization’s effects on women to reveal the understudied forms of violence against women resulting from militarist drug war policies. Most importantly, I note the importance of bridging these three kinds of literature to uncover how the militarist drug war fuels violence against women in Mexico and how the government's response perpetuates the problem.

The **third chapter** discusses the background of transnational militarization and, more specifically, the Mexican government's adoption of militarization to police the illicit drug trade. This chapter also focuses on the growth of militarization under Calderón's successors. The **fourth chapter** analyzes how forms of direct violence have caused an increase in interactions between women and military forces, which has led to higher rates of human rights abuses against women.

The **fifth chapter** narrates the way violence against women is produced by militaristic strategies and their interaction with DTOs, which leads to the diversification of DTOs into human trafficking and overall higher levels of public violence. The **sixth chapter** provides a critique of the government's measurement of violence and how, subsequently, the Mexican government addresses those results by minimizing the crimes against women. The act of mismeasurement produces a narrative that supports the alleged victories of the government's approach to the war on drugs while erasing its consequences. In Mexico, there is no single definition of femicide or established methodology to track it; this masks the experiences of women, worsening the problem and adding a further layer of victimization. It denies women their lived experiences and ensures that injustices regarding violence against women are widespread and normalized. The **conclusion** includes policy recommendations and examines the implications of these issues beyond Mexico.

I began this project with a simple question, how has the war on drugs affected women in Mexico? I'm originally from Mexico City and I kept hearing about a variety of troubling cases regarding women and violence from friends and family. I saw that there were statistics that showed how men had been overrepresented as homicide victims, but little mention about the experience of women. I started doing exploratory research and found that underage girls in

Mexico were being disappeared at disproportionate rates. This led me to further investigate the phenomenon and I started to slowly uncover how the current strategy to combat the war on drugs was affecting women. The realization that the government was equally implicated for violence against women led me to ask whether that the strategy designed to combat the war on drugs was also affecting violence against women. Seeking responsibility for a militarized strategy led me to trace the transnationalization of that strategy. Then as I explored the strategies to combat violence against women, I found that the government's response was to privatize violence against women and further perpetuate it. These arguments are interconnected. I explored both feminist and prohibitionist literatures in international relations to. Make sense of the phenomena I was observing in my research, and found that my findings also contribute to further refining these literatures.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

This chapter explores three different literatures on the following issues: 1) the effects of militarization on women's security, 2) the use and misuse of statistical data, and 3) drug prohibitionist regimes. Subsection 2.1 discusses violence against women from a feminist perspective. This section explores the ways in which military policies and their ideology have affected women's security and even excluded them from discussions of what is conceived as security and how to achieve it. The following section 2.2 Statistics, Security and Silencing explores the ways in which indirect forms of violence can cover up women's experiences of violence. This section understands silencing by the government towards violence against women as a form of violence in and of itself. The last section of this chapter 2.3 looks at drug trafficking literature. This section discusses the inherent problems associated with a prohibitionist regime and establishes symbiotic links between smugglers and the security forces trying to stop them.

2.1. Violence against women

In Mexico, women are excluded from national security projects. This exclusion occurs at several levels of the national security project. The conception of security in Mexico does not include forms of security that are important to women. In Mexico, there is no government strategy to tackle the rising rates of violence against women, nor are there any established parameters to measure the success of policies and programs designed to prevent this violence. Even when programs are set to help female survivors of violence, several states refuse to use their budgets to invest in these institutions (Figueroa and Toledo 2020, 28). There is no uniform definition of feminicide like there is for drug trafficking and homicides. Lagarde points to state impunity as a significant element regarding violence against women and criticizes criminal codes in Mexico

for not always including it as a critical element to understanding the murder of a woman as feminicide (Data Cívica 2020, 14). As discussed in interviews with experts on women's security, even the government's budget shows how resources for social welfare and programs that directly support women's security are redirected to the military. Women in Mexico are excluded from defining security or deciding the best approach to achieving security. Women in Mexico are excluded from defining security or deciding what would be the best approach towards achieving security. Historically, therefore, militarized policies imply the exclusion of women in the production of the concept of security and the active search for security, which is the condition of possibility for how a militarized approach to the war on drugs ignores and often jeopardizes the security of women. When women are included in national security projects, they are included without giving them any agency. This type of inclusion means that the image of women is used to justify the national security project, but they are not given a voice or space to redefine security and collaborate in a strategy that provides them with security. In some instances, it was national security projects that used the 'protection of women' to justify their actions, and thus take on strong patriarchal values that further devalue women. Cynthia Enloe helps us understand Mexican state officials' construction of national security, which they claim is centered around the goal of providing "their citizens with protection from potential harm" (Enloe 2016, 27). National security and militarization are understood as inseparable, which limits the conceptualization of security and the policies to achieve security for all citizens. If the military is in charge of defining and providing security, then certain forms of security such as the safety of women when incarcerated or simply food security are not included in military concept of security. Enloe explains how "Militarization includes seeing military solutions as effective, those in government that follow militarization see the world as dangerous best approached with

military tactics" (Enloe 2016, 33). This view has been taken to an extreme by the Mexican government who relies heavily on the military to provide security even when its deployment has caused insecurity for women in Mexico. "It is essential to recognize that military, defense, and security-related institutions have historically been owned by men and occupied by their bodies" (Ackerly, Stern and True 2006, 111). Historically, women in Mexico have also been excluded from defining what security means and should look like, undermining the state's ability to protect all its citizens.

This dissertation project extends Enloe's work on the transnationalization of militarization to the war on drugs. Enloe argues that "Globalization can become militarized globalization whenever militarized ideas about national security come to be seen as central to creating or sustaining international relations," (Enloe 2016, 35) a definition which is exemplified clearly by the US Narcotics Certification system. As Kelly Greenhill and Peter Andreas explain, both the narcotics and human trafficking certification processes assess the extent to which governments cooperate with the United States, rather than determining whether the cooperation effort is successful (Greenhill, Andreas 2010, 116). These certification processes exert strategic and economic pressures on these nations as they can be used to withhold financial assistance, reject loans from world organizations, and cancel preferential trade agreements (Greenhill, Andreas 2010, 88). The programs export a militarized conception of national security that becomes naturalized as the only way to combat illicit business and achieve "security." Greenhill and Andreas' analysis stops short of considering the implications of state-building projects which rely heavily on militarization, which are significant to women who have been historically excluded from security and military policies. Enloe detects a possible solution in the

demilitarization process but urges that security needs to be understood as a broad, multilayered goal that can no longer be imagined as analogous to militarization (Enloe 2016, 149).

Both Jacoby and Enloe argue that women's security is an issue that should be understood from the bottom-up, using women's experiences and knowledge in analyses and policy-making. Jacoby asserts that "women's concept of security should ensue from women's experience of insecurity" (Ackerly, Stern and True 2006, 154). Enloe also discusses the importance of using gender impact analysis, which considers how certain decisions will affect men and women and delves into its effects on specific groups of men and women, their relationships, and inequality (Enloe 2016, 45). Peterson argues that the devaluation of women's experiences contributes to their insecurity, explaining that "gender pervades language and meaning systems, 'ordering' how we think by privileging that which is identified as masculine over what is identified as feminine" (Peterson 2003, 51). She brings to our awareness how "we devalue not only 'women' but also identities, ways of thinking, practices and 'others' who are 'feminized'" (Peterson 2003, 74). The silencing of women's knowledge allows policymakers to ignore the ways militarization marginalizes women, enabling the naturalization of militarized national security strategies which in turn impedes alternative conceptualizations of security which may be more effective. The concept of invisibility is vital for my research, as it contextualizes women's exclusion from security processes in relation to the drug war in Mexico.

As Charlotte Hooper notes, the lack of female practitioners in academic arenas as well as elite political and economic circles leads to the marginalization and making invisible of women's roles and concerns (Hooper 2001). Even when women reach the highest levels in politics, if they continue to behave in gender-stereotypical ways they are simply perceived as "invisible women" because they are acting like men (Hooper 2001). The process of invisibility begins by simply

noting who is involved in decisions about defining security and violence and who is not. Mo Hume notes how "all research on violence is informed by silences" (Hume 2009). Hume details the importance of understanding silencing as more than what is not said, but as an issue that is integral to studies on violence (Hume 2009). As Hume mentions, it is critical to understand "how violence is talked about and the masculinist norms that inform 'violence talk'" (Hume 2009, 83). Historically it is men who have dominated the research on violence in academia, deciding what is to be studied and how violence is to be understood. This historical domination over the meaning of violence has become institutionalized and even today``` we can see this reflected in the ways in which the drug war in Mexico is defined as a problem of national security but violence against women is not.

Interpretivist and feminist literatures explore the troubling relationship between militarization and gender inequality. Feminists argue that women's exclusion from military institutions and decision-making involving security creates greater gender inequality. Cecelia Lynch describes the importance of using an interpretivist lens regarding security, as it seeks to denaturalize militarized understandings and solutions to conflict (Lynch 2014, 29). An interpretivist approach can open critique to the most basic principles that form the understandings of security under militarized settings. This critique shows the availability of other solutions that were obscured by militarized ideologies and understandings of security. Lynch situates feminist literature within the interpretivist tradition to examine its importance and utility. She argues that critical feminist lenses are crucial to analyze and understand issues in ways that expose otherwise normalized issues. The deconstruction of understandings of "security" is an essential step in analyses of the efficacy of security measures and the implications of building policy around a national security concept that excludes certain groups, and can help create policy

solutions which better represent all citizens. There is a class division of women in Mexico, but neither upper nor lower-classes of women are represented by the current national security project, which silences women's experience of violence regardless of socioeconomic class.

Jacqui True and Spike Peterson study the perpetuation of violence against women in a globalized economy. Their work establishes a connection between the globalized economy and an increased vulnerability for women. This globalized economy has increased migration from Central America and Mexico into the United States. More and more young women or women by themselves are making this trip in search of economic opportunities. This makes these migrants an easy target for DTO's that are in search of bodies to consume and sell. On the other side a globalized economy will also ignore the work women do at home and will generally promote service sector jobs that are undervalued to women.

Enloe explains that "movements and institutions that promote capitalism and militarism are those which might appear to be the most likely to adopt patriarchal ideas and practices" (Enloe 2016, 23). Ackerly, Stein, and True support this conclusion, arguing that "the modern state and capitalism removed women both from the public sphere of politics and from the economic sphere of production" (Ackerly, Stern and True 2006, 37). Spike Peterson adds some nuance to this conclusion, acknowledging that women are participating in the workforce in more significant numbers, but the types of jobs they get places them on unequal footing. True also argues that the "gendered public-private sphere division of labor, supported by gender ideologies that hold women responsible for invisible, unpaid work in the private sphere creates inequalities in the household" (True 2012, 30). However, True's focus on the relationship between inequality and violence against women does not apply to my analysis of Mexico, where rates of women's wealth, education, and health have improved alongside gendered violence. Peterson

demonstrates the vulnerabilities created by a globalized economy, which pressures women to migrate alone to other countries. I take Peterson's objectives further by examining how this migration caused by globalization has dire effects for women who have to cross through Mexico alone and are often victims of violence.

Peterson argues that shifts in budget priorities disproportionately affect women. This assertion is evidenced by budgetary changes under the administration of the current president of Mexico Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, which has defunded daycare centers and shelters for battered women. Peterson notes that "globalization processes are both a continuation of capitalist racialized patriarchy and a new conjecture of capitalist racialized patriarchy" (Peterson 2003, 34). She adds that "legacies of masculinism, racism, classism and colonialism deeply shape practices, uneven effects and naturalization of neoliberal globalization" (Peterson 2003, 42). The author uses the concept of "flexibilization" to explain how this has played out for women. She states that flexibilization feminizes the workforce and increases the number of unskilled jobs in which workers are perceived as docile but reliable, available for part-time or temporary work, and willing to accept low wages (Peterson 2003, 131). Women are considered desirable for this type of labor, as their work in the private sphere is acceptable and devalued, making them ideal candidates for part-time or temporary jobs. Peterson argues that women are and have been historically assigned the primary responsibilities for social reproduction, and women are naturally perceived as having flexible time (Peterson 2003, 132). Peterson also points out that non-elite women in the developing world have less access to education, skill-training, credit, and control over resources, and are mostly dependent on states that are continuously decreasing social welfare (Peterson 2003, 43). Therefore, a security strategy that requires the defunding of social welfare will have the unintentional consequence of making women less secure. Militarized

national security projects require an enormous amount of spending. True examines how "Conflict and the security agenda impoverish societies as states make tradeoffs between military spending and spending for social and economic development and Human Rights protection, thus creating the conditions for severe violence against women" (True 2012, 32). Enloe supports this point, commenting that "a lot of governments are spending large slices of their limited resource pies to act out their militarized visions of national security" (Enloe 2016, 181).

Feminists have made great strides in uncovering the ways militarist thinking and policies affect women's lives and security. Simon Dalby, for example, notes the feminist argument that security (in terms of masculinist modes of domination) constructs and promotes patriarchal relations of power that render women insecure precisely because they are women (Dalby 1992). Lynch argues that this feminist perspective "undercuts the state-centric logic of the security discourse" (Lynch 2014, 74). Robert Cox discusses how capitalist institutions exclude women, and promotes the gendered nature of things such as labor and trade (Cox 1996, 203). True, an IPE feminist scholar, supports this point as she explicates that the "gravest violence against women increases as a direct result of armed conflict" (True 2012, 113). The blend of national security and militarization policies inevitably lead to violence against women, as they promote violent, military solutions necessary to uphold public safety, despite evidence proving the opposite. The cure has become as bad as the illness when it comes to Mexico's national security.

An interpretivist lens undermines the militarist logic which portrays the war on drugs as a battle against an enemy. Enemies are fabricated as external factors, separate from the "normal" citizenry. But, in reality, the enemies are regular citizens, often with close ties to people outside of the drug trade. Thus, the state is caught in a war against a large part of its population, which runs counter to its goal of achieving security for all citizens. A military solution to the war on

drugs naturalizes the criminalization and even killing of a large segment of Mexico's population. If the intended result is to achieve security for all citizens, why does the Mexican state not seek other alternatives to achieve security? Why does it not try to legitimize these businesses and turn them into pharmaceutical companies that can be regulated and taxed? Why does the state not ask the people it seeks to secure what security would mean for them? If the only goal of this militaristic strategy is to stop the drug trade, we should also ask if the unintentional consequences of this policy are worth it.

True, Ackerly, and Stein expose by what means violence against women is made invisible. Their research is central to my project as it elucidates how the implementation of statistics or military narratives renders violence against women invisible. True argues that "societies have made violence against women both acceptable in many places, at many times, and invisible" (True 2012, 9). Ackerly, Stein, and True point out that "silence in gender is a determining characteristic of institutions of hegemonic masculinity" (Ackerly, Stein and True 2006, 109). They explain how silencing occurs as they indicate that "individual silencing can lead to collective silence. Burying women's traumas thickens the silence and therefore contributes to the denial of justice" (Ackerly, Stein and True 2006, 144). True records how in Mexico cases of female homicides that involve elements of sexual violence, were also the instances in which levels of impunity were the highest (True 2012, 86).[8]

[8] Catia Confortini describes different types of violence that affect women and argues that structural violence is the basis for other types of violence. However, she argues that it is important not to focus solely on structural violence as it may obscure exclusionary processes which create a silence that cannot be easily captured by structural violence. Confortini is vital to my research, as a focus on the exclusionary strategies of the military and security is crucial understanding their negative impact on women's security. These different kinds of invisibility are connected to violence against women. Confortini also understands structural violence as the basis for other types of violence. Still, this overemphasis on structural violence fails to explain how violence against women in Mexico has risen at the same time as indicators for wealth, health, and education have improved (Confortini, Location 437). Tiina Vaittinen and Catia Cecilia Confortini, "Gender, global health, and violence : feminist perspectives on peace and disease," (2020).

Ackerly, Stein, and True support this view, stating "marginalized viewpoints are especially valuable for seeing the limits of dominant conceptual schemes because they offer a perspective on social reality that is invisible from the perspective of the dominant group" (Ackerly, Stein and True 2006, 79). To make the invisible visible is the first step towards returning a voice and agency to the women. This form of empowerment through voice is why Christine Chin "starts [her] research from the lives of some of the most disempowered women and demonstrates how their lives and work are impacted by national security and the global economy" (Ackerly, Stein and True 2006, 30). A bottom-up approach is necessary to assess the current national security project and uncover its deficiencies.

I draw from this feminist literature to provide a conceptual framework for asking questions. There is not enough focus on the globalization of militarism and its effects on women in the prohibitionist literature. There also needs to be a focus on how American policies to fight the war on drugs, such as the drug certification process, promote a military solution for the war on drugs and have led to further militarization. It is essential to acknowledge the deficiencies emerging from the lack of consolidation between the feminist literature on militarism and the literature on drug trafficking, as they both share insights that reveal the shortcomings and unintentional consequences of the current strategy to combat the war on drugs. Mexico's war on drugs provides valuable examples about the strategies used to spread militarism and justify its consequences, at the expense of women's security.

Tracing the process of militarization in Mexico and the reaction by DTOs uncovers a symbiotic relationship between the military and organized crime that propagates different forms of violence against women. The multidimensional measures of poverty in Mexico show progress since the drug war began. They signal that True's argument doesn't go far enough to consider

ways in which prohibitionist regimes in a globalized capitalist system can produce violence against women, even while inequality and poverty are being addressed. In conclusion, feminist scholars point to critical linkages between militarism and violence. These links need to be included in the prohibitionist literature to understand the effects of this new wave of militarism caused by the war on drugs. I push beyond these literatures and contribute to them by including the work of Latin American scholars on violence and by showing how these concepts work in the Mexican case through semi-formal interviews I have conducted.

2.2. Statistics, Security and Silencing

The issue of silence or creating invisibility is an important theme in this research as it connects government policy to both forms of direct and indirect violence against women. As mentioned in the previous section, Hooper analyses how historically men have dominated the discussion of violence in the academic and political arena (Hooper 2001). This domination has created invisibility regarding women's experiences and definitions of security and violence. Hume has also directly looked at processes of invisibility in El Salvador and the ways in which studies on violence must include invisibility and silencing as part of academic's research into violence (Hume 2009). Jan Jordan in her chapter for the *Handbook on Sexual* violence describes how silencing is a critical component of oppression and notes the association "between the degree to which a society silences its women and the prevalence of rape" (Brown and Walklate 2012, 254). Jordan traces the long history of silencing by patriarchal societies pointing, for example, at how any woman challenging male control during the medieval ages risked being labelled a witch and burned to death (Brown and Walklate 2012). She even points to torture devices used against women such as the scold's bridle that served not only to silence the victim but any other fearing for their own safety (Brown and Walklate 2012).

Spender discusses how women's silences are generally forced upon them and describes violence of women as a "silence of denial" (Spender 1990, 107). Marsha Houston and Cheris Kramarae describe how "silencing is used to isolate people disempowered by their gender, race and class" (Houston and Kramarae, 388). Adam Jarowski describes how "silence is oppressive when it is characteristic of a dominating group, and when the group is not allowed to break its silence by its own choice" (Jarowski 1988). These forms of oppressive silencing are all present in the case of women's violence in Mexico. Bijaya Pokharel, Kathy Hegadoren and Elizabeth Papathanassoglou explore the factors that influence silencing of women who experience intimate partner violence. The authors find that microsystems such as self-blame and concern for family to be the most commonly found, but they point to macrosystem factors such as the normalization of violence as the most powerful determiners of women's silence (Pokharel, Hegadoren and Papathanassoglou 2020). This research allows us to understand how external factors affect internal factors that reproduce silencing of violence experienced by women.

Houston and Kramarae detail how wars are places in which women have little official say and are times when women are told their issues must become secondary (Houston and Kramarae, 393). This goes in hand with many of the feminist critiques presented. The transference of issues that are important to women to a secondary position is key to my research as it informs the way things as violence are conceived and acted upon in ways that exclude women. Silencing works differently in different settings, issues such as the right to vote for women were silenced during World War 1 in the US. In Mexico the issue is the same. Women are in search of security, but their definition of security has become secondary while the militaries definition of security has become the dominant issue. Evelyne Accad describes how "the following are all related in a sexist, racist society: rape, femicide... sexual slavery, harassment, battery and militarization

(Accad 1990). The historical silencing associated with militaries continues to be a problem that generally results in violence against women as well as silencing of their reality. Houston and Kramarae detail "women who write or talk publicly about their lives are courageous since these accounts often counter men's records of women's lives; the accounts and their tellers are considered troublesome or subversive" (Houston and Kramarae, 395). The silencing in a country becomes even more apparent when women sharing their experiences becomes subversive actors simply for sharing their accounts. The current administration in Mexico reflects this situation as women who are critical of the violence they experience are constructed by the government as enemies of the state.

Mexico's militaristic security project perpetuates another form of violence against women: the erasure of their experience through the manipulation of statistics. I argue that in Mexico, the state embarks in a campaign which aims to privatize women's violence and make it invisible. This campaign privatizes violence against women by framing the violence as a domestic issue. This is achieved by strategically choosing to record some statistics while ignoring others and using this murky data to shape narratives about the military's success. Data limitations facilitate violence by making victims of violence invisible, which prevents authorities from addressing root causes of the issue. It also facilitates violence by constructing a false narrative around gendered abuse which frames it as a family issue that can be resolved within the private sector. Ackerly, Stein, and True explain how "Political decisions are made based on data that policy elites choose to collect" (Ackerly, Stein and True 2006, 37). Kamal Sadiq supports this view as he describes how the state collects data on its preferred image of the nation (Sadiq 2005). Maria Mies agrees, arguing that "quantitative research methods are instruments for structuring reality in certain ways" (Ackerly, Stein and True 2006, 37). It is important to explore

how these reconstructions of violence against women through data are an independent form of violence that affects women and that silences and appropriates the violence perpetrated against them.

Greenhill and Andreas explain how statistics can frame a particular narrative or version of events. Although the prohibitionist literature will be discussed further in the following section, it is important to mention how statistics involved in prohibitionist regimes contribute to the invisibility of violence against women. The statistics are used to present a version of reality that excludes the experiences of violence by women under a prohibitionist regime. The authors argue that many statistics are poorly constructed, uncritically accepted, and then widely reproduced because they are assumed to be produced by experts with specialized knowledge (Greenhill and Andreas 2010, 13). They provide examples of instances in which statistics have been manipulated to deliver a narrative of success concerning the drug war, arguing that the publication of numbers of arrests, seizures, or hectares of drugs destroyed provide a politically appealing sense "of doing something" (Greenhill and Andreas 2010, 16). The authors surmise that instead of measuring the number of drugs destroyed, indicators such as cocaine's retail price and purity levels would be better measures of "success" (Greenhill and Andreas 2010, 47). These would be better measures of success as they would directly measure if the war has achieved the goals of curbing drug production or sales. The reality is that currently none of these statistics are used to measure success.

A militaristic national security strategy seeks to justify itself through any means necessary, which creates a major roadblock to transparency. Greenhill and Andreas explain that "Federal law enforcement agencies justify their budgets and articulate effectiveness by parading arrests, seizures and prosecution statistics before Congress" (Greenhill and Andreas 2010, 45).

For example, in 1984 the administrator of the DEA, John C. Lawn, delivered a budget presentation to Congress in which he justifies the need for a larger budget by citing the number of arrests, convictions, and seizures (Lawn 1984, 3). In a separate speech before a Foreign Affairs Committee task force, Lawn admitted that "it is unknown what impact, if any, these seizures may have on cocaine supplies and prices either in Colombia or the United States. Prices in the Southeast U.S. have remained unchanged." (Lawn 1984, 4). The overvaluation of numbers supports the feminist assertion that some forms of knowledge are valued over others. In this case, security institutions construe inadequate statistics which are valued as indicators of security over the qualitative, real-life experiences of those affected by the war on drugs. Greenhill and Andreas explain how statistics can form a particular narrative about the nature, size, and growth of the illicit economy, and provide an implicit credibility through the use of numbers (Greenhill and Andreas 2010, 45).

Jaqueline Urla explains how numbers came to earn such a privileged position in our society as a "higher" manner of understanding ourselves. She traces this trend back to the nineteenth century, when science and statistics first appeared as a way to legitimize the "authority of science to debates on social policy" (Greenhill and Andreas 2010, 19). Quantification became a vital component of the state-building process, as it helped make citizens legible (Greenhill and Andreas 2010, 21). The state needs to know when people are born, where and who they live with in order to better extract taxes and consolidate the state's power. My contention is that quantification is used just as frequently to render citizens invisible, particularly women, who have historically been consigned to the private sphere. Greenhill and Andreas discuss how anchoring effects in the human mind can produce bias. They explain that "during normal decision making, humans anchor on specific values and subsequently adjust to that value

to account for other elements of the circumstance" (Greenhill and Andreas 2010, 28). The issue is that "humans tend to anchor most strongly on the first number to which they are exposed, especially in cases where numbers are shocking and precise" (Greenhill and Andreas 2010, 28). Then, "when information supports a person's preconceived notions, they are less apt to question it. When the opposite is true, the person is adept at dismissing it" (Greenhill and Andreas 2010, 29). The erasure of certain citizens becomes naturalized and reproduced through time and space by both governments and societies. Most importantly the government is thus able to manipulate statistics to create a reality that is convenient for them and that can be easily accepted by most citizens.

The authors note that the statistics about the drug war and human trafficking from government institutions or the UN are "highly problematic yet unchallenged because they serve multiple interests and functions that inhibit more skeptical scrutiny" (Greenhill and Andreas 2010, 35). I argue that one of these interests is to support militarized national security strategies which are exported to countries "fighting" the war on drugs. For example, consider the US State Department's Annual International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, which estimates illicit drug production in several countries. Greenhill and Andreas found no publicly available methodology as well as several inconsistencies and numbers that the authors of the report discarded because they did not "fit" (Greenhill and Andreas 2010, 35). Even more concerning is the United Nations illegal trade estimate, which was found to be an entirely made-up number (Greenhill and Andreas 2010, 35). The authors corroborate that most trafficking statistics created by NGOs and government agencies seek to frame a specific narrative for advocacy and budget justifications, but not serious research (Greenhill and Andreas 2010, 75). These institutions and organizations have a vested interest in continuing to exist more than in solving the issue they

were designed to solve. This is particularly problematic with regard to human trafficking, as several of the defining criteria for trafficking are ambiguous and subject to manipulation (Greenhill and Andreas 2010, 109).

To overcome these issues of statistics and measurement, I use a combination of sources that when triangulated, can expose a better picture of what is happening. By triangulating government statistics, NGO reports on violence against women in Mexico, academic data, and semi-structured interviews I conducted with experts, I can highlight the deficiencies in measurements while gathering more objective data on the sources of violence against women.

2.3. Drug Trafficking

This section develops the context under which militarization is being globally promoted to fight the war on drugs. It also explores the symbiotic relationship established by smugglers and those trying to stop them. This relationship help explain how both smugglers and authorities both develop and grow in power, size and complexity while trying to either protect or profit from a prohibitionist regime. Finally this section helps explain how drug statistics are manipulated to continue a prohibitionist regime that benefits both the smugglers and the authorities trying to stop them.

In his book *Smuggler Nation*, Peter Andreas traces a historical game of cat and mouse in which legal expansions to regulate smuggling in the US result in a larger federal government which in turn professionalizes smugglers and increases corruption overall (Andreas 2014). He also details the transformative impact of the drug war on the criminal justice system in the US. By the 1990s, "drug cases accounted for 44 percent of criminal trials and 50 percent of criminal appeals," and "Drug offenders as a proportion of inmates in federal prisons increased from 25 percent in 1980 to 61 percent in 1993" (Andreas 2014, 287). In his book *Border Games*, Andreas

notes a similar pattern in which higher enforcement at the Mexico–US border makes migrants more reliant on organized crime to cross the border (Andreas 2009, location 3897). He concludes that the current model of border enforcement turns "migrant smuggling into a more expansive, corrupting and profitable business" (Andreas 2009, location 3897). Friman and Andreas argue that one of the basic principles of the US-led drug control effort has been to attack drug smuggling at the source (Friman and Andreas 1999, 154). Andreas criticizes this strategy, explaining that the source-based crackdown of Colombian DTOs not only failed to reduce drug supply but expanded the power and wealth of Mexican DTOs (Andreas 2009, location 3897). He also blames the partial militarization of the border for overwhelming the justice systems of both countries and fueling "greater corruption, violence and deeper integration between legal and illegal cross-border commerce" (Andreas 2009, location 3897).

Mittie Southerland and Garry Potter support these conclusions as they explain that "criminal enterprises adapt their structures and functions to exploit the available opportunities for profit in their particular environmental niche" (Southerland and Potter 1993, 251). All these authors expose how prohibitionist regimes do not prevent smuggling but create more complex networks of trafficking and law enforcement. In a sense it forms a symbiotic relationship in which an arms race is set by both actors seeking to dominate the other. Smugglers adapt as the budgets and powers of enforcement agencies expand, resulting in a symbiotic relationship. Andreas and Friman also criticize the source-based approach of the drug war as it ignores the demand side which drives the drug trade in the first place (Andreas and Friman 1999, 89). The military strategy to combat the war on drugs does not deliver satisfying results—the dramatic and well-publicized arrests of kingpins rarely result in convictions (Beittel 2013, 5). This

strategy also contributes to the long process of fragmentation that continues to splinter Mexico's criminal groups (Beittel 2013, 5).

There is a broad literature addressing the use of militaries to subdue internal violence via counterinsurgency. Authors such as Stathis Kalyvas and Laia Ventura explore the state's use of militaries to combat insurgencies and how this has led to violence against non-combatants (Kalyvas 2012; Ventura 2017). The authors differentiate between selective and indiscriminate violence, but Kalyvas argues that criminal organizations do not fit into these categories as they do not threaten the country's sovereignty (Kalyvas 2012, 19). The authors' claims employ a civil war logic which frames conflicts between the military and DTOs as power struggles in specific regions. However, the differences with the drug war in Mexico are that the DTOs do not seek to rule politically[9] and that the military strategy is imposed by a foreign power. The lines between DTOs and the military are also not drawn as easily as those between an insurgency and the military. The DTOs work closely with certain elements within the government and the security forces to secure their business, so even the relations between the military and the "enemy" are different from those explored by this literature.

The literature on drug trafficking is critical of the United States' source-based strategy and the pressure it imposes on several Latin American countries to follow this strategy. Unfortunately, it devotes little attention to the impacts of this source-based militarized strategy on women's security. For example, in his book *Killer High*, Andreas quantifies the impact of the drug war by referencing the total death rate or rates of violence in Latin American cities (Andreas 2020, 244-250). These analyses of the consequences of militarization tend to focus on men, as death rates and other measures of violence are skewed towards quantifying violence

[9] Guillermo Trejo and Sandra Ley discuss the evolution of DTOs, who seek subnational control. But as Trejo and Ley mention, this is not the same as Kalyvas' civil war groups, who seek complete national control.

against men. Andreas' book focuses on demonstrating the relationship between the creation of the war on drugs and drug consumption. His emphasis on war and the military naturally disregards women, who are excluded from the military. Andreas and Greenhill expose the deficiencies and manipulation of statistics regarding drug and human trafficking. Still, there is a lack of attention to statistical manipulations that silence women's voices and their relationship to military strategy.

By combining the literature on drug trafficking, silencing and feminism this research traces the transnational nature of the military strategy to combat drugs and its effects on woman's security. The war on drugs has become an important policy that affects the lives of most citizens in the Americas. Still, analyses without a feminist approach overlook the ways this militarized strategy excludes, silences, and hurts women. Investigating the impacts of militarization on women in the context of Mexico's war on drugs provides an important contribution to the literature by representing the experiences of millions of women that are directly affected by this policy. It also highlights the mechanisms underlying the transnationalization of militarism and the harmful and silencing effects of Mexico's government campaigns and statistics. The drug trafficking literature highlights the narratives and framing behind drug statistics that allow governments to claim victories in the war on drugs. I take this argument further by examining how these frames and narratives are applied to statistics measuring violence against women caused by the militarized strategy against the war on drugs. This argument uncovers specific definitions and statistical mismeasurements that silence the experiences of women in Mexico related to security. As exposed in the measurement section, the lack of a homogenized definition of femicide leads to its mismeasurement and prevents the deliverance of justice in the courts.

Failing to record or acknowledge violence committed by the military also silences the experience of women who are harmed by the military's role in public security.

In conclusion the feminist literature helps establish how militarization has excluded women from security building projects. It also establishes how a militarized project negatively affects women's security. I extend Enloe's understanding of militarization and its effects on women by applying it to the war on drugs. The literature on silencing establishes how statistics and governmental neglect can be indirect forms of violence against women. Government neglect and making things invisible need to be understood as forms of violence that perpetuate violence and impunity. Finally, the literature on drug trafficking establishes how a prohibitionist regime can establish a symbiotic relationship between smugglers and the authorities trying to stop them. This relationship only promotes the further militarization to combat drug trafficking. I expand this literature by showing how this militarization has had a direct negative impact on women's security.

Chapter 3. How The United States Transnationalized a Militarized Strategy to Fight DTOs

This chapter looks at the origins of the militarized strategy to fight DTOs. It traces how the drug certification process was used by the United States to pressure countries into applying a militarized strategy to fight the war on drugs. The US decided to combat drug trafficking by attacking drug traffickers at the points of production instead of tackling demand at home. The US would further employ this militarization strategy by providing substantial aid packages intended to train and strengthen the military of drug producing and trafficking countries to combat DTOs. In Colombia they would receive Plan Colombia while in Mexico they would receive Plan Merida. Plan Colombia would come first to try and target drug trafficking through a military aid package intended to reinforce and train the military to combat drug trafficking. As the Caribbean drug route used by Colombia in the 1980's was closed due to higher American surveillance and arrests the drug route would transfer to Mexico. This shift in routes would make Mexican cartels more powerful as they became a key piece of the drug trade to the United States. As Mexican cartels grew in power and size the American government decided to mimic Plan Colombia in Mexico. The Mexican plan would be known as plan Mérida and would also seek to reinforce and train the military to fight drug traffickers. Unfortunately, the violence and problems resulting from Plan Colombia were ignored and would only replicate themselves in Mexico.

3.1. Transnationalization of a military strategy

Figure 1

My timeline begins with the transnationalization of the drug war via the USA's Drugs Certification Process, which is used to pressure Latin American countries to cooperate with US policy goals, leading to the militarization of the drug war in Latin America and Mexico specifically. In 2006, the new president of Mexico, Felipe Calderón, declared war against transnational drug traffickers. His strategy included the deployment of several thousand troops and a "kingpin strategy" targeting leaders and important figures from Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs), a strategy that is still in use today. The use of the military for public security functions has triggered an increase in human rights abuses against women in military detention as well as in public. Figure 1 is a model that connects the USA's militarization of the war on drugs to the current strategy utilized by the Mexican government to combat drug trafficking. This model helps expose the transnational nature of this policy and will be

accompanied by background information on why and how the use of the military has become the preferred strategy in Latin America to combat drug trafficking.

The drug certification process was used across Latin America to transnationalize the USA's militarized strategy to combat DTOs. Julie Ayling provides context on the drug certification process and an analysis of its impacts on other countries. She explains that the "listing and certification process has been a critical part of coercive strategies used by the United States to further its drug control policies internationally" (Ayling 2005, 376). The US has coerced drug-producing and drug-transiting states into its militarized war on drugs by threatening non-cooperative states with aid and trade sanctions. Ayling argues that this certification process "emphasized military solutions to the drug problem at the expense of human rights" (Ayling 2005, 376), and exerts the influence of The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) around the world. Today, many of the 11,000 people who work under the DEA are stationed internationally, ensuring US interests in the war on drugs are enforced. There are 80 DEA offices in 58 foreign countries, and several US Embassies have a Narcotics Affairs Section (NAS) which collaborates with the DEA to provide support for counternarcotics programs (Ayling 2005, 376).

The certification process was formed in 1986 under the provisions of the Foreign Assistance Act as a response to domestic fears of drug abuse such as the crack epidemic and illicit trafficking (Ayling 2005, 377). It requires the president to compile an annual list of "major drug-transit and drug-producing countries," (Ayling 2005, 377) which is presented to Congress. The president must then submit an international narcotics control strategy report (INCSR) to the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate. This report includes the countries listed as heavily involved in drug trafficking or drug production and data on the cultivation and manufacturing of drugs in those countries. Most importantly, it must

include information on the "efforts" each of these countries engages in to meet the UN Convention's objectives against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and address drug-related government corruption.

For a country to achieve certification, the president must determine whether the country has “cooperated fully with the United States or has taken adequate steps on its own, to achieve full compliance with the goals and conventions of the U.N. convention” (Ayling 2005, 377). The certification is tied to the UN convention and goals detailed in bilateral narcotics agreements with the US or any relevant multilateral agreement. If a country does not meet the standards of certification but is seen as vital to the national interests of the US, it may receive a “national interest waiver” (Ayling 2005, 377).

The coercive power of the certification process comes from its impact on the amount of bilateral assistance listed countries can receive. If a country makes the annual list of drug-producing countries, the US will provisionally withhold 50% of any bilateral assistance destined to be sent to that country. Countries will receive the funds if they are cleared from the list, but if they do not meet the standards laid out in the process, they will not. The US can also block multilateral development assistance to those countries, from organizations including the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, International Development Association, Inter-American Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, African Development Bank, and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Only full certification or a national interest waiver can rescind the aid sanctions. Further, the US can also cut off any military assistance; as Ayling writes, "this included sales of military equipment, foreign military financing, leasing of defense articles and international military education and training under the Arms Export Control Act 1976" (Ayling 2005, 378). Under the certification process, the US government can also ban

non-food assistance under the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954 and financing by the US Export-Import Bank. Furthermore, the president can "deny preferential tariff treatment, apply additional duties (up to 50% ad valorem) to dutiable and duty-free products, curtail air transit ... and withdraw U.S. customs resources from a country" (Ayling 2005, 378). The consequences of decertification can be devastating for a country. Decertification resulted in a recession in Colombia, which worsened its civil conflict (Ayling 2005, 378). The potentially devastating consequences of decertification made the adoption of a militarized strategy, in accordance with the US's wishes, the standard approach to combat DTOs in Latin America.

Under the certification process, American officials used the volume of drug crops eradicated and the number of drug-related arrests made as measures to judge the efficacy of countries' drug policing and assess their eligibility for certification. In 2003, several amendments were made to the certification process, but as Ayling notes, "the reforms are for the most part cosmetic, designed to ensure that the process is more palatable because it is more nuanced" (Ayling 2005, 382). Dominic Cordova notes how the Clinton administration used the threat of decertification to "facilitate manual and aerial crop eradication, build new U.S. military bases, train and mobilize thousands of security forces, and harmonize domestic criminal penalties under a harshly punitive, U.S. style regime of mandatory minimums" (Corva 2009, 166). Ayling illustrates that there has been no change up to 2005 or even the present to the strategy of conscripting other countries into the drug war, or to the standards by which countries are judged (Ayling 2005, 382).

A 2020 US congressional commission proposed replacing the drug certification process, calling it "increasingly anachronistic" and outdated (Associated Press 2020). The report also stated that "critics also contend that the 'name and shame' approach generates resentment,

undermining the principle of shared responsibility, which recognizes the role of U.S. demand for illicit drugs as well as Latin American supply" (Associated Press 2020). The report further states that classifying certain countries, such as Bolivia, as "failing" has had "little impact on US drug supply" (Associated Press 2020). Two years after this committee's report, the certification process has yet to be revoked.

I use the terms militarized and militarization as an extension of Cynthia Enloe's definition of militarism: "Militarism refers to a complex package of ideas that all together foster military values in both military and civilian affairs. Militarism justifies military priorities and military influences in cultural, economic and political affairs" (Enloe 2016, 26). Militarism frames men as natural protectors to whom women should be grateful, and implies that it is natural to have an enemy in human affairs (Enloe 2016, 26). The Mexican government's current approach to national security embraces this idea, justifying its value as a protector fighting against an enemy, the cartels. Mexico's current policy has elevated the military, which is now expected to fulfill roles it is neither trained for nor capable of doing. Accordingly, the Mexican government has overstretched and weakened the military as an institution. Arturo Sotomayor details the ways in which militarization is much more than the use of the military for public security:

> adoption and use of military models, methods, concepts, doctrines, procedures, and personnel in police activities, thus giving a military character to public safety (and public space) questions. Militarization is not restricted to policing and may include judiciary matters, natural-disaster rescue missions, and public-health issues. To some extent, militarization is part of a broader political process (Sotomayor 2013, 43).

The different elements of militarism identified by Enloe and Sotomayor can be taken together to trace the rise of militarization in Mexico and how it became the preferred strategy to combat the war on drugs.

Figure 1 illustrates how a militarized approach became the norm when dealing with DTOs. Sotomayor traces militarization back to the Nixon administration, which first coined the term "war on drugs" and framed the fight against DTOs as conventional warfare (Sotomayor 2013, 45). In the 1980's president Ronald Reagan imported this policy into Latin America by legislative and executive measures to encourage Latin America to use military intervention against DTOs (Sotomayor 2013, 45). In 1988, president Reagan's Secretary of State George Shultz gave a speech about the war against narcotics, in which he frames drug traffickers as an enemy to be dealt with by military means: "Working together we can win the war against the new pirates of the 20th century, the narcotics traffickers of the world, who threaten us all" (Shultz 1988, 1). Shultz went on to emphasize the importance of mobilizing the military, pointing to Colombia, where this was ongoing (Shultz 1988, 4). He concludes his speech by stating "we must expand our military assistance programs … if the war against the traffickers and their allies is to be won" (Shultz 1988, 4). One measure promoting the use of the military was the 1989 Andean Initiative, which created strong economic incentives in Latin America to involve the armed forces in the fight against DTOs (Sotomayor 2013, 45). The US military provided training, equipment, and diplomatic backing, and militaries in Latin America began to arrest and interrogate civilians and conduct internal surveillance, thus militarizing the fight against DTOs (Sotomayor 2013, 45). The measures to militarize the war on drugs would begin with Colombia, Latin America's premier drug producer. These policies reflect the "source strategy" developed by the prohibitionist literature that shows how the moral and legal responsibility for fighting drug trafficking is placed on the producing countries. This strategy ignores the consumption and addiction in the US as viable strategies to combat DTOs and instead constructs the problem as a military issue.

"Plan Colombia" was the next policy to crystalize the militarized strategy against DTOs and became the format for fighting DTOs in Mexico. The Colombian state was fighting revolutionary movements as well as drug trafficking organizations and, in some cases, revolutionary movements that were also DTOs. The plan was meant to be a six year, eight billion dollar package to help combat DTOs and bring peace to Colombia (Sotomayor 2013, 46), through which the US promoted the use of the military to combat cartels and decrease the drug supply. The policy led to arrests of members of many of the most active cartels but did not affect the price or quantity of cocaine and heroin in the US (Sotomayor 2013, 46). Alexander Main estimates the collateral damage of Plan Colombia was the displacement of 5.7 million Colombians and thousands of extrajudicial killings (Main 2014, 65). However, the US government ignored these losses and the failures of the militarized strategy in Colombia and decided to use it as a model to combat DTOs in Mexico. The feminist literature warns about the effects of militarization, but es Enloe explains how the acceptance of a militarized strategy requires a certain mentality that constructs enemies and promotes the fallacy that military solutions are the only available solutions to combat DTOs.

After the closure of the Caribbean smuggling route which transported drugs from Colombia to the US, Mexico's position in the transnational drug trade became more prominent, and the US looked to export its militarized approach to policing DTOs there. The convergence of US–Mexican counternarcotic policies occurred due to the leverage of the US drug certification process in Mexico. Kate Doyle explains how after the 1982 debt crisis, Mexico began to look for closer political and economic ties with the US as it attempted to restructure its economy (Doyle 1993, 83). Mexico became far more dependent on international loans and leaders, starting with President Miguel de la Madrid and continuing under President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, began

aligning their policies with the US (Doyle 1993, 83). The drug certification process was then used to leverage the emerging economic and political ties between the two countries by making them dependent on the militarization of Mexico's war on drugs.

Plan Colombia demonstrates that militarization was intentionally mixed with development programs to further the US's foreign policy agenda. The plan was originally designed to use European development assistance to help with the Colombian peace process.[10] However, the European Union withdrew from the plan when the US insisted on incorporating military elements, particularly training Colombia's army and police (Corva 2009, 167). Corva argues that the militarization of police forces in Latin America, the presence of US personnel on foreign land, and the mass incarceration of people involved in the drug trade in Latin America all "signal a thickening of the police function against underprivileged racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups" (Corva 2009, 168). Although Corva does not mention women, their liberty and security are increasingly affected by the pressure to incarcerate drug traffickers and signal cooperation to the United States. The certification process directly affects women's security by forcing countries to fight DTOs with their militaries.

Jessica Zarkin and Gustavo Flores-Macías draw on case studies from around Latin America to analyze the process of militarization to combat the war on drugs and signal cooperation with the US. They note that in Honduras, the government formed the Military Police for Public Order (PMOP) to combat DTOs and 6,000 soldiers participated in joint operations with the police (Zarkin and Flores-Macías 2019, 2). They found that in Brazil, another country which has militarized against the drug trade, soldiers patrolled city streets for nearly 100 days in 2016. Militarized strategies and outputs such as these are highly rewarded in Latin America; the

[10] Colombia had been engaged in a domestic struggle for several decades, as the government forces battles revolutionary guerrilla movements such as the Fuerza Armada Revolucionaria de Colombia (FARC).

US Department of Defense funneled over 5.5 billion dollars in security aid to Latin America between 2000 and 2016, "provided as in-kind assistance for anti-drug efforts" (Zarkin and Flores-Macías 2019, 9). The authors also note that "the number of special operations training missions to Latin America tripled between 2007 and 2014, and the U.S. currently works with the security forces of all countries in Latin America except Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia" (Zarkin and Flores-Macías 2019, 9-10). Due to the leveraging power of the certification process Mexico has adopted one of the most extremely militarized anti-drug strategy, due to its position as the point of entry for most of the illicit drugs sold in the US.

Before Mexico's 1982 debt crisis, the Mexican Armed Forces were independent of the US, receiving no training or financial assistance from them. Doyle notes that in the 1980s, Mexican armed forces received almost no aid through military assistance programs by the US (Doyle 1993, 87). However, after Reagan entered office, US officials trained and sent equipment to the Mexican Armed Forces. Doyle explains:

> Following fairly low levels of financing provided by foreign military sales in prior years ... a total of approximately 22.1 million for the period between 1950 and 1981, foreign military sales deliveries jumped to just under 120 million for fiscal years 1982 through 1989. The licenses granted by the United States for commercial arms sales to Mexico also skyrocketed during the period: while licensed exports came to a sum of 16.6 million for the three decades preceding Reagan's terms, the fiscal year 1987 saw 218 million granted for that year alone. Subsequent years show a steady flow of arms licenses to the tune of about 40 million annually. Similarly, international military education and training programs rose as increasing numbers of Mexican armed forces personnel received professional military education ... at United States schools and underwent training to operate equipment used in anti-drug activities (Doyle 1993, 87).

These figures do not just indicate the growing importance of the relationship between the Mexican and American militaries; they reflect the influence of the US drug certification scheme and Mexico's increasing economic reliance on complying with an American-style militarized strategy to combat DTOs. From Reagan to the current Biden administration there has been an

increased usage of the military to combat DTOs in Mexico. Zarkin and Flores-Macías detail the increasing involvement of the Mexican military personnel in anti-drug policing. They note that by 1998, under the Clinton administration in the United States and President Zedillo in Mexico, 23,000 military personnel participated in anti-drug tasks such as the burning of illegal crops (Zarkin and Flores-Macías 2019, 22). In 2005, President Vicente Fox deployed 18,000 soldiers for drug eradication and kingpin captures, and under President Calderón, over 67,000 soldiers were used to fight DTOs (Zarkin and Flores-Macías 2019, 22).

Tony Payan and Guadalupe Correa-Cabrera conducted a series of interviews with elites who were key to implementing Mexico's militarized drug enforcement. Through their interviews, the authors find evidence that Calderón's militarized strategy was designed by and for the interests of the United States—a source close to Calderón claims that the idea to militarize the public security of Mexico came from the US government (Payan and Correa-Cabrera 2021, 160). Another source, who remained anonymous, asserts that the idea to militarize the war on drugs was acquired by Calderón during his first trip to the United States. It is not surprising that the source of a militarized strategy to combat DTOs is the US, either directly through face-to-face meetings or indirectly through the pressures of the certification process. The militarization strategy was convenient for the US, as it supported the growth of the weapons industry following the federal assault weapons ban, which expired in 2004 under the George W. Bush administration (Payan and Correa-Cabrera 2021, 159-160). The book mentions how several other sources mention that the president of Mexico asked the US directly for help to fight DTOs; what is certain is that the militarization strategy and design were formulated by the United States.

3.2 Plan Mérida

Mexico was rewarded and encouraged for militarizing its fight against drugs with Plan Mérida, a military aid package. Felipe Calderón and George W. Bush signed plan Mérida in 2008 to disempower criminal organizations and capture their leaders. The US Congress approved 2.3 billion dollars for this plan and spent 1.4 billion on equipment and training. The plan aims to reform the justice system by applying new judicial, police, and prison reforms, and providing forensic equipment and training. Overall, though, the plan focuses on military responses to the drug war. It provided four planes for ocean surveillance, one surveillance aircraft, nine Blackhawk helicopters, divided between the navy and the federal police, and dogs and technology to monitor border crossings. The plan also established a system of secure telecommunications between ten Mexican and American cities to share intelligence and dedicates funding to training and equipment for the Mexican penitentiary and judicial systems (U.S. Embassy). It did not include any social development sections to address the issue of drug trafficking, which has led to wide criticism in Mexico. For example, the plan did not focus on economic concerns that lead many people to participate in drug trafficking. The Mérida Initiative was renewed and expanded under the Barack Obama administration, which formed the Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI) in 2011 (Main 2014, 65). Plan Mérida accelerated the militarization strategy to combat the war on drugs in Mexico.

Researcher Astorga from the Universidad Autónoma de Mexico (UNAM) argues that the Merida initiative[11] was designed to appear to be policy created by the Mexican government, but was actually created by the US (Payan and Correa-Cabrera 2021, 165). Regardless of the strategy's origin, its impacts clearly benefit the interests of the US over those of Mexico. For

[11] Plan Merida was modeled after Plan Colombia and was an aid package designed to help the Mexican government and military fight the drug war.

example, one high-ranking member of the armed forces explains that the military purchased more weapons than it needed from the US, and the equipment and intelligence structures were barely used. The source from Payan and Correa-Cabrera interviews asserts that the weapons were not needed at all, because drug traffickers did not have sophisticated armament at the time, and much of the weapons and equipment ultimately ended up in the hands of DTOs (Payan and Correa-Cabrera 2021, 188). Peter Andreas traces a historical game of cat and mouse in which legal expansions to regulate smuggling in the US result in a larger federal government which in turn professionalizes smugglers and increases corruption overall (Andreas 2014). We can understand Plan Merida as a continuation of this cat and mouse game played out in Mexico. As the military becomes more sophisticated and better armed through initiatives like Merida then the smugglers respond by strengthening themselves and becoming more sophisticated. Initiatives like Merida and Plan Colombia only trigger arms races against smugglers. The more one side strengthens or becomes more sophisticated the more the other side must respond in order to catch up. This relationship between the military and smugglers is why it is referred to as a symbiotic relationship.

Aside from the purchase of weapons and equipment of Plan Mérida, part of the overall militarization strategy of Mexico was the kingpin approach, which focused on arresting high-priority DTO leaders. Arturo Sarahkhán, a former ambassador to Mexico from the US, confirmed in an interview that the US persuaded Fox and Calderón that the kingpin approach was the most effective strategy to take down DTOs (Payan and Correa-Cabrera 2021,166-167). However, this strategy was designed to be temporary only, and was supposed to be accompanied by US assistance building a stronger Mexican police force. In reality, however, the priorities of the DEA became public policy in Mexico; the focus remained on taking down high-profile

kingpins and seizing drug shipments (Payan and Correa-Cabrera 2021, 168), indicators by which the DEA justifies its budget and existence, which came at the expense of the creation of a stronger Mexican police force. This militarized strategy, with its focus on kingpins, contributed to the fragmentation and diversification of DTOs into other criminal activities and a rise in overall violence. Eduardo Guerrero, a security expert in Mexico, asserts in an interview that Calderón and the DEA had very close ties, which encouraged the former president to ignore other, more sophisticated agencies when they warned that the militarization strategy was generating violence and earning minimal positive results (Payan and Correa-Cabrera 2021, 170).

Many of the shortcomings of this policy were caused by the US's singular focus on drug trafficking, which did not acknowledge the money laundering and gun trafficking which occurred alongside it (Payan and Correa-Cabrera 2021, 177). Overall, the strategy was disarticulated and improvised, with no clear metrics to measure success other than the existing metrics used by the DEA. The same metrics which Andreas and Greenhill note only provide a sense of "doing something" but do not measure price, purity or access for illicit substances (Greenhill and Andreas 2010, 16). In the Payan and Correa-Cabrera interviews, an anonymous source claims that Carlos Pascual was replaced as ambassador to Mexico after the release of WikiLeaks documents containing records of him criticizing the security policy of Calderón and the Mexican armed forces. The source explains that the military was untouchable for Calderón, who pressured the US administration to fire Pascual (Payan and Correa-Cabrera 2021, 182). From the Reagan to Obama administrations, the militarized approach to the war on drugs became more prevalent in Mexico and as a result the Mexican government grew increasingly reliant on the military. Pascual's exit demonstrates the power of the militarized strategy and the willingness of Mexican officials to defend it and the military. This trend would manifest again in the

suppression of research and data highlighting the failures of the strategy or violence committed by the military. The Mexican government became vested in protecting the armed forces and the militarized strategy it had embarked on regardless of the costs.

Overall, the transnationalization of a militarized security project provides the perfect example of a security model built from the top-down. Jacoby and Enloe show the faults with this form of constructing security as it does not ask the people what security means to them. A top-bottom model of security ignores the security of some as it asserts its dominant view on what security is and how it will be achieved. This framework of security is then built with blinders that ignore the security of women and others in the country as it only defines security from a limited military perspective. The policy and construction of security is even further removed from its citizens and their problems as it is imposed by another country (the US). The extreme detachment between the imposition of this security policy and the citizens it affects makes it far less likely that the policy can be responsive to criticism and further exacerbates the consequences of a bad policy.

Violence against women is institutionalized through the non-enforcement of laws and the lack of data produced regarding this issue. The government's current policy of nonenforcement and lack of collection of data related to violence against women perpetuates both direct and indirect forms of violence against women. It reproduces direct violence by suppressing research on human rights violations against women under military detention which reinforces impunity related to violence against women. It also perpetuates indirect violence against women as it neglects the experiences of survivors by neglecting statistics and data related to violence against women. The neglect of the Mexican government reproduces indirect violence against women in other ways such as through a lack of legal provisions and protections. The absence of a single

definition and punishment for feminicide as well as the revictimization of survivors of violence within institutions designed to protect them only serve to strengthen the impunity of the perpetrators of violence against women. Finally, the budgetary neglect from the government towards violence against women results in the military increasing their budget while social programs, such as shelters for battered women have seen their budgets slashed. All these forms of neglect serve to perpetuate both forms of direct and indirect violence against women while strengthening the impunity of perpetuators of violence and normalizing their actions.

Chapter 4. The Mexican War on Drugs and The Militarization of Mexico

The militarization process began in the 1980's in Mexico and accelerated since 2006 when then President Felipe Calderon engaged in a full-frontal attack against DTOs. The two administrations following Calderon, that of presidents Peña Nieto and Andres Manuel López Obrador, promised to reduce violence and employ a different strategy to combat the drug trade. Instead, however, each of these subsequent administrations not only continued but also expanded the militarized strategy. As a result, the military has never had as much power or as many responsibilities as it does in Mexico today.

4.1 Militarization of Mexico

Richard Friman and Peter Andreas examine the history of the drug war, national security, and militarization in Mexico. The authors found that the budget for drug control and enforcement personnel tripled from 1989 to 1999 (Friman and Andreas 1999, 135). In 1988, under pressure from the United States, President de la Madrid classified the war on drugs as a national security matter, a declaration which was ratified by Presidents Carlos Salinas and Ernesto Zedillo in the following years (Friman and Andreas 1999, 135). Salinas declared the war on drugs a high priority in his government because of the effects of illicit drugs on Mexican national health and national security, citing the need for all nations to unite to combat the issue (Friman and Andreas 1999, 135).

In the early 1990's President Salinas began the militarization process by establishing a national security council, a new national intelligence agency, a drug control unit within the attorney general's office, interdiction units in the federal judicial police, and a new army staff

section focused on drug enforcement (Friman and Andreas 1999, 136). The Mexican military was involved in anti-drug operations before this period, but their involvement peaked in the late 1980s (Friman and Andreas 1999, 136). The authors cite estimates that by this time one-third of the military budget was devoted to drug enforcement, and the number of soldiers involved increased to 25,000, compared to only 5,000 in the 1970s (Friman and Andreas 1999, 136). According to Peter Andreas, during the late 1980s "the military became the supreme authority, or in some cases the only authority, in parts of some states, among them Oaxaca, Sinaloa, Jalisco and Guerrero" (Andreas 2009, Chapter 3).

In the late 1990's President Zedillo again invoked the language of national security, describing the drug trade the number one security threat in Mexico (Friman and Andreas 1999, 135). The authors note that this was odd for the time, as national security had not yet become part of Mexico's political discourse and had only been mentioned once before by President De la Madrid (Friman and Andreas 1999, 135). However, this intensified focus on the drug trade was the result of international political change. During the cold war the United States main concern over Latin America had to do with the war on communism. As the cold war came to an end during the administrations of Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, American foreign policy focused increasingly on drug trafficking in Latin America. This new focus led to the creation of the US's certification process and Reagan's domestic war on drugs that pushed the Mexican government and others in Latin America towards a militarized approach to narcotics policing.

The language of national security employed by Mexican officials in reference to the drug war justified the militarization strategy used to combat DTOs in Mexico. As Andreas explains, "militarization fit well with the new emphasis on defining drugs as a national security threat"

(Andreas 2009, Chapter 3). Framing drugs as a national security threat also fit into a post 9/11 and post Iraq war model. Under Zedillo, the constitution and criminal code were altered to give the military broad enforcement powers, and generals were appointed to lead institutions such as the Federal Judicial Police, the National Institute to Combat Drugs, and the Center for National Security and Investigation (Andreas 2009, Chapter 4). By the late 1990s, military personnel held positions in the highest levels of law enforcement in two-thirds of Mexican states, and around 40% of the army was focused on drug enforcement (Andreas 2009, Chapter 4). Andreas notes that "the militarization on the Mexican side of the border has grown in recent decades, and anti-drug operations in these border areas are now mainly in the hands of the military" (Andreas 2009, Chapter 7).

Zedillo's successor, President Vicente Fox, continued to ramp up militarized drug enforcement. Laura Atuesta provides details of his militarization strategy by analyzing his military operation, called "México Seguro." The military operation was designed to fight the rising levels of violence of DTOs, fueled by a feud between the Sinaloa cartel and the Gulf cartel (Atuesta 2018, 3). The operation did not achieve any major successes. Fox was then succeeded by Calderón, who further intensified the use of the military to fight the war on drugs. According to June Beittel, Calderón led an aggressive militarist campaign against DTOs, sending thousands of Mexican military troops and federal police to combat the organizations in drug trafficking "hot spots" around the country (Beittel 2019, 4). During Calderón's administration, there were 15 military operations in different parts of Mexico including Michoacán, Guerrero, Baja California, Morelos, Tijuana, the golden triangle (Sinaloa, Durango, and Chihuahua), Tamaulipas, Nuevo Leon, the southern border (with cooperation from Guatemala), Mexico State, Veracruz, Saltillo, Monclova, Torreón, and Matamoros (Atuesta 2018, 4).

The publicized roles of the navy and army in drug enforcement do not align with their actual activities, indicating public campaigns advertising their involvement obscure their actual activities. For example, the role of the military in drug enforcement is to decrease the area of drug harvests, but military programs are full of activities which have nothing to do with the size of drug harvests such as patrolling public streets (Atuesta 2018, 6). The navy justifies its deployment in Mexico by arguing there is a need to patrol coastal regions, but their presence extends across Mexico (Atuesta 2018, 7). The indicators the military uses to measure the success of its operations do not include measures of violence or the recapture of public spaces; instead, they measure the number of ongoing operations and how many they seek to initiate by the end of the year (Atuesta 2018, 7). The use of these indicators, which only measure the amount of times the army is involved in operations, rather than the operations' success, undermines the government's claims that the military is effective and necessary in drug enforcement. Atuesta criticizes Calderón's depiction of a cooperative effort among federal forces, states, and localities, because in practice, federal forces replaced local police (Atuesta 2018, 7).

Under Calderón, militarization was driven by federal forces, and the armed forces became more heavily involved in public security—under Fox, the army's budget had been increased from 20.4 billion to 26 billion pesos, and when Calderón came to power, he increased the budget further to 36 billion pesos (Sotomayor 2013, 44). Calderón incorporated thousands of soldiers into the federal police force, installed members of the armed forces as heads of public security in 14 states, and placed active-duty military officers in charge of local police in six states (Sotomayor 2013, 42). Sotomayor describes Calderón as completely reliant on two military branches in his fight against the DTOs: the army's Ministry of Defense or SEDENA, and the navy's la Marina or SEMAR.

As a concept, militarization does not simply refer to the use of the military; although this is an essential piece of the puzzle, it also reflects the mentality behind the decision to use the military. This means that militarization includes laws and rules, chains of command, public security and even financing decisions. So, for example, the law passed to continue using the military for public security is a law that reflects the militarization of Mexico. The fact that the National Guard is commanded by the armed forces as well as many other important security positions within the government shows the militaries involvement in the chain of command. Even the country's budget has decidedly increased the militaries budget at the cost of other social welfare programs. The phenomenon of militarization in Mexico continues to expand as the militaries involvement in tasks such as public security and customs is legitimized through the law. As the militaries tasks expand so does their budget and control of the chain of command for security decisions within the country. The military continues to expand in responsibility, power and wealth in Mexico even when the leaders of the armed forces have criticized the position the government has put them in.

General Tomás Ángeles, sub-secretary of national defense from 2006-2008, explains that the military mindset was not guided by hard facts or statistics so much as a desire to use the armed facts to combat drug trafficking (Payan and Correa-Cabrera 2021, 27). He claims that the overuse of armed forces made the DTOs a more belligerent opponent than they had been before militarization (Payan and Correa-Cabrera 2021, 27). As Payan and Correa-Cabrera explain: "the war is then not a product of hard figures or facts, but a decision focused on the instrument to deal with an emerging problem" (Payan and Correa-Cabrera 2021, 27). Calderón demonstrated a militarized mentality, and when confronted with a problem saw only the armed forces as a viable solution, regardless of the reality or other alternatives to deal with DTOs. Calderón further

demonstrated a militarized mindset by dehumanizing those he considered the enemy; in April 2010 he made a public speech in which he proudly stated that 90% of Mexican deaths could be attributed to organized crime, five percent to the police, and another five percent to the civilian population (Payan and Correa-Cabrera 2021, 32). This provoked an outcry, as he was criticized for minimizing the human value of those killed due to their ties with organized crime. Using the military requires an enemy; the problem for Calderón is that the enemies he targeted, who he often referred to as "cockroaches," were his citizens (Payan and Correa-Cabrera 2021, 126). Justifying their deaths due to their links with organized crime was unacceptable to most Mexican citizens, many of whom had personal connections with people involved in crime, and understood they were human beings.

The citizens involved in the drug trade in many ways are a product of economic drivers. In my own research I encountered the stories of indigenous men who smuggled drugs into the US for the promise of a new pair of tennis shoes (Weisz Argomedo 2020). There are several areas in Mexico in which children who neither study nor work and are referred to as "nini" are used by DTOs to fill in their ranks. The lack of economic possibilities and the promise of quick, "easy", money are major drivers for people, including children, engaged in drug trafficking. The economic factors behind this problem are often ignored by the Mexican government.

Former President Calderón deployed the Marines to states such as Veracruz and Tamaulipas to fight the Zetas cartel, which was established by former army commandos (Sotomayor 2013, 44). Sotomayor explains the history of the armed forces in Mexico and details how the new strategy employed by Calderón militarized the public security forces in Mexico. He writes: "For almost seventy years, civilian control over the armed forces in Mexico was established through the professionalization of the officer corps, which effectively neutralized the

military as a political factor and subordinated it to the political imperatives of the dominant party (the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI)" (Sotomayor 2013, 51). Although this allowed Mexico to evade the serious military dictatorships that plagued Latin America during the Cold War period, it concentrated a high degree of power in the hands of the armed forces. As Sotomayor explains:

> "Nevertheless, the current strategy placed the armed forces in the front and center of political order and emphasized the internal uses of force, which effectively resembled national-security doctrines. For scholars of military affairs, such as Alfred Stepan, this approach affects training, professionalism, and combat readiness for conventional warfare and politicizes soldiers as they become increasingly concerned about internal warfare, placing a premium on political stability. Under this context, the Calderón strategy blurred the distinction between police and military forces" (Sotomayor 2013, 51).

Zarkin and Flores-Macías note that in Mexico, 67,000 troops have participated in police operations from 2006 to 2011 (Zarkin and Flores-Macías 2019, 2). The US has continued to encourage and provide support for a militarized strategy; in 2009, officials at the US embassy discovered the location of a cartel leader and dispatched the Marines (who are preferred due to their American training), who found and killed the leader. This garnered praise of "the country's military-led drug strategy" from the US ambassador (Sotomayor 2013, 47). Furthermore, the US Department of Defense authorized the use of unarmed drones to collect intelligence against DTOs to be shared with their Mexican counterparts (Sotomayor 2013, 47).

After Calderón president Peña Nieto took office and followed a different approach from his successor but continued the kingpin strategy and military deployments (Beittel 2019, 4-5). The current President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO) has only continued the militarization process in Mexico. He supported "constitutional reforms to allow military involvement in public security to continue for five more years, despite a 2018 Supreme Court ruling stating that prolonged military involvement in security violated the constitution" (Beittel

2019, 6). Obrador is continuing the tradition of handing over public security duties to the military. Obrador also secured congressional approval to create a new 80,000 member National Guard (combining military police, federal police, and recruits) to combat crime (Beittel 2019, 6). After sustained pressure, Congress modified the original proposal to ensure this new National Guard was under civilian command (Beittel 2019, 6). President Obrador further extended the duties of the military by declaring that the government would militarize all customs and Mexican ports (Maldonado 2020). This new responsibility means a higher number of soldiers are deployed across the Mexican borders and they are now in charge of any product entering or leaving Mexico.

In conclusion the militarization of Mexico can be traced back to the Reagan years in which the military assistance to Mexico began to increase along with pressure from the US to fight DTOs with the military. The use of the military to fight DTOs increased through each president coming to an apex under Felipe Calderon who would decide to fight the DTOs head on with the armed forces. The use of the military to fight DTOs increased homicide rates and insecurity across Mexico, so subsequent presidents would promise alternative strategies to combating DTOs. In reality both presidents Enrique Peña Nieto and Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador would continue to use the military to combat DTOs and even expand its powers into other arenas such as customs.

Mexican Administrations since 1982 and the primary steps taken towards militarization of the war against drugs.

President	Years Active	Militarized drug policy
Miguel de la Madrid	1982-1988	Early 1988 declares Drug trafficking a national security threat.

Carlos Salinas de Gortari	1988-1994	Expands national security apparatus due to drugs being classified as national security issue.
Ernesto Zedillo	1994-2000	Declares fight against drugs a high priority due to health concerns and national security. Also declares drug trafficking Mexico's number one security threat. Military begins to be heavily involved in antidrug missions. Military personnel are given positions in the highest levels of law enforcement in two-thirds of Mexican states, and around 40% of the army was focused on drug enforcement
Vicente Fox	2000-2006	Continued to ramp up militarized drug enforcement. Begins military operative called Mexico Seguro designed to fight the rising levels of violence of DTOs, fueled by a feud between the Sinaloa cartel and the Gulf cartel
Felipe Calderon	2006-2012	Calderón led an aggressive militarist campaign against DTOs, sending thousands of Mexican military troops and federal police to combat the organizations in drug trafficking "hot spots" around the country.
Enrique Peña Nieto	2012-2018	Continues the kingpin strategy and military deployments.
Andres Manuel López Obrador	2018-2024	Creates a new 80,000-member National Guard mostly composed of soldiers which was originally intended to be run by civilians but is now under military command. Expands the militaries responsibilities to include customs, transportation, major building

		projects, medical and school supplies as well as control over Mexican airspace.

Figure 2

4.2 The National Guard

The different levels of security forces in Mexico have changed over time. During Calderon's administration, the military is divided into the *Secretaria de la Defensa Nacional* (SEDENA) and the *Secretaria de Marina* (The Navy). The SEDENA control the Mexican air force and military units combating the war on drugs. The navy controls the marines and the naval forces of Mexico and is also involved in fighting the war on drugs. Then the police forces are divided into Federal Police, Investigative Police, State Police and Municipal Police (Quezada and Manaut 2012). The Federal Police are formed from a consolidation of previous federal forces that have been disbanded due to corruption (Bonner 2012). Police in Mexico are either considered administrative or investigative and are classified differently based on the level of government in which they operate and their function, either preventative or investigative (Quezada and Manaut 2012). President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador would disband the federal police due to corruption allegations and create the National Guard to take over their public security tasks. When president Obrador established the new National Guard, he promised to return soldiers to their bases instead of deploying them on the streets, and claimed the new force was established to protect human rights. The reform to the constitution that established this "public" security force stated it would have a "civilian character" (Tucker 2020). In reality, the new National Guard is a continuation of the militarization of public security forces. The Guard is led by ex-general Rodríguez Bucio, and members are armed with assault rifles and 9mm pistols and travel in Chevrolet vans and Black Hawk helicopters (Tucker 2020). The National Guard is armed in

the same manner the Mexican military and does not adhere to the civilian character and obligations of transparency it was founded upon.

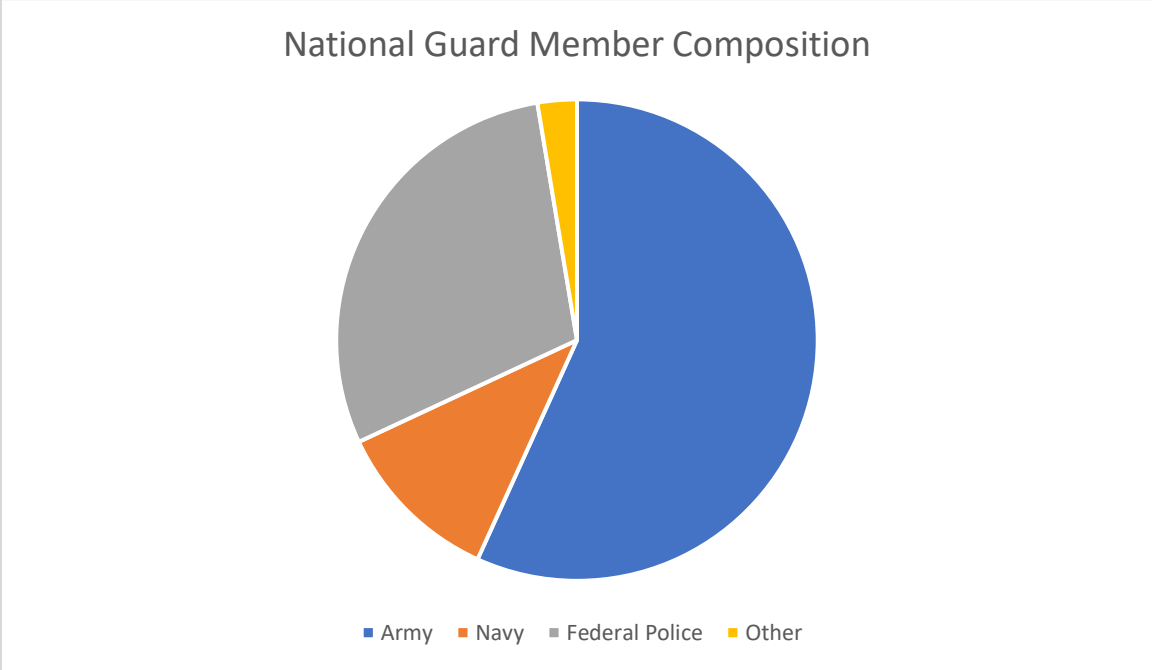

Figure 3

The National Guard has not fulfilled its legal obligation to publicly release how many of its members are still employed by the armed forces. An investigation by the news source *Animal Politico* found that as of July 2020, the National Guard was composed of 90,000 members. 51,101 members were transferred directly from the army, 10,149 from the Marines, and 26,376 from the now-defunct Federal Police (Tucker 2020). The army and the marines were responsible for the entire recruitment process and continued to pay the salaries of former members who joined the National Guard. Only 20% of the members and 0.3% of the recruits have passed background checks and received training and certification for police work (Tucker 2020). These statistics suggest that despite Obrador's promise to create a demilitarized police force, Mexico's new National Guard is, in fact, a military body. The failure to train and certify this new force in

policing indicates that no steps have been taken to avoid the same human rights violations that were widespread when the military and marines were in charge of public security.

Between 2019 and 2020, the National Commission for Human Rights in Mexico registered 219 complaints against the National Guard. Among those complaints, there were 51 arbitrary detentions, 28 for cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment, three for torture, two for homicide, and two for forced disappearances (Tucker 2020). Lucía Chávez is a researcher for the NGO *Comisión Mexicana de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos* (The Mexican Commission in Defense and Promotion of Human Rights or CMDPDH) who argues that the total number of human right violations is higher than reported numbers, but distrust of authorities and the lack of government transparency suppress the actual figures (Tucker 2020). There is no independent body of oversight monitoring the National Guard, so their violations go unpunished, creating the impression that they act with impunity.

In 2019, the Mexican government passed a law on the use of force that allowed lethal force as long it was used as a last resort to protect life. The law failed to include the necessity to protect third parties when using force. Information compiled by the media (which is not absolute since there is a lack of transparency from the government concerning these statistics) shows that from 2019 to 2020, 11 members of the National Guard had been killed in 128 violent confrontations, in which 178 civilians had been killed. The lack of transparency surrounding these statistics makes it impossible to ascertain whether those civilians were drug traffickers or people caught in the crossfire. Experts at *Grupo Monitor Fuerza Letal* (Lethal Force Monitoring Group) argue that an "abuse of force" exists if there is a rate of more than ten deaths for every one death of a member of the security forces (Tucker 2020). This abuse of force is not limited to

combat against DTOs; several National Guard members have been reported for sexual abuse in different detention centers.

Militarization of drug policy has led to both direct and indirect forms of violence against women. In the case of the National Guard, it has led to direct forms of violence against women. For example, on March 2020, 20 members of the National Guard entered a migratory station in Tapachula, where they forced several women to strip naked, and then beat them as reported by the *Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Matías de Cordova* (The Fray Matías de Córdova Center for Human Rights) (Tucker 2020). In a report to Amnesty International, Daniele Reyes, the CMDPDH's coordinator for asylum, described witnessing many cases of violence against women during a visit to a migratory detention center in Hermosillo. She noted that 13 women reported being sexually assaulted by National Guard members. The next day, the women would not talk to her—one person reported that the National Guard had physically assaulted anyone who had spoken to her the previous day (Tucker 2020). These two examples reflect the impunity of the National Guard, who intimidate anybody reporting human rights abuses at their hands. Significant for the present study is the particular targeting of women by the members of the National Guard, who use their position of power and impunity to violate women's human rights.

AMLO and his predecessor Nieto have promised to change the drug war strategy, but both persist in strengthening the military and placing more duties under its control. Between 2007 and 2021, 48 initiatives which expand the role of the Mexican Armed Forces have been presented to Congress. The political party of AMLO proposed the majority of initiatives to expand the role of armed forces in Mexico. Under AMLO the deployment of the military in Mexico has expanded to include the construction of public and private infrastructure, the distribution of gasoline, textbooks for public education, and fertilizers, the surveillance of the

northern and southern border, the detention and inspection of migrants, the control of ports and customs, and even the participation of leaders of the army and navy in the Science and Technology Council (Velázquez, Álvarez, Pérez, Madrazo 2021). The militarization of Mexico is continuing to expand regardless of the political party in charge, government's promises of reform, or the negative impacts of this strategy.

Jorge Lule coordinator for research at the Comisión Mexicana de Defensa y Proteccion de los Derechos Humanos (CMDPDH) explained to me in an interview that

> The role of soldiers in the war on drugs is continuing to increase and is fundamentally related to the exercises of violence and dispute of existing territories in the country. We cannot think of the term war on drugs until we see the use of armed forces to have this frontal attack against organized crime. The government's decision to use the armed forces to combat organized crime has created a type of entrenched warfare; there are two sides in conflict over territories, and this conflict overshadows the lives of civilians within these territories. In the case of Mexico, it is not just organized crime acting without regard for the lives of bystanders, but the military and, by extension, the government. The fallout from the militarized approach to the war on drugs has exacerbated different issues. Under this approach, arbitrary detentions have increased, as has the stigmatization and criminalization of users of psychoactive drugs. The policies enabling the armed forces to act as drug enforcement do not prioritize the presumption of innocence, and provide low evidentiary standards to justify the use of force against individuals suspected of involvement in organized crime. This fuels the perception that the role of members of the armed forces, who received military rather than police training, is to combat and kill their enemies. The role of the armed forces in Mexico doesn't only stop at this frontal attack; as we have seen over the past 15 years, there is a continuous increase in the activities that are being relegated to the armed forces. They are no longer just responsible for public security, but are now promoting and running health programs, education, agriculture, and public works. A brief look at recent military dictatorships in countries such as Chile, Venezuela, and El Salvador, demonstrate the dangers that come with giving so much power to military forces.[12] (Lule)

Marcela Villalobos, the president of Amnesty International Mexico, expressed concern about the increasing numbers and kinds of roles given to the Mexican military. In an interview, she drew particular attention to Obrador's statement that soldiers should have a political role in the country. The inclusion of the military into politics could potentially erode democracy in the

[12] January 21, 2022 over zoom, Mexico.

country as political parties fight over support of the military and control of the country. Of further concern are legislative flaws which give out harsh punishment to drug users while providing impunity to corrupt forces; Villalobos highlights the Commission to Prevent the Use of Illicit Substances' criminalization of drug users, which contrasts with an impunity of 98% for drug traffickers and corruption in the prosecutor's office. She also argues that "the army has been victimized by this policy as well. General Cienfuegos has publicly expressed that the army did not ask to patrol the streets, and were not certain over their jurisdiction, but the government continued to give them more power, responsibilities, and funding, which they weren't prepared to handle" (Villalobos).[13]

Cynthia Enloe and Arturo Sotomayor's definitions of militarization have nearly prophesied the evolution of the Mexican military's roles. Villalobos' comments on the political role of the military echo Enloe's definition of militarization[14], and outlines many of the problems created by the military' expanding responsibilities. Lule also points to the armed force's training and doctrine as the cause of the military's failure to protect citizens, especially women. As Enloe also explains the training that soldiers go through is one that gets them ready to murder and dehumanize others. This training may be efficient for going to war and killing others, but it is not sufficient for the public security tasks the military has been placed in charge of. Even more interesting is Lule's conception of territories in this militarized war on drugs and how women have been conceived of as a territory to be traded, possessed, and even attacked. The current drug war has made subnational territorial control essential to the survival of DTO's that view

[13] 26 of October 2021 over zoom, Mexico.

[14] "Militarism refers to a complex package of ideas that all together foster military values in both military and civilian affairs. Militarism justifies military priorities and military influences in cultural, economic and political affairs" (Enloe 2016, 26). Proponents of these ideas also classify men as natural protectors and insinuate that women should be grateful for men's protection (Enloe 2016, 26). This mindset frames having an enemy as normal in human affairs (Enloe 2016, 26).

territory as an asset to be conquered so that it, as well as the people within it, can be economically exploited. In an interview, Cecelia Farfan, Head of Security Research Programs, Center for US-Mexican Studies / University of California San Diego, explained that "the armed forces actively participate in the creation of a narrative which designates them as the only force capable of providing security, an idea which justifies their roles as the sole providers of public safety"(Cecelia Farfan).[15] Again, this echoes Enloe's argument that under militarism, military forces justify their involvement in public security by framing themselves as the protector of a society under attack by an enemy. As Enloe states, proponents of these militarized ideas classify men as natural protectors and insinuate that women should be grateful for men's protection (Enloe 2016, 26). The use of the military in Mexico continues to grow, and with it, so do the problems perpetuated by an institution that is neither trained nor qualified to deal with the ever-expanding tasks they are being assigned.

In conclusion, the US has used the drug certification process to exert economic pressure on Latin American countries to combat drug trafficking with a militarized strategy. Mexico's militarization process occurred as a result of this pressure and under the guidance of the US. Today, militarization continues to intensify under the guidance of Mexico's own leaders, whose policy decisions are guided by a militarized mindset which frames drug trafficking as an issue of warfare and national security. The military continues to grow in size, funding, and power, even as it is criticized for violating human rights and increasing public violence. The current administration of Mexico under Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador has broken its promise to return soldiers to their barracks and has further institutionalized the presence of armed forces in public security. The administration promised to create a national guard which would be under civilian

[15] 1st of November 2021 over zoom, USA.

control, but relatively quickly it was revealed that it is composed mostly of soldiers, and they are not under civilian command. The inability of the Mexican government to strengthen its judicial branch as well as its police forces has led to the overreliance on the military to provide public security as well as a number of other services. The military is neither trained nor capable of fixing the holes left by a weak judicial system and a corrupt and inefficient police force. Using the military as a quick fix to Mexico's security issues will only weaken the state and perpetuate violence in other forms.

Chapter 5. Direct and Indirect Military Violence Against Women

5.1. Military Violence

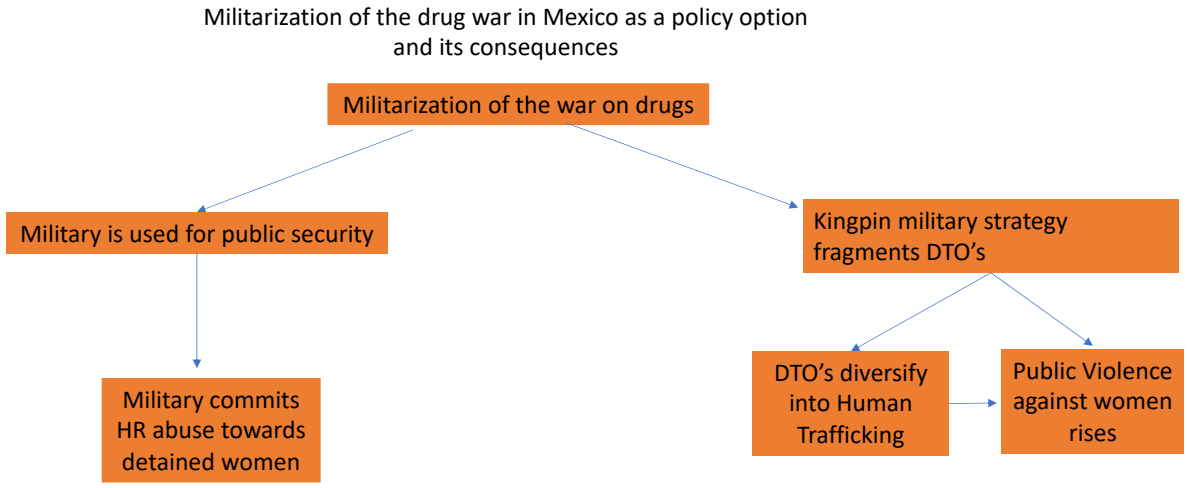

Figure 4

To understand how a militarized policy to fight the war on drugs in Mexico can lead to forms of direct and indirect violence against women it is crucial to trace the militaries and government's actions and its effects on women's security. The following table lists the evidence of direct and indirect forms of violence against women that are examined in the following chapters. Both the government and the military are responsible for direct and indirect forms of violence against women.

Only 1.3% of women detained by the army and navy had a warrant for their arrest, which indicates that these arrests were not approved by the judicial process (Equis 2019, 29). The

military and navy can detain women in Mexico for various reasons that have nothing to do with the women committing a crime. The military forces operate in municipalities by going around town with no specific line of investigation to follow. They act in a similar way to an occupying force. In a sense, because there is rarely a warrant out for arresting women detained by the armed forces, they can detain a woman in the street for practically any reason without any overview or consequences. Women can be detained during massive street sweeps in poor communities conducted by the armed forces. If a suspected male drug trafficker is detained, any woman in the household or accompanying them can also be detained alongside them.

Guillermo Trejo and Sandra Ley also link this militarized strategy to fight the war on drugs to the rise of fragmentation and diversification of DTOs that cause a surge in extractivist industries of human wealth sub-nationally (Trejo and Ley 2020). Since the armed forces target DTOs, they have adapted their business by diversifying into other licit and illicit industries. This diversification has increased women's targeting as DTOs enter the human trafficking business. When the DTOs take over a region, they target women as they conceptualize them as a commodity to be controlled and sold. So, women are essentially targeted by the DTOs in Mexico and the security forces deployed to fight the DTOs.

Direct and Indirect forms of violence

Direct Violence	Indirect Violence
Military detains a high percentage of women without a warrant.	DTO fragmentation and diversification into sex/human trafficking.

Military violates the human rights of detained women.	Government campaigns on violence against women that frame the violence as a domestic or "private" issue.
Women in Mexico are more likely to be incarcerated without a fair judicial process.	Reallocation of resources from social welfare to military spending.
Women are revictimized in government institutions when reporting violence.	Military interventions have increased violence in regions where they are conducting operations and resulted in higher levels of violence against women immediately after the intervention and months after the intervention.
Security forces threaten women in jail from reporting violence committed by state forces.	Suppression of research related to violence against women.
Higher likelihood of experiencing forms of sexual violence while detained than men.	Lack of a single legal definition of feminicide.
High levels of impunity for soldiers and criminals that perpetuate violence against women.	Lack of a national strategy to target violence against women.

Figure 5

Figure 3 illustrates the links between militarist policy and the increasing rates of violence against women at the hands of the military and DTOs, as well as the symbiotic relationship between the military and DTOs. Equis, an organization committed to researching violence against women,

creates reports using government data, information from non-governmental organizations working on women's violence, and researchers from Mexico. Their reports cover topics ranging from torture at the hands of security forces in Mexico to the imprisonment of women for minor drug crimes. These reports are crucial to establish the impact of militarized security strategy on the security of women in Mexico.

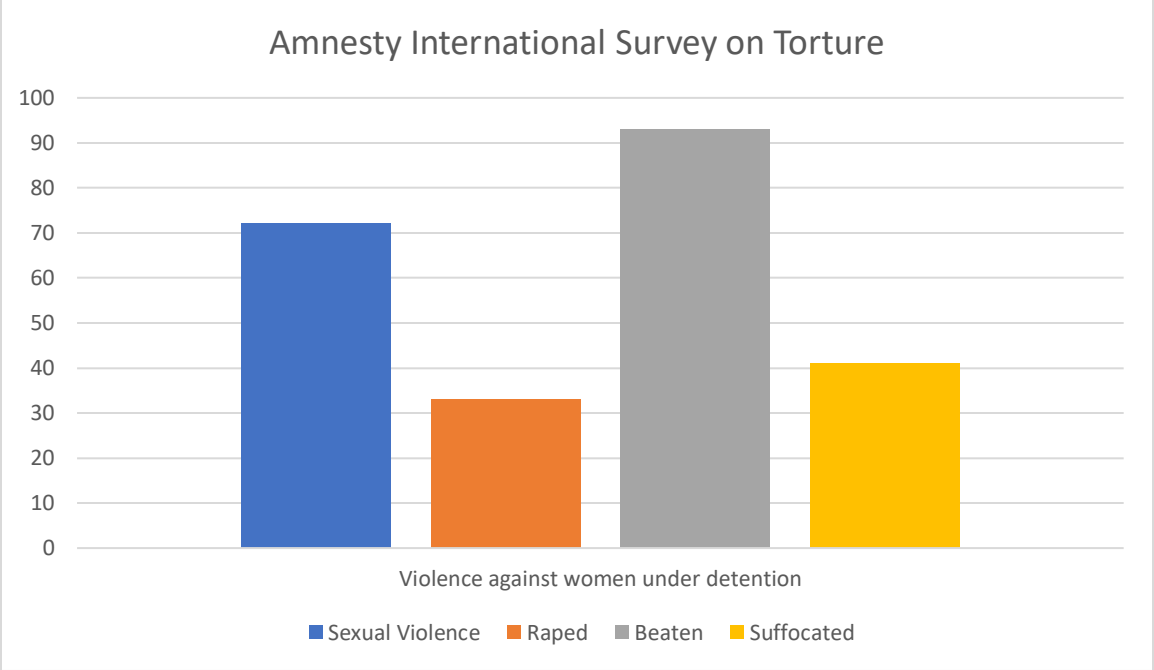

Figure 6

One Equis report includes details from an Amnesty International investigation surveying 100 women detained by Mexican security forces in 19 states in 2016. Figure 4 represents the results of this survey. The survey determines that out of the 100 women detainees, 72 reported having experienced sexual violence against them during their arrest or hours after their capture, and 33 reported being raped (Equis 2019, 72). Amnesty International found that out of the 100 women interviewed and detained in 2016 in Mexican prison, 93% reported being beaten (Amnesty 2016, 19). 41% reported being suffocated with plastic bags, and several more reported being hit in areas of the body that would exclude the face to avoid visible lesions. The use of

suffocation, harm to the inside of the ears, and punches to the legs or stomach are commonly used, because they are easy to hide.

Amnesty International also reported the highly sexual nature of violence used against women under detention. Almost every woman interviewed reported violence used against them by security forces, including psychological or verbal abuse centered around their gender, sexual orientation, and threats of violation against them or their family members (Amnesty 2016, 20). 72% of them reported sexual violence that spanned from being groped to being raped (Amnesty 2016, 20). It is telling that of the 94 women who were insulted during their arrest, 74 reported being insulted for being a woman (Amnesty 2016, 27). Sexual violence seems to be a procedural part of the detention of most women in Mexico. A comparison of the rates of violence against women committed by the armed forces versus the police reveals that the armed forces are more likely to commit violence against women.

Sixty-two percent of the reported violations against women were committed by the Mexican armed forces (Equis 2019, 72). The Equis report delivers further evidence that the militarized security strategy to fight the war on drugs directly impacts the insecurity of women in Mexico. These types of violence are not necessarily new forms of abuse in Mexico, but they have accelerated with the adoption of militarized drug policies. The increase of military in the streets of Mexico as a result of these policies has increased the chances that women are detained without a warrant and tortured and abused when detained by the military.

Even when detentions are compared with other security forces like the police, we can clearly see that the military is much more likely to engage in violence against women under detention. The report mentions a survey conducted by INEGI which revealed that women were three times more likely to experience sexual violence during their arrest than men; unfortunately,

the study did not distinguish between types of sexual violence, preventing analysis of the kinds of abuse (Equis 2019, 72). These reports by Equis were made by academics in collaboration with multiple NGOs, who worked directly with women who were the victims of violence, and benefit from a combination of a clear methodological structure and on-the-ground experience.

In addition to facing higher rates of violence in detention, women in Mexico are more likely to be incarcerated without a fair judicial process. Statistics indicate that women are increasingly being incarcerated at higher rates for minor drug-related crimes. In 2014, for example, around 940 women were placed in prison for drug-related crimes. By 2015 the number rose to 1,617, and then in 2016, it rose once more to 1,911 (Equis 2020, 9). At the federal level, "crimes against health," a category which refers to low-level drug-related crimes such as possession or possession with the intent to sell, are the primary cause of women's incarceration (Equis 2020, 10).

Illegal detentions and torture are now standard practice in Mexico. In 2015, INEGI reported that the top two most reported instances of human rights violations in Mexico were the arbitrary detention of people followed by torture and abuse (Amnesty 2016, 13). Amnesty International explains that authorities generally view women in DTOs as a weak link through which they can penetrate the organization. Cartels will use vulnerable women—generally poor, uneducated, and single mothers—to complete low-level, dangerous jobs, as they are seen as disposable in case they are detained, making them vulnerable to both drug traffickers and the military (Amnesty 2016, 17). The National Survey of People Deprived of their Liberty in Mexico (ENPOL) shows a pattern of abuses that lead to illegal judicial processes (Equis 2019, 17). The survey found that the arbitrary detention of people following different forms of physical, psychological, and sexual abuse during their arrest and their stay at prosecutors' installations is

standard practice (Equis 2019, 17). Usually, there is no access to lawyers, families, or medical checks to certify their injuries. The process coerces people to incriminate themselves or fabricate evidence that sustains their incrimination of other people (Equis 2019, 17).

Mexico has no registry of detentions, which only prolongs illegal arrests (Equis 2019, 17). The survey finds more than 40% of people who pled guilty did so because they were subject to physical aggression, threats, or other pressures (Equis 2019, 17-18). The survey results clearly show a lack of due process. The report asserts that juridical processes accept illegal evidence; this is supported by data from a report published by the Prodh Center that documented 29 cases of women subjected to sexual torture (Equis 2019, 18). All of the women surveyed in the Prodh Center report were detained illegally based on faulty evidence that the prosecution was able to use in the juridical process to arrest them (Equis 2019, 18). No evidence was excluded, even though the women's reports that they were tortured were verified by evidence (Equis 2019, 18). It is nearly impossible for women who have been tortured in detention to use the legal system to report the abuse.

The judicial authorities require victims to prove they were subjected to torture through a medical and psychological examination. However, these examinations are rarely available, and when they are practiced, they are not conducted by independent personnel (Equis 2019, 19). In general, the personnel conducting the examinations conclude the allegations of torture were fabricated, even when there is clear evidence of torture (Equis 2019, 19). The few victims who manage to obtain examinations from independent experts are then subject to credibility attacks during the judicial process (Equis 2019, 19). Mexico conducted a national survey of superior tribunals of justice in each state, asking whether justices thought they had done their due diligence to protect detained women from torture; half of them recognized they had not (Equis

2019, 19). The judicial system has failed to protect women who are subject to violence at the hands of the security forces that detained them, and levels of torture and violence against female detainees continue to rise as the war on drugs intensifies.

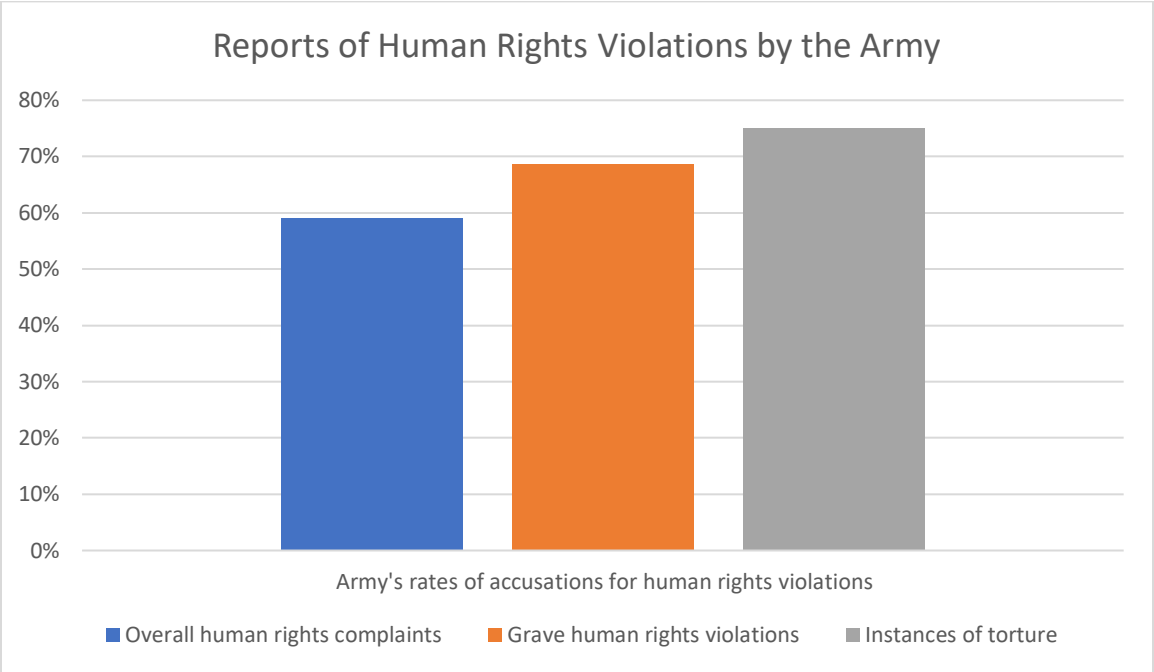

Figure 7

A group of researchers at Equis conducted statistical analysis and found that torture during detentions increased significantly when former President Calderón intensified the war on drugs (Equis 2019, 24). The National Committee for Human Rights reports that between 2006 and 2017, 59% of human rights complaints were filed against the army (Equis 2019, 24). The commission also found that in this time period, the army was found to be responsible for 68.7% of the gravest human rights violations, including torture, forced disappearances, and extrajudicial executions (Equis 2019, 24). The army was found to be responsible for 75% of torture cases, 47.8% of which occurred within the walls of military buildings (Equis 2019, 24-25). Overall, the militarization of public security forces has had a negative impact on the security of detainees.

Amnesty International conducted a study of 100 women detained by different branches of the security forces in Mexico. Their investigation found that most arrests were conducted by the federal police, but the highest reported cases of rape came from women detained by the marines. The marines surveyed in this study only detained ten women, but eight reported being raped. Several reported that the marines used gloves to molest them so as not to leave any biological trace behind, while others reported being electrocuted in their genitals (Amnesty 2016, 22). Just over a quarter of arrests by police forces resulted in women being raped, compared to 50% of army arrests and 80% of Marine arrests. These reports show that the Mexican armed forces commit the most violent forms of sexual abuse against women, yet continue to be deployed at high rates across the country to provide "public security."

Sexual violence against detained women in Mexico has been normalized. In their report, Amnesty International explains that only 35 women responded that they had suffered some form of sexual violence at the hands of the security forces. However, as the interviewers asked the women if they had experienced things such as being groped or punched or electrocuted in their genitals or breasts, 72 women responded they had been subjected to these forms of sexual violence. Eighty women were also the object of sexist insults. Still, most of the women interviewed did not immediately identify being groped or punched in their genitals or breasts as forms of sexual violence (Amnesty 2016, 25). Part of the problem is the lack of knowledge about sexual abuse and violence. The federal penal code in Mexico defines sexual violence in a broad enough way to understand these aggressions as sexual violence. The problem is that although the law establishes what sexual violence entails, many citizens still do not understand how many of these aggressions like being groped also represent forms of sexual violence. Educating people

about the topic is a necessary step to counter the normalization of sexual violence against women in Mexico.

A survey conducted by the INEGI to analyze the percentage of women who experienced physical or sexual violence by someone other than their partner shows a worrisome trend regarding the normalization of violence against women. In 88.4% of the cases, women did not solicit support from any institution, nor did they present a complaint or report to any authority (ENDIREH 2017). Only 2.2% sought support from an institution, while 9.4% reported the event to an authority and/or sought support from an institution in Mexico (ENDIREH 2017). The amount of unreported violence committed against women stems from the accusers' impunity and the survivors' mistrust of authorities. This underreporting is problematic because it normalizes violence against women and perpetuates the impunity of those committing the violence. Women are left in an impossible situation; reporting the abuse to authorities often means reporting to the abusers, but if they say nothing, the cycle of silence and impunity which perpetuates the abuse continues. For those women brave enough to seek out services from the government the reality is just as stark. The services provided to survivors of violence by the government are places that are known to revictimize women with staff that is not trained to help them as noted in interviews with Adriana Ortega and Nicole Huete from Intersecta as well as Rita Canto from UNAM (National Autonomous University of Mexico).

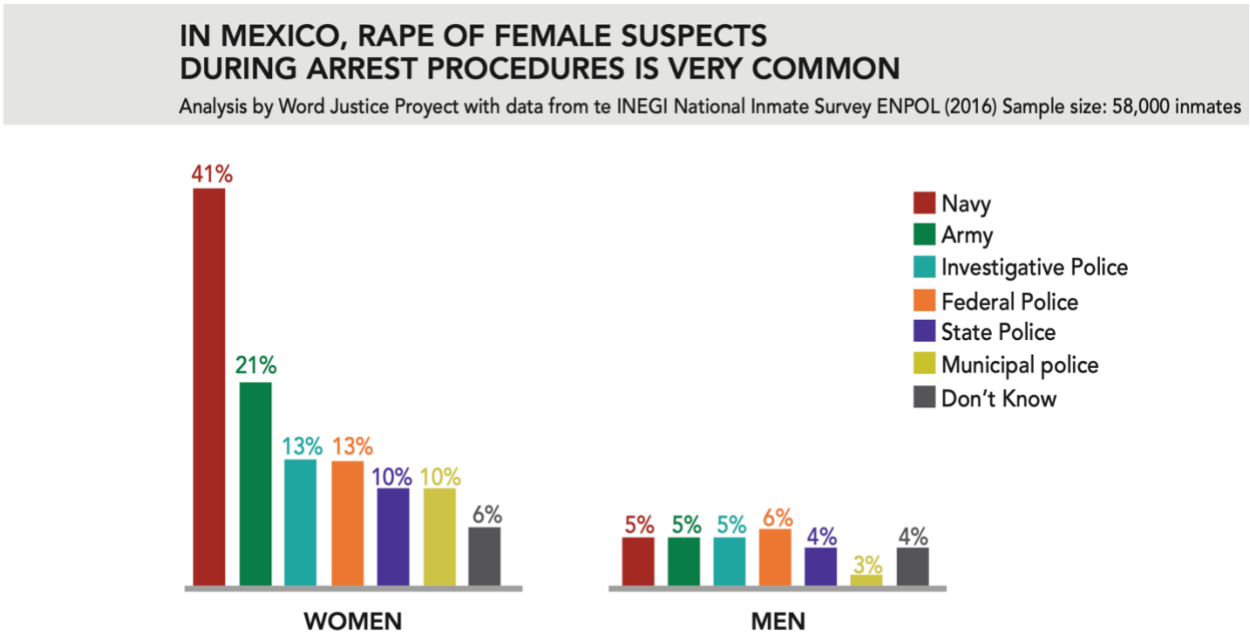

Figure 8

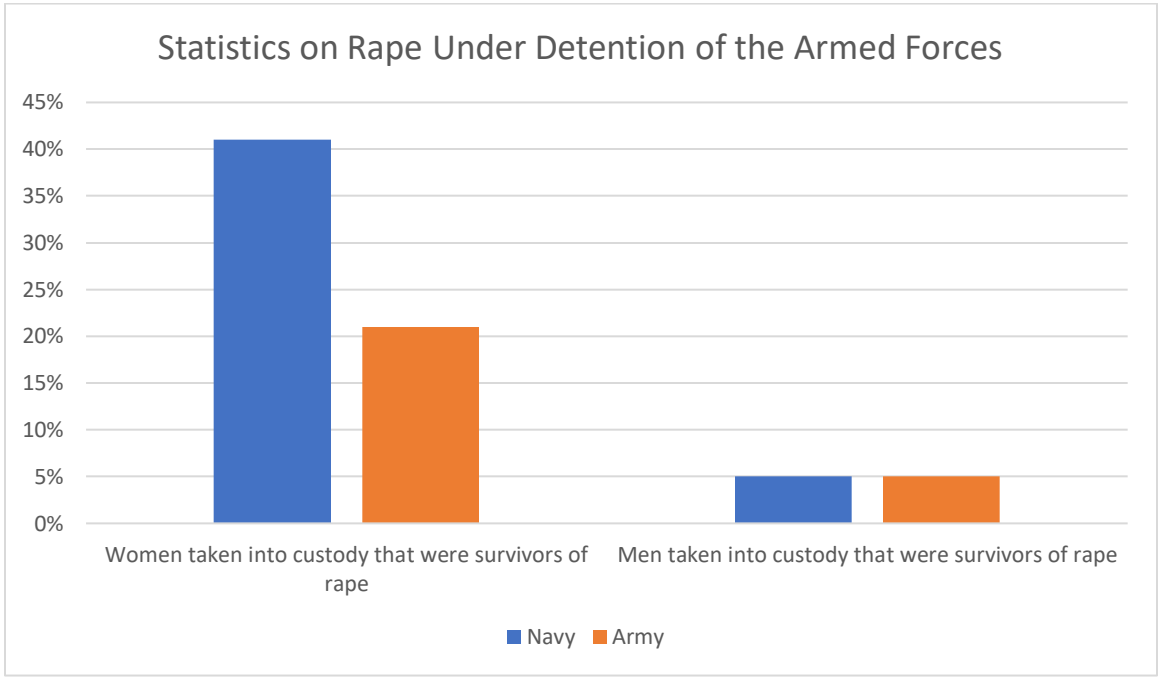

Figure 9

The National Enpol survey found that 41% of women detained by the navy were raped, compared to 5% of men, while 21% of women detained by the army were raped, compared to

5% of men (Equis 2019, 29). Only 1.3% of women detained by the army and navy had a warrant for their arrest, which indicates that these arrests were not approved by the judicial process (Equis 2019, 29). Therefore, the decision to detain these people was made by the military at the point of contact, indicating potentially high numbers of arbitrarily detained women. These statistics show that the increased use of the military in public security has led to circumvention of the judicial process to detain citizens. This circumvention is particularly dangerous for women who have a much higher risk of experiencing torture or sexual assault when detained by soldiers or marines compared to the police.

Immigrants detained in Mexico are also subjected to torture, as noted by several surveys and organizations in charge of monitoring migratory detention centers, with women being disproportionally affected by sexual violence (Equis 2019, 43). This means that due process is circumvented for either citizens or noncitizens which only weakens the legal institutions in Mexico. From 2006-2017, there were 11,778 investigations of torture, of which only 24 were consigned to the judicial authority (Equis 2019, 48). The Enpol survey notes the percentages of women reporting rape during their arrest based on states with Coahuila (38%), Tabasco (31%), Chihuahua (17%), Nuevo Leon (17%), and Guanajuato (16%) leading the list of reported abuses (Equis 2019, 73). The mistreatment of women detained by the military has led to international human rights proceedings; there are currently three cases in the Inter-American court related to violations the Mexican armed forces have committed against women (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 81).

According to the ENPOL survey, women arrested by the marines and army reported higher acts of physical and sexual violence compared to that of the federal, state, judicial, and municipal police. With the exception of kicking and keeping women in isolation, which all law

enforcement bodies did at similar rates, there is a marked difference between the way police forces treat detained women, compared to the army and Marines (ENPOL 2016). The categories the survey examines include being undressed, tied up, hit, suffocated, raped, and burnt (ENPOL 2016). The army and especially the marines are reported for each type of abuse at higher rates than their police counterparts. Considering the fact that most arrests of women by the army and marines are for minor drug offences and made without a warrant, and the fact that women are likely to suffer violence in detention, we are left with a dangerous environment for women in Mexico, who are subject to detention without cause, higher rates of violence, disproportionately harsh sentences, and minimal access to the courts.

ENPOL 2016 Statistics

	Marines	Army	Federal Police	State Police	Don't know or refuse to answer	Ministerial or Judicial Police	Preventive or Municipal Police
Isolation	77.35%	71.64%	71.64%	64.47%	64.40%	58.30%	51.87%
Kicked	67.20%	44.35%	43.67%	44.67%	44.27%	33.94%	36.74%
Undressed	57.65%	47.44%	42.22%	38.47%	33.97%	34.08%	31.32%
Tied	60.38%	40.21%	34.25%	32.09%	33.51%	36.61%	23.74%
Hit	47.84%	33.27%	24.76%	28.26%	29.16%	22.23%	21.44%
Suffocated	49.67%	33.55%	23.46%	29.24%	28.46%	25.61%	15.88%
Raped	40.87%	20.86%	12.64%	10.24%	13.49%	14.49%	9.85%
Burnt	22.45%	7.45%	2.71%	5.19%	5.84%	2.85%	3.74%

Figure 10

Police and military abuse is enabled by a culture of impunity. Since 1991, only 15 cases out of thousands of reported incidents of torture have resulted in federal prison sentences

(Amnesty 2016, 6). Even though women have presented many complaints against the armed forces for sexual violence and torture, the army did not suspend a single officer between 2010 and 2015. Violence against women becomes institutionalized when it occurs with such impunity. During the same period, only four Marines were suspended, including one convicted for sexual abuse who was only suspended temporarily, meaning he could rejoin the Marines once his prison sentence was completed (Amnesty 2016, 6). This means that even when members of the armed forces are convicted for violence against women (which is rare), they may be allowed to rejoin the armed forces, which grants them a position of authority and the power to re-offend. This non enforcement of laws intended to protect citizens from abuses committed by the military is a form of violence against women. In this case we can see how direct forms of violence are protected through the indirect non-enforcement of laws. This non enforcement of the law is a form of indirect violence that helps institutionalize violence against women by providing impunity to soldiers who perpetuate these crimes. The government exacerbates the impunity of these abusers, as the *Procuraduría General de la República* (The Attorney General of the Republic) refuses to publish data on torture victims, impeding research on the violence experienced by women during arrest and detention.

Amnesty International reported that Mexican authorities attempted to impede their investigation on the torture and abuse of women by obstructing their plans to interview female detainees (Amnesty 2016, 6). Researchers from the organization describe finding a prison guard hiding in the conference room during their interviews with women in an apparent attempt to intimidate and dissuade the interviewees from denouncing acts of torture or abuse (Amnesty 2016, 10). There was no report of this prison guard being reprimanded even though Amnesty International sent several written petitions encouraging Mexican authorities to take action against

the prison guard (Amnesty 2016, 10). These intimidation tactics echo those used by the National Guard and obstruct the efforts of researchers to quantify and analyze instances of abuse. Mexico's government and security forces have a vested interest in suppressing research on the subject and hiding evidence of their abuse.

This section explores the ways in which the military engages in direct forms of violence against women. The section shows how sexual violence is much likelier to happen if the detainee is a woman. It also shows that torture and violence against women increased as a result of the militarized strategy to fight the war on drugs. Women are generally detained without a warrant and are much likelier to experience violence if they are detained by the military versus the police. Even with an increased number of reports of violence against the military by women, the institution and its members have experienced almost absolute immunity when reported.

5.2 Violence as a result of military confrontations with DTOs

Violence against women is not just a result of direct contact with security forces. Rather, it's a result of the overall militarized approach to fighting the war on drugs. According to Data Cívica, the rise of public violence resulting from the drug kingpin strategy (the strategy designed to take out the leaders of DTOs) and the increased use of the military to combat the war on drugs has led to increased public violence against women. Data Civica's 2020 report illustrates how, since the initiation of the militarized national security strategy in 2009, homicides against women in the public space have overtaken those in the private sphere, even though homicides of women in the private sphere continue to rise (Data Cívica 2020, 19). For example, in 2017, 2.5 homicides of women per 100,000 inhabitants occurred in the public sphere, while only 1.5 per 100,000 inhabitants happened in the private sphere (Data Cívica 2020, 19). The government has failed to address these statistics. While the government attributed the increasing rates of male homicides

to the growth in cartels, it does not have a similar rationale for explaining the growing death rates for women. Better measurements of violence against women would result in a reputational issue for the government, and provide its critics with stronger evidence of policy failures that officials would struggle to justify.

The rise of a militarized approach to combatting DTOs under Calderón has increased overall violence in Mexico. Gabriela Calderón et al. argue that "the sharp increase in homicide rates coincides approximately with the onset of President Felipe Calderón's administration and his militarized campaign to debilitate DTOs" (2015, 1456). These authors acknowledge that Calderón's strategy successfully eliminated DTOs leadership from 2006 to 2012, capturing or killing 25 capos and 160 lieutenants. Still, the cost was an escalation by almost 300% of "drug-related violence" (Calderón et al. 2015, 1480). The authors highlight the diversification of DTOs into other areas, such as human trafficking (Calderón et al. 2015, 1456). The outcome of the authors' statistical analysis demonstrates that "neutralizations of drug cartel leaders have positive (i.e., exacerbating) short-term effects not only on DTO-related violence but also on homicides that affect the general population" (Calderón et al. 2015, 1457). They explain that "after the capture of either a leader or a lieutenant, violence spills over to neighboring municipalities in the form of both increased DTO-related deaths and homicides among the general population" (Calderón et al. 2015, 1457). This study directly links President Calderón's militaristic war on drugs strategy to an overall increase of violence against the whole population. So, while violence on the whole increases, it is the most vulnerable populations, such as women, who experience its most brutal manifestations in silence. Guillermo Trejo and Sandra Ley link this militarized strategy to the rise of fragmentation and diversification of DTO's that causes a rise in extractivist industries of human wealth sub-nationally (Trejo and Ley 2020).

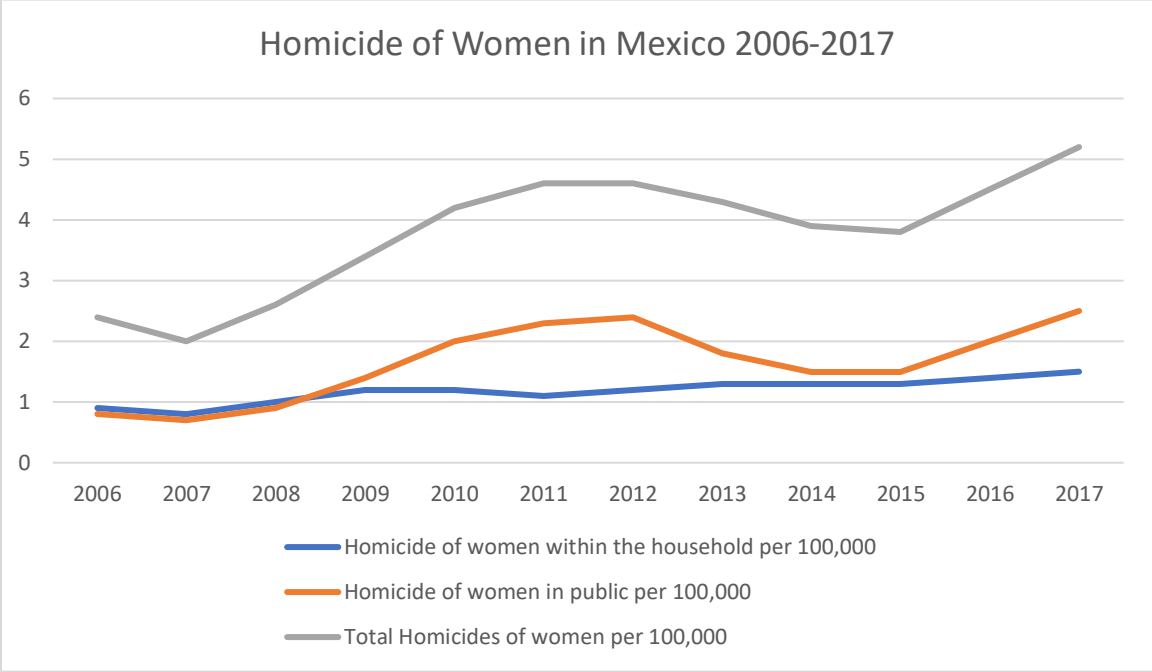

Figure 11

Laura Atuesta and Estefanía Vela take these studies a step further and analyze how the militarization strategy has resulted in more violence against women specifically. They note how violence against women has not only risen in the public sector (outside the home) but that murders of women by firearms have increased since 2007 (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 13). In 2000, general crime statistics reported that three out of ten women were killed by a firearm, while in 2018, six out of ten women were killed by a firearm. In particular, the murder of women using a firearm in public settings skyrocketed by 500% between 2000 and 2018 (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 15). This report analyzes the increase of homicides of women due to the militarization strategy used to combat the war on drugs, which has caused overall higher rates of violence in Mexico.

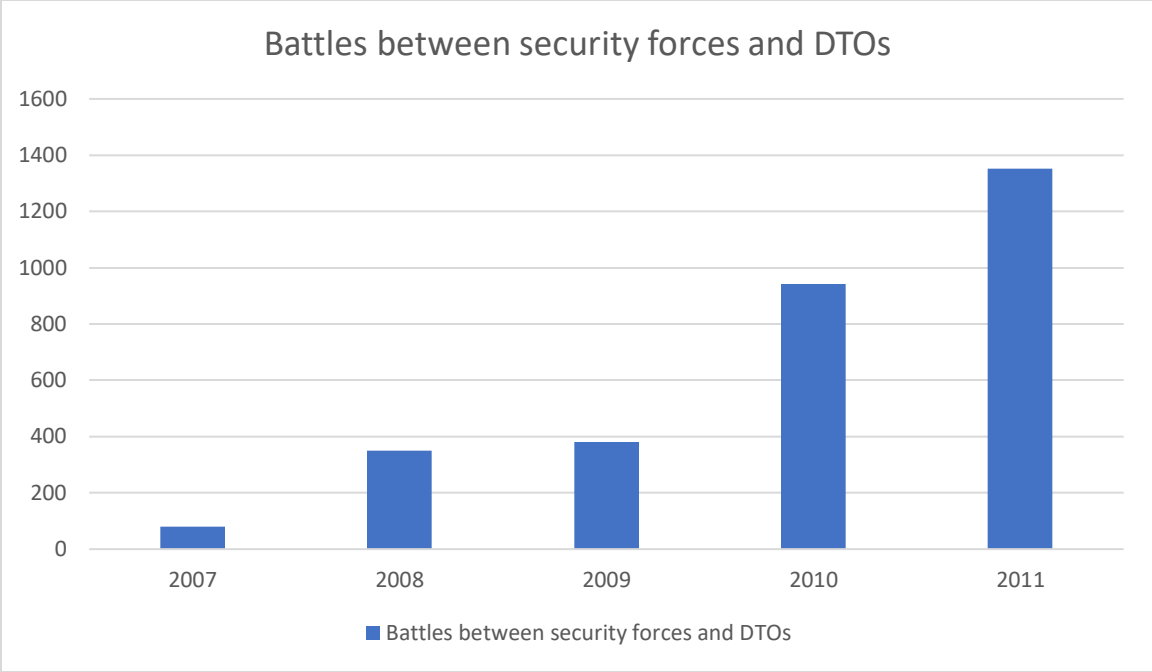

Figure 12

The CIDE-PPD database used by Atuesta and Vela distinguishes between battles between DTOs, which made up 19% of cases, and those between the armed forces and DTOs, which made up 81% of cases (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 29). Clashes between security forces and DTOs increased from 79 in 2007 to 349 in 2008, 381 in 2009, 943 in 2010, and 1,352 in 2011 (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 30). The SEDENA was involved in most incidents (1,748), and their presence in battles increased substantially from 2008 onwards (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 30). The database reveals that police forces did not accompany the SEDENA (army) and SEMAR (marines) to these conflicts with DTOs. In 93.8% of cases, the SEDENA was unaccompanied, and the SEMAR was unaccompanied in 87.8% of confrontations with DTOs. This is because the confrontations were not the result of organized operations, but occurred during random patrols. The results indicate that the armed forces lied when they gave labor reports stating that they worked with civilian authorities as the reports show they mainly act alone (Atuesta and Vela

2020, 32). The reality is that the armed forces operate almost completely independently when conducting public security duties, creating a culture of secrecy which increases their impunity.

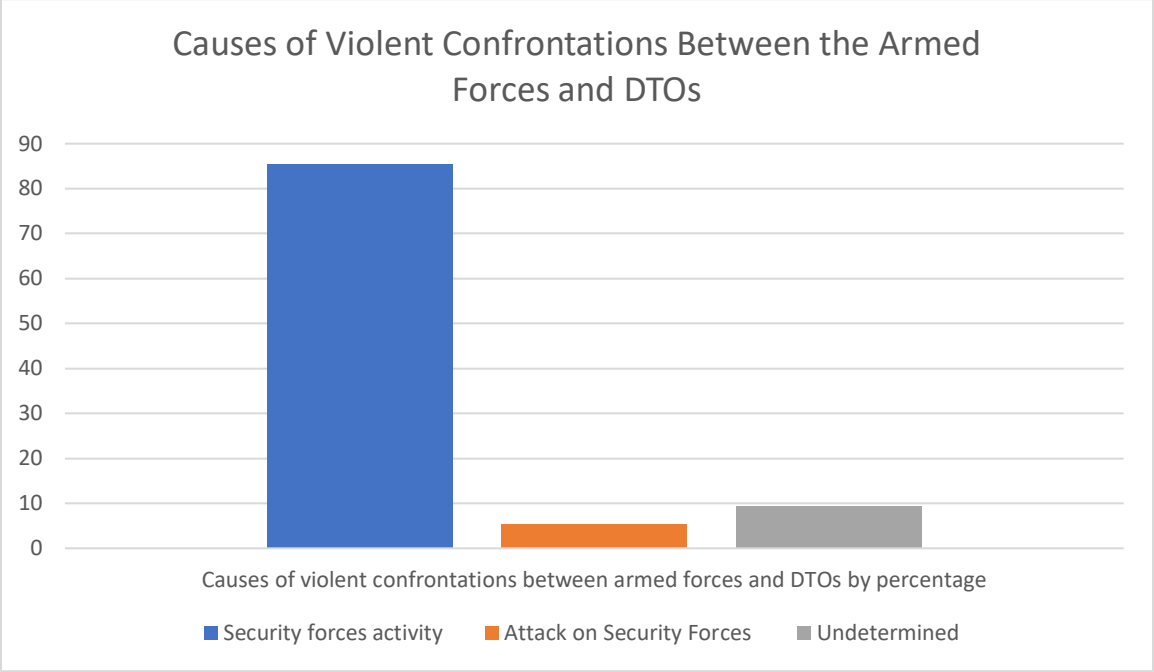

Figure 13

The CIDE-PPD database also provides statistics on how confrontations between the military and DTOs begin. Only 5.45% of battles were ignited by attacks on security forces, which undermines the government's argument that violent confrontations were defensive in nature (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 37). This also casts doubt on the government's justification for militarization, which holds that security forces are under attack by a common enemy. In reality, 85.3% of violent confrontations were triggered by security forces. Only 1.68% of violent clashes involved suspects who had warrants out for their arrest. This number drops to 0.9% for cases involving the SEDENA, and 0% for incidents involving SEMAR. In more than a quarter of incidents, confrontations were caused by patrols conducted by security forces. Around a quarter of incidents were triggered by forces patrolling outside their bases (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 39). The statistics reveal that SEDENA and SEMAR had a higher rate of triggering confrontations

than their police counterparts (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 37). This, in combination with the fact that most confrontations occurred without approval from the judiciary, indicates that the army and marines initiated violent events through a form of territorial occupation, rather than the judicially-backed investigations required by ordinary police. This territorial occupation is unique as it does not follow a formal investigative investigation with judicial backing as we see with the police, these troops essentially function as occupying forces. The territorial occupation means troops go around town making random detentions and engaging in confrontations rather than specifically targeting DTO's based of judicial investigations.

In over half of the violent confrontations recorded in the study, people were killed. Of the deceased, 81.6% were presumed to belong to a criminal organization, while 5.7% were civilians. The numbers of deceased from the security forces are as follows: municipal police (3.37%), the army (2.77%), the federal police (1.97%), the state police (1.92%), the ministerial police (1.80%), the marines (0.46%), and the AFI (0.36%) (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 41). Only 114 SEDENA soldiers were killed, despite their participation in 56% of confrontations, in which 66% of suspects were killed. Similarly, the SEMAR participated in 4.8% of conflicts but were responsible for 8.4% of the deaths of presumed criminals (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 41). The lethality levels of confrontations in which the armed forces participated increased substantially, while the number of arrests remained minimal.

Statistics on the detention rates of suspected criminals show that when the SEDENA was involved in incidents, suspects were less likely to be detained compared to similar incidents involving police forces. In the most common scenario (27.22% or just over a quarter of cases), there were no deaths, injuries, or arrests made after a confrontation between security forces and ODTs. However, the second-most common result from these conflicts, which occurred 26.03%

of the time, was that people were killed with no arrests (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 43). Fifty-five percent of presumed criminals died in events in which nobody was detained (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 43). Further, SEDENA and SEMAR were most likely to be involved in events with deaths and no arrests, being present at 32.32% and 31.76% of these events, respectively (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 43). In contrast, in most incidents in which the police were involved, nobody was killed, detained, or injured, and in the second-highest number of incidents they made arrests without killing or injuring anybody (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 43). These statistics indicate that violence is not a necessary part of these confrontations, but reflect flaws in the military's approach to such incidents.

The number of deaths compared to injuries, otherwise referred to as the lethality index, demonstrates that the SEDENA and SEMAR are responsible for the highest death rates compared to injuries (5.86 and 4.96 respectively).These statistics show how the use of the military in public security has led to an increase in lethal force. These are double the rates of their police counterparts. The same is true for the rates of presumed criminals killed per arrest—the agencies kill one person for each arrest they make (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 44). The SEDENA and SEMAR also have the highest rates of killings for every one of their operatives killed. They kill 20 presumed criminals for every soldier who dies and 12 for every marine killed, three to four times the rates of their police counterparts (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 45).

These statistics, which are available through the CIDE-PPD database, establish a clear relationship between the involvement of the armed forces and increasing rates of violence in Mexico. They suggest that the armed forces trigger violence at much higher rates than their police counterpoints. The high ratio of deaths to arrests problematizes the involvement of the armed forces in public security. The armed forces are shown to act without oversight from civil

authorities, their police counterparts, or the judicial branch, and use lethal force indiscriminately. These high levels of lethality cast doubt on the armed forces' assertions that the people involved were criminals, as there are often no survivors to be tried or testify as witnesses in court.

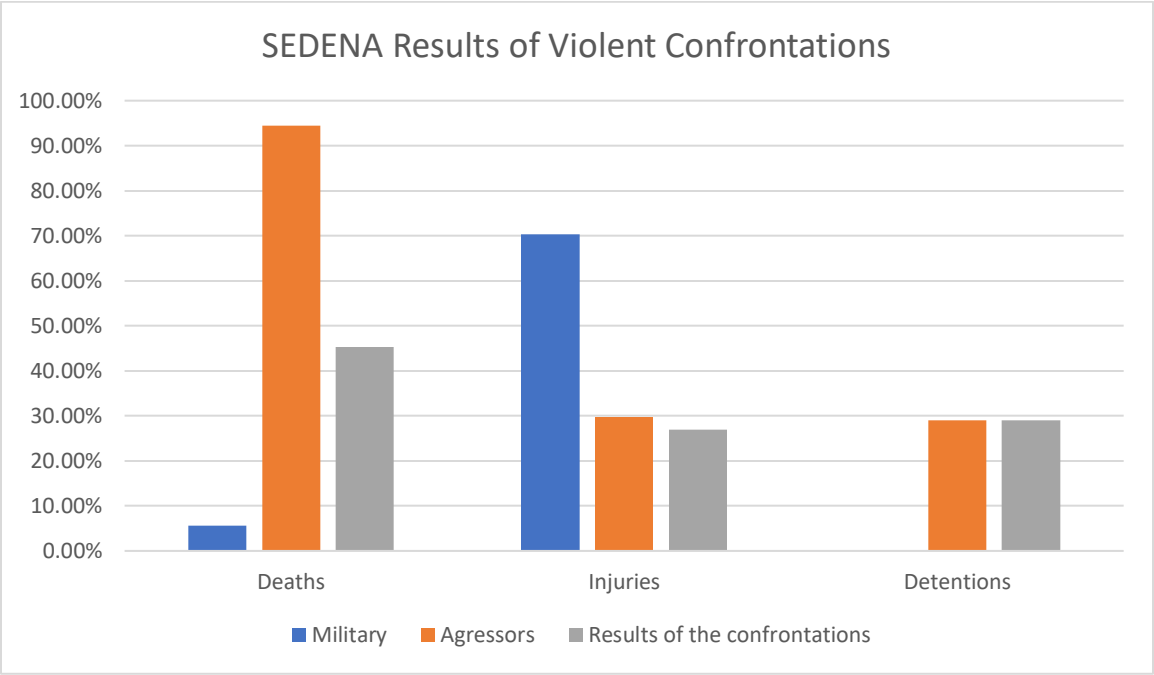

Figure 14

The SEDENA database categorizes fatalities into only two categories: aggressors or the military. This dichotomy means there is no data on the number of civilians hurt or injured. The database is still helpful, however, as it demonstrates that the trend towards increasing violence and lethality has continued over an extended period. The data covers the period between 2007 and 2018 and establishes that 45.29% of confrontations between military and DTOs resulted in deaths, of which 94.45% were aggressors and 5.55% were army personnel (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 51). There were injuries in over a quarter of these confrontations, 70.31% of which were sustained by military members, and the remainder by "aggressors." At the same time, only 29% of confrontations resulted in arrests, meaning the army kills more suspects than it detains (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 52). Incidents of abuse of power by the military have continued to rise

under Lopez Obrador's presidency. In 2019, 94.7% of violent confrontations involving the armed forces resulted in death. Under Obrador, 1.5 people are killed for every one that is detained, which is a higher rate than under Calderón or Peña Nieto's presidencies (Jiménez and Vela 2020).

Results of Violent Confrontations Involving SEMAR

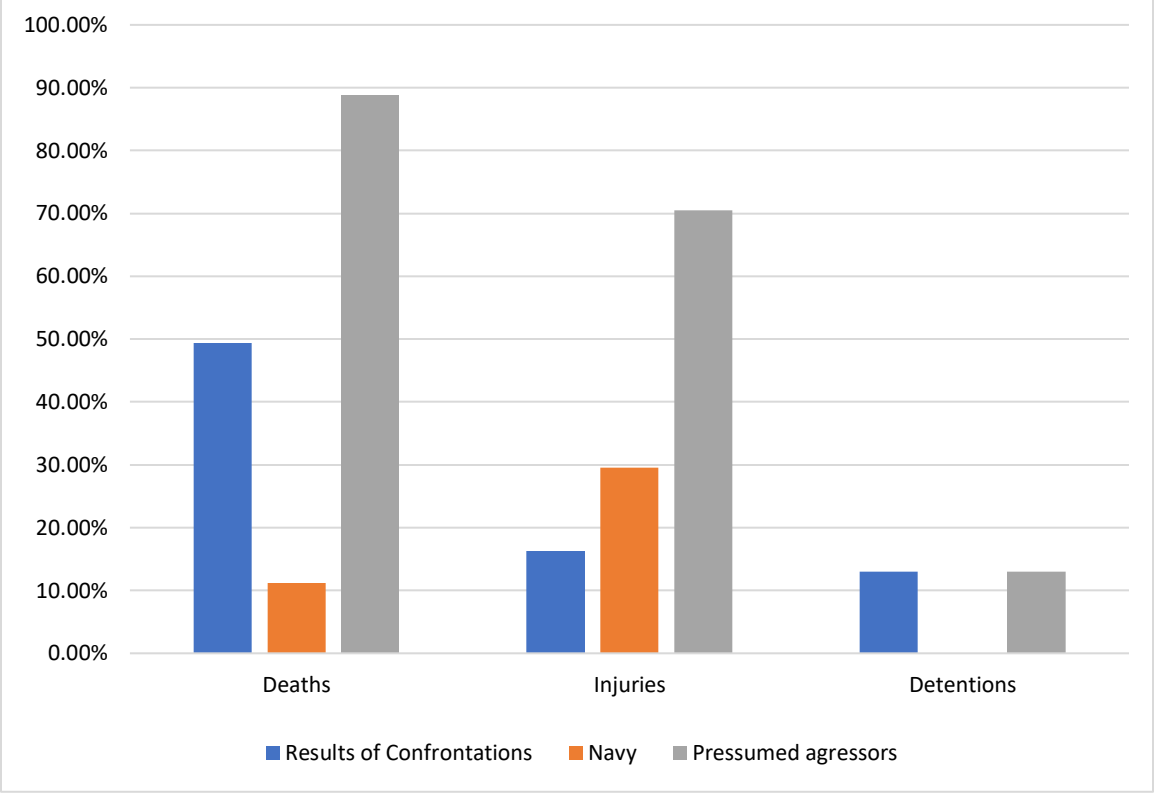

Figure 15

The SEMAR database has the same deficiencies as the SEDENA's, as it excludes civilians killed or injured during confrontations and only categorizes between aggressors and marines. There are similar lethality levels in confrontations involving marines, with 49.37% of confrontations resulting in deaths (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 58). The deceased were classified as "aggressors" in 88.82% of cases, and marines 11.18% of the time. This means that 7.9% of "aggressors" were killed for every marine. Injuries occurred in 16.29% of confrontations, and the

majority of the injured were “aggressors” (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 58). Suspects were detained in only 13.03% of conflicts, meaning 3.11 “aggressors” were killed for every one detained (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 59).

Atuesta and Vela analyze whether the violent confrontations of the armed forces have also caused higher rates of additional violence in the municipalities in which these confrontations occurred. The authors embark on a quantitative study using data from municipalities with confrontations and without confrontations to calculate if overall violence increased in municipalities in which the armed forces engaged in confrontations (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 65). The study results show that confrontations by the armed forces are never related to an overall reduction of homicides in the municipalities and are always associated with an increase of homicides for men and women in the municipalities (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 70). The study shows that confrontations by the armed forces always result in higher homicide rates in the short run and three months after confrontations.

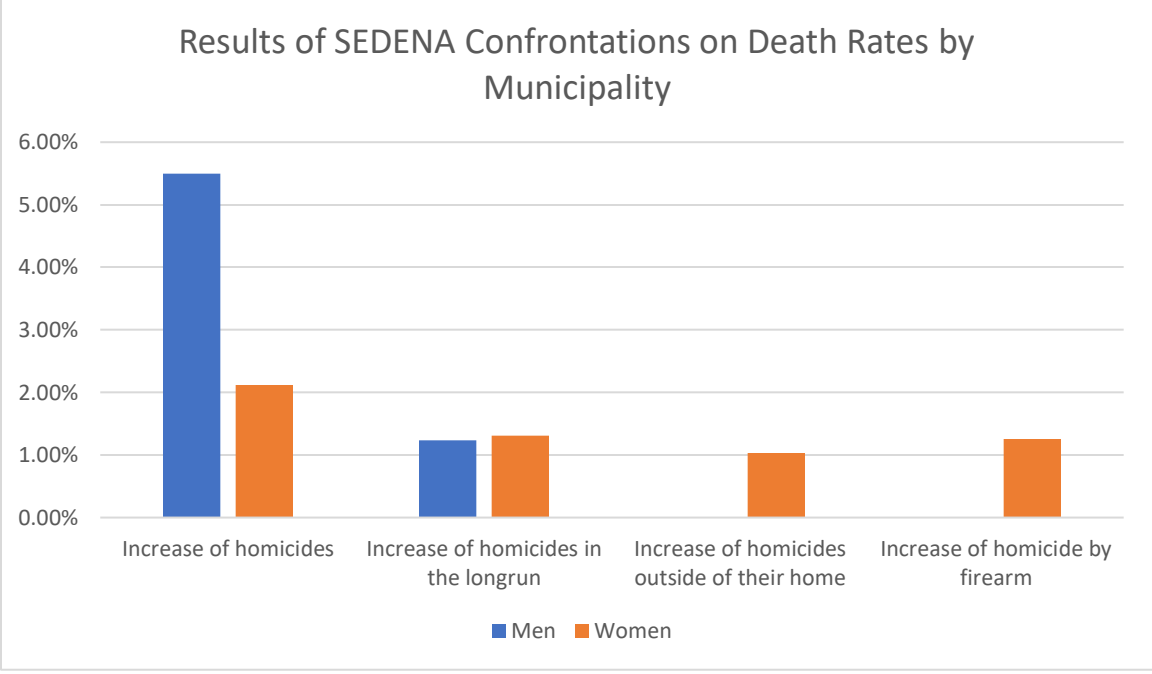

Figure 16

For every additional confrontation that the SEDENA participated in, homicides at the municipal level increased by 5.5% for men and 2.12% for women (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 75). For every additional confrontation that the SEDENA was involved in, the average number of homicides for women increased by 1.31%, compared to 1.23% for men (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 75). For confrontations associated with SEDENA, in the short run, they don't affect the rates of women killed at home or without the use of a firearm. However, there were increases in the number of homicides of men, regardless of whether they occurred inside or outside the home and whether they involved firearms. While direct violence may have not increased in the short run; overtime indirect forms of violence still significantly impact women. The confrontations by the SEDENA result in an increase of homicides against women outside of the home by 1.03% for every additional confrontation and involving the use of a firearm by 1.26% (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 77). In the long run, for men, the impact is the same for homicides in public or at home or with or without firearms. For women, in the long run, there is a higher rate for all forms of homicide, with or without a firearm, and at home or in public. This signals that confrontations started by the military in municipalities result in higher rates of violence against women both in the short and long run.

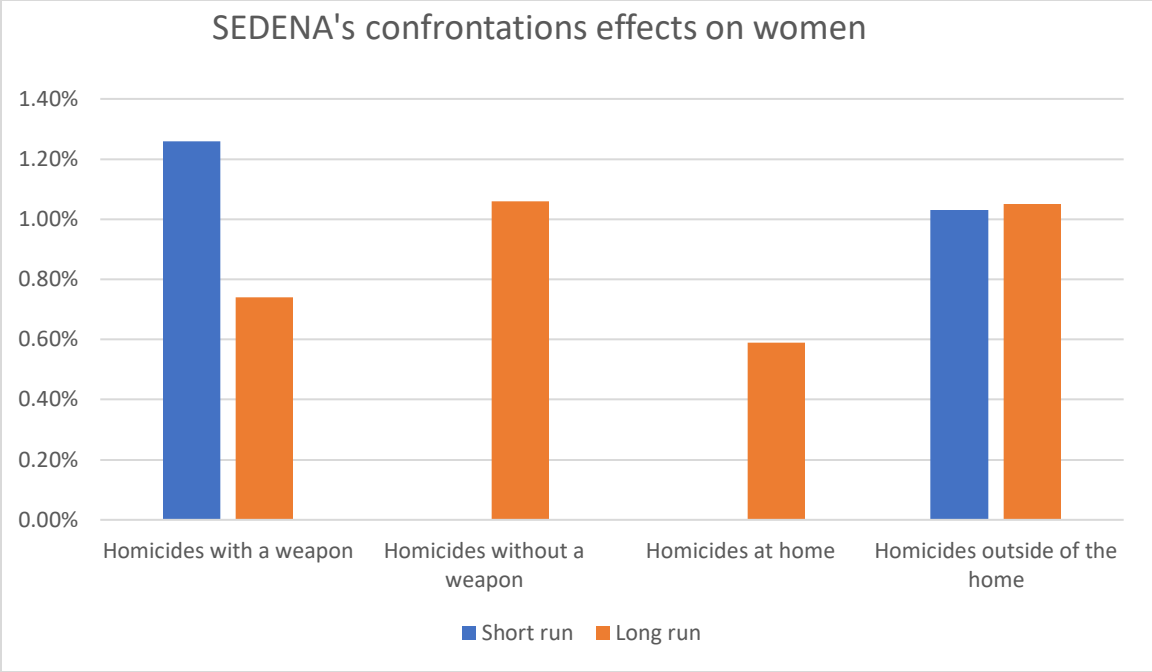

Figure 17

Specifically, homicides of women increase by 1.26% shortly after every additional confrontation by the SEDENA, and 0.74% over a longer period. In the case of homicides of women that do not involve weapons, we see no increase shortly after confrontations, and an increase of 1.06% in the longer term (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 77). For every additional confrontation by the SEDENA, we see no increase of homicide for women at home and an increase of 0.59% in the long run. In contrast, we see a rise of 1.03% for homicides outside of the home in the short run and an increase of 1.05% in the long run (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 78).

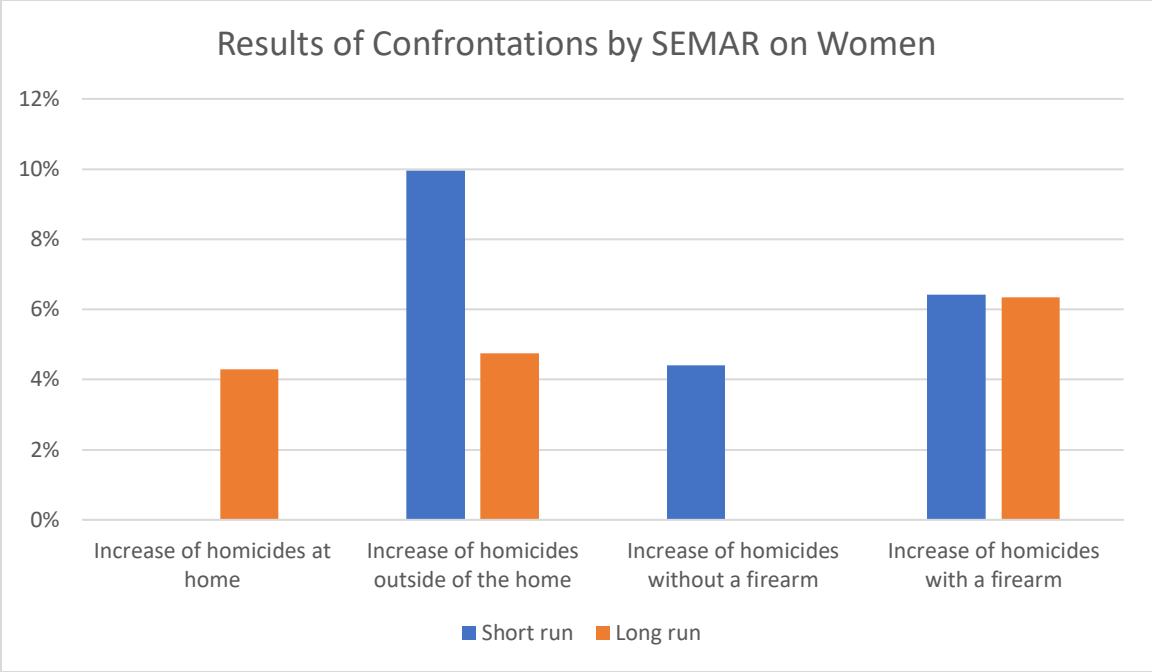

Figure 18

For every additional confrontation by the SEMAR, there is no impact in the short run for homicides of women at home, and there is an increase in the long run of 4.29%. For homicides outside of the home, there is a short-term increase of 9.95% an increase of 4.74% in the longer-term. Homicides without a firearm increase by 4.4% shortly after a conflict, with no impact in the long term. Homicides committed against women with a firearm increase by 6.42% shortly after a conflict, and by 6.35% in the longer term 6.35% (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 78). These results demonstrate the differences between homicide rates of men and women. Men appear to be more impacted in the short term, possibly because they are more directly associated with the confrontations. There is a more sustained and at times increased impact of homicide rates against women in the long-term. This may be because violence affects the community as a whole, increasing violence and homicide rates in every facet of life. This suggests that the confrontations caused by the armed forces increase violence against women both directly and indirectly. The violence experienced was higher in the short and long term compared to places in

which the armed forces had not had direct confrontations. The issue is that communities that have faced these direct confrontations see violence spill over even after the initial confrontation as violence works as a cycle. The more violence experienced in a community, the more likely that violence will spread and continue as grievances grow and competition over the territory and its people escalates.

As Rita Canto researcher for the UNAM and part of the search committees for disappeared people in Mexico explains in her interview:

> I think any militarization project with no time limit or end date is problematic. We saw this clearly when the army entered Mexico City, we observed the National Guard enter in 2018 to help with the more complicated areas like the west that was a zone with clear incidences of disappearances and when the National Guard entered the number skyrocketed, not because they necessarily directly disappear women. My hypothesis is that when the SEDENA enters territories in conflict, pacts used to balance power between DTOs and governmental actors break down, causing violence and insecurity, particular among the most vulnerable, which includes women (Rita Canto).[16]

Thus, even if the military isn't directly harming women, their presence in a region can indirectly jeopardize their security.

Feminist literature exploress multidimensional measures of poverty, including the measurement of several systemic inequalities related to violence against women. The Consejo Nacional de Evaluacion de la Politica de Desarrollo Social (CONEVAL) developed a methodology to measure multidimensional poverty in Mexico from 2008 to 2018. CONEVAL describes multidimensional poverty as, a situation when a person is socially deprived in any sense and their income is insufficient to acquire the goods and services required to fulfill their needs (Coneval, 1). This means that instead of only looking at the lack of economic resources people experience, it considers several new dimensions that social policy needs to focus on that

[16] 14th of October 2021 over zoom

are related to poverty. This period spans multiple administrations, minimizing the possibility that data was manipulated by the political party in power. The results propose an alternative explanation to poverty for the rise of indirect violence against women in Mexico. During the period analyzed, the percentage of the population in poverty decreased from 44.4% to 41.9%, as did the percentage of the population in extreme poverty, which decreased from 11% to 7.4%. At the same time, the number of people without access to education, health services, social security, housing, and food also decreased (Coneval, 5-6). The number of women in poverty also fell, from 44.6% to 42.4% (Coneval, 6). Overall, the period covering the militarization of the drug war and the increase of violence against women has also been a period where multidimensional poverty decreased.

This section shows how the militarized strategy to fight DTOs has caused both direct and indirect forms of violence against women. The presence of the military has increased direct violence against women at the point of contact. The presence and confrontations the military engages in throughout different communities has also elevated general levels of violence against women. This form of violence is more indirect as it reproduces violence against women in an indirect manner. The soldiers are not the ones necessarily committing the violence directly against women in this case, but they are responsible for increasing general violence in the short and long run in municipalities in which they engaged in confrontations. So even if it is cartel members committing the higher rates of violence against women, it is because of a reaction to confrontations with the military. The soldiers' activities in the region increase the probability that women will experience violence in the short and long run compared to communities where the military is not present.

5.3. Diversification of DTOs

The diversification of DTOs into human trafficking, triggered by the militarized drug war strategy, further perpetuates violence against women. The diversification of DTOs simply refers to the diversification of their illicit activity expanding from their drug trafficking origins into other illicit or licit activity that can help increase their profits. These additional illicit activities include human trafficking, extortion rackets, kidnapping, illegal logging and stealing gasoline. This diversification has been mainly caused by the drug king pin strategy employed by the government and the military to combat DTOs. As pressure from the military and other DTOs grew so did the need to diversify their business into other areas to maintain profits lost from fighting directly against the military and other DTOs striving for territorial control. This diversification has meant that DTOs are actively participating more in extractivist businesses that directly impact citizens security. Take, for example, the Zetas. According to Davila, they became an independent cartel in 2010, at which time the dynamics of human trafficking in Mexico radically changed (Davila 2015). The Zetas identified a lucrative opportunity built on Mexico's geostrategic position as a bridge country for migration flows (Davila 2015). Drug cartels such as the Zetas took over human smuggling operations in Mexico's northern and southern borders and transformed them into trafficking operations targeting thousands of Central American migrants (Davila 2015). They frequently extort, assault, and traffic victims of these operations for either forced labor or sexual exploitation within Mexico and the United States (Davila 2015). O'Connor supports Davila’s findings, adding that diplomats and activists have long raised the alarm about drug cartels moving into the human trafficking business, sometimes with the complicity of corrupt regional officials (O'Connor 2011).

The Zetas provide an interesting case study of the movement of cartels into human trafficking, particularly because the group was created by former members of the Mexican special forces. The members were recruited by Arturo Guzmán to serve as the military arm for the gulf cartel run by Osiel Cárdenas (Univision 2010). According to a judicial report, Guzmán defected from the army in 1997 and started recruiting his former partners by offering them 50,000 dollars a year, which was much more than they made as soldiers (Univision 2010). Eventually, the Zetas organized their own cartel and diversified into human trafficking. The formation of the Zetas demonstrates how the militarization of the drug war leads to the corruption of the military, their direct involvement with DTOs, and further violence against women. The Center for Strategic and International Studies, a bipartisan, non-profit policy institute based in Washington DC, released a report explaining that human trafficking has become increasingly lucrative for drug traffickers looking to diversify their activities (Brice 2010). The report indicates that some cartels, such as the Zetas, rely on human trafficking as their primary revenue source (Brice 2010).

The Zetas are heavily involved in human trafficking operations. Ioan Grillo explores how drug traffickers such as the Zetas are "involved in human trafficking along with many links on the chain. Cartels control most of Mexico's smuggling networks through which victims are moved, while they also take money from pimps and brothels operating in their territories" (Grillo 2020). Surveying prosecution documents, the author reveals several cases in which drug cartel members confessed to killing pimps who crossed them, and to burning down establishments that refused to pay their quota (Grillo 2020). After the marines arrested one of the Zetas' leaders, Ángel Treviño Morales, the prosecution declared its intention to level charges of human trafficking against him (Grillo 2020). Grillo writes "the cartels know that drugs can only be sold

once, but women can be sold again and again and again" (Grillo 2020). After working with hundreds of sex trafficking victims in Mexico, Ulloa concludes that DTOs were involved in 70% of the cases she was involved in (Grillo 2020). In this sense, the militarization strategy which pressured DTOs into diversifying their sources of income by becoming involved in human trafficking triggered increased violence against women. The marginalization of women has traditionally been linked to socioeconomic conditions, but in Mexico militarism and the drug war are the primary drivers of high levels of violence against women.

Marcela Villalobos explains: "Those that are disappeared in our country [Mexico] were underage women that disappear at higher rates than men, which is related to human trafficking with the goal of sexual or labor exploitation" (Marcela Villalobos). When discussing if and how human trafficking has increased Marcela as well as many of the others interviewed discuss the difficulties of knowing whether the numbers are actually growing or if the increase reflects better investigating and reporting. As Marcela explains,

> It is difficult to measure it because we do not really know. It is a crime that is rarely reported as it can disguise itself as other crimes like kidnapping or disappearance etc. So, we do not really know how many women are being exploited, we know Mexico is one of the main countries with cases of human trafficking. Especially when related to sexual exploitation of minors. We need to understand the situation, but it is a crime that generates a lot of money and is a crime that generates so much money it involves people like organized crime but also these spaces of macro criminality with politicians and businessman that make the problem invisible and what should be done does not happen. The impunity enables these issues. I can't say if they have grown exactly due to the alarming dark numbers, but as women and children have disappeared, we need to analyze it. How do they disappear and those that are found, what situation where they found in specially the survivors, what is their situation? It needs to be researched. When a person like feminist Lydia Cacho tries to denounce human trafficking, she had to move, and exile and we can see how those businessmen accomplices got away with these things. The immediate search of women needs to be a policy that is enacted across the country, women could be found in brothels or dating houses or places where they could be easily located. We know many times they are in entities close to the border like Chiapas, Baja California and Veracruz (Marcela Villalobos).[17]

[17] 26 of October 2021 over zoom, Mexico.

Rita Canto argues that the focal point of human trafficking is Mexico's metropolitan areas in Mexico.

Our research demonstrates the ways the state has systematized the invisibility of women, which perpetuates violence against them. They use infrastructures such as the airport that help explain this massive extraction, there needs to be a logistical system and governmental support behind this operation, it is not easy to make a person disappear. There is a process of invisibility, there is an important political debt because if you don't name the problem, you are giving women in Mexico the wrong message. It is important to name the problem and red flags so that we can become alert of the problem. This is a war against women not because they are the target but because it begins with women and then extends beyond. The message that is given is one of impunity where all of us are victims of this system of violence in some way (Rita Canto).[18]

Rita Canto touches on the idea of invisibility that Kamal Sadiq as well as other feminist authors like Ackerly, Stein, and True have also worked on. The concept of invisibility is present in many forms for women. Most of the work women do at home is invisible from the perspective of critiques of capitalism. There has also been a patriarchal push to privatize women's activities and keep them out of the public arena. Finally, there is the invisibility of their experiences as they relate to violence. All these forms of invisibility are harmful to women as they help perpetuate injustice, and also serve to hide the daily struggles women face. The invisibility also spreads into governance as understanding problems is key to solving them. Government institutions that are in charge of helping survivors of violence are known to be places where women are frequently revictimized. The invisibility does not merely hide the violence women experience but it also makes it harder to fix existing institutions that are responsible for supporting these survivors. This invisibility is then exploited by the government to form a more convenient story about the causes of violence against women: i.e., that its source and solution lie at home in the private setting.

[18] 14th of October 2021 over zoom

When I asked Rita if she believed human trafficking had increased since 2008, she responded:

> Yes, the response is yes, starting with the military operation in Michoacán, there has been a facet of displacement of militarization across the country that on the side of NGOs and academics has cost us a lot of work to pinpoint the moment in which we are in. Brazil is a great reference and researchers speak of how this is a mirror in which we can see ourselves regarding what happens in Mexico. With the deployment of the armed forces came a wave of criminal diversification that we began to notice crudely in Mexico City, which is where I am, and have the focus of my attention. Starting in 2017 things got worse again. There is a phrase that Marcela Curay says: "in the moment that a cartel comes in, the first thing that disappears are women." There are ways of operating not only symbolically but that signifies the control of the bodies of women, particularly those who live in ghetto spaces and marginalized that do not happen by casuality. There have been processes in which politics of public security in Mexico City created ghettos in which the lives and bodies of women can be sacrificed with impunity (Rita Canto).[19]

The creation of these spaces in which women's bodies are sacrificed with impunity can be understood as a form of indirect violence being perpetrated against women. Not only is the government responsible for the direct violence women experience at the hands of the security forces but they are also affected indirectly by allowing the formation of spaces that allow impunity to reign over the bodies of women.

> These spaces of impunity did not originate in Mexico City. As Rita explains, This comes from afar in reality, in Ciudad Juárez we can mark the start of the problem. There is a mythology around Juárez where they say it was the epicenter of the feminization of several phenomenon related to violence. When it started in Juarez there were already other states that were facing the same problem in particular in the northern border. So, the spiral of femicide violence travels down as many authors state, as it goes down due to the militarization processes it increases and the forms change (Rita Canto).[20]

As Canto asserts there is a process that is triggered with military deployments to fight drug wars that leads to an increased vulnerability for women's bodies that are treated as something to be conquered and exploited.

[19] 14th of October 2021 over zoom.
[20] 14th of October 2021 over zoom.

Jorge Lule also has first-hand experience helping families of those that have been disappeared. He provides valuable insight about human trafficking, explaining:

> From my personal experience helping cases of family members that are looking for their disappeared loved ones, I have seen an increase in human trafficking cases due to different reasons. As I mentioned before, the war on drugs, or at least the violence exercised against women due to the war on drugs. makes it so they are seen as a territory for dispute or a token for exchange. That has increased the processes in which an exercise of violence against women is normalized. Additionally, as we have researched the theme of disappearances, we saw that it is important to create a methodology to note the different types of disappearances. Just because someone is not there could mean different things like they are detained, in a network of human trafficking and other spaces that mean they have not been killed. Even in search groups of family members looking for their disappeared there are search protocols for women that are still alive that look for them in human trafficking networks, in clinics for people with HIV or other diseases to try and find them. I think that globalized spaces don't only exist in the licit market, they involve the illicit market as well. Currently, being Latino is seen as being exotic so it becomes something attractive. It becomes a type of currency you want, and human trafficking has increased in this region due to organized crime and the valuation of Latinos in the illicit market (Jorge Lule).[21]

Disappearances are another form of both direct and indirect violence. The direct violence comes at the hands of the person who disappears another person. The indirect form of violence comes from the governmental neglect to address this issue. Lula and Canto recount how the militarization process and the fight against DTO's has led to a conceptualization of women and their bodies as just another product that can be sold and, in this case, even resold. Women are thus understood in the context of the war on drugs as simply another way to make profit or as something to be consumed and discarded. The context of impunity perpetuates and normalizes these conceptualizations of women and their bodies.

Francisco Barron details the need to address conceptual and definitional issues which enable human trafficking. In his interview he stated:

> If you look at the laws of prevention or assault from 2012 [regarding human trafficking] and some modifications, protocols and institutions that try to first make the problem visible and then try to intervene in the problem very timidly and with juridical actions.

[21] 21st of January 2022 over zoom.

> What you see in these documents, that I believe is a serious problem, is that human trafficking is not conceptualized. Homicide is determined as the stealing of life, what is conceptualized as a crime which is a problem of philosophy of law, but it is well described. If you look at descriptions of human trafficking, they are absolutely ambiguous, everything and nothing fits into them. I do believe that a lot of colleagues and activists say we have to intervene in the streets and do something, our colleagues forget that there is discursive and conceptual politics that needs to be done as well (Francisco Barron).[22]

Barron explains that the issue is having ambiguous concepts, such that it becomes difficult to define or tackle the issue in the first place. Again, it is themes of invisibility that perpetuate these ambiguities as the government refuses to listen to survivors of human trafficking to help understand the issue better. Instead, definitions and solutions on human trafficking are designed and implemented from the top-down. It is imperative to understand an issue if one is to find solutions, so Barron continues to explain why the government is having problems tackling these issues using its existing vocabularies and conceptualizations:

> The government has a general law to try and deal with human trafficking from 2012 and it has modifications and protocols. If you see what they call human trafficking they use vocabulary of very varied backgrounds. For example, they use vocabulary of slavery, capitalist exploitation, of economic consumption, or vocabularies of violence. There are certain DTOs that use children as lookouts or to sell drugs that are lumped into this term. This generates an articulation that becomes very complex, conceptually speaking. You do not know if human trafficking is slavery that has a specific regime on submission of bodies and relationships. They also add this vocabulary of migrations, so they also think that human trafficking has a centrality in the movement and consumption of bodies. One of the things we investigate is that not all bodies are candidates to human trafficking or even the traffic or organs, they need to be specific bodies.
> There is an accumulation of vocabulary that impede or complicate the ways in which institutions can act. Because you don't know if this slavery is human trafficking, but the structures and ways of functioning is different, you do not know if it is organ trafficking, you don't know what it is. I'm not saying we have to have a perfectly clear concept of what it means. You have to address the conceptual problem where you have a combination of vocabularies from different systems of power, submission etc. over bodies. They even speak of labor exploitation as if it was the same as sexual exploitation. There are practices and phenomena that interact with all these different discourses, so everything is called human trafficking, so what happens is that institutions don't know how to confront this issue. They add stereotypes into the language so everything fits, all

[22] 25th of October 2021 over zoom.

> violence except for femicides are all encompassed into this term as if it was a storage facility where you can store every form of violence. So, it becomes very complex to intervene (Francisco Barron).[23]

Barron uncovers the ways in which silencing and invisibility have had effects on the concepts and definitions used to address violence. The imposition of a definition from the top that does not consider the experience or voice of the survivors of violence perpetuates the problems it seeks to address. Even from a conceptual point, the silencing of women has created definitions of violence that are too broad and that make the search for justice even harder to achieve. Silencing survivors makes tackling violence harder, from conceptualizing the problem to acting on it.

In conclusion, the direct and increased interaction between the armed forces and civilians has caused an increase in violence against women. This chapter exposes how women are sexually abused at higher rates than men when detained by the armed forces in Mexico. Most women are arbitrarily detained, given disproportionately harsh sentences, and face high rates of abuse at the hands of the armed forces, even when compared to detentions made by the police force. These statistics indicate that increased confrontations between the DTOs and the army has also increased general violence against women in the short and long term. The chapter highlights and traces the ways in which the military and its operations have caused both direct and indirect forms of violence against women.

Alternative explanations for the rise of violence against women are insufficient. Feminist theory points to the importance of economic well-being in relation to violence against women. The multidimensional measures of poverty in Mexico, however, show an increase in the economic well-being of most Mexican women. The Mexican government frames the rise in

[23] 25th of October 2021 over zoom, Mexico.

violence as a private issue occurring at home. The evidence on violence against women, however, shows that violence against women is occurring more in public spaces than in private spaces for the first time in Mexican history. Another possible explanation for the rise in violence against women focuses on the DTOs.

The problem with only blaming only the DTOs for the rise in violence against women is that it disregards the rise of reports of violence committed against women by the armed forces since the onset of the frontal attack on DTOs by the military. It also does not explain why there has been a rise in violence against women since 2006 when Calderon declared war on the cartels. The DTOs are responsible for the rise of violence against women, but they are responsible within the context of their interactions with the government. It is crucial to understand the rise of violence against women from DTOs as part of a strategic response by DTOs to the militarized strategy employed by the government to fight against them. It is through the militarization of drug policies in Mexico that both direct and indirect forms of violence have risen against women in Mexico. Direct violence occurs at points of contact with the military that break due process and take women prisoners with no warrant and then torture and abuse them at high rates. Indirect violence occurs by creating the environment possible for these crimes and others to be committed against women with almost absolute impunity.

Chapter 6. Government Neglect and the Production of Indirect Violence

This chapter analyses the ways in which government neglect and inaction is a form of indirect violence that has perpetuated violence against women in Mexico. I focus on three main aspects of this neglect that center around understanding and acting against the problem of violence against women. In terms of neglect the government hinders the understanding of these issues by suppressing continuous research on the subject. Researchers have experienced pressures from security forces against women who are survivors of violence when testifying against security forces. The government has also utilized its budget to further neglect the problem by slashing budgets dedicated to research on violence against women and shutting down shelters for battered women. It also neglects any action to meaningfully address violence against women. Government officials engage in media campaigns that try to privatize the issue of violence against women and portray it as an intrafamilial issue to be resolved within the home. The government finally neglects to solve critical issues within its own institutions that are perpetuating violence against women. These include not having uniform definitions and laws regarding feminicide and ignoring the increasing reports or revictimization within prisons and prosecutors' offices when reporting violence. Overall this chapter looks at the outcomes of neglect from the government and identifies this neglect as a form of indirect violence.

6.1. Response to women's violence by the Mexican government

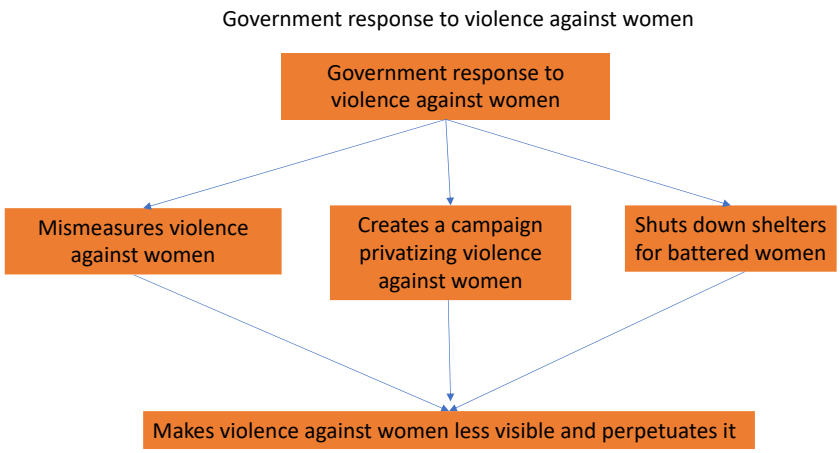

Figure 19

Figure 17 models how the Mexican government's narrative of a successful militarization of the drug war has enabled an inadequate response to rising rates of violence against women and perpetuates the problem. This graph is modeled from the results of my findings as well as interviews with several experts on violence against women in Mexico. I use a critical feminist lens to analyze this phenomenon, as it explicitly focuses on the act of silencing women. Government responses privatize violence against women, rendering it invisible, which acts as a new form of violence against women. For example, the Mexican government does not consistently collect data or take surveys related to violence against women—surveys which are crucial to understand violence against women are published up to five years apart. In many cases, legal terms such as femicide are not defined uniformly across Mexico, making it difficult to gather reliable data. These inconsistencies make it difficult to monitor gendered violence and create strategies to tackle it.

Further, research conducted on gendered violence is actively suppressed. This is evidenced by the experience of Amnesty International researchers, who faced several barriers trying to investigate women's claims of abuse by authorities. The suppression of statistics about violence committed by the military is more challenging to identify, as researchers struggle to recognize omissions without access to original datasets. Sometimes there is an absence of research, but in other instances there are cases of direct manipulation of the results of the research from security forces who threaten the subjects of the investigation. The government employs several strategies to manipulate data; sometimes they simply bury important information in metadata, while at other times the military shares contradictory data in a series of releases, leaving researchers with no way to ascertain which data are correct. In the past, civil organizations have successfully taken legal action to have information released, but this is a time-consuming process with no guarantee of success.

Tackling an issue as complex as violence against women requires transparency, political will, resources, and attention from the government. If researchers cannot access accurate data about the issue, it becomes difficult to establish its scope, evolution, and the required response. The failure of the Mexican government to provide reliable statistics on violence against women minimizes their experience and allows the government to reallocate resources intended to help survivors of violence towards other projects. The current government closed several women's shelters and defunded research on gendered violence as it increased resources for the Mayan train infrastructure project. No rationale is provided for the defunding of shelters, but it is easy to understand that the train project, whose cost estimates tripled since it was first announced by President Andres Manuel López Obrador is the most likely culprit (Infobae 2022). Invisibility must be understood as a form of violence that impedes help from reaching those that need it the

most. In Mexico, there is no government strategy to tackle the rising rates of violence against women, nor are there any established parameters to measure the success of policies and programs designed to prevent this violence. Even when programs are established to help female survivors of violence, several states refuse to use their budgets to invest in these institutions (Figueroa and Toledo 2020, 28). At the federal and state levels, the government has avoided fully acknowledging or investing resources into the crisis of gendered violence.

The role of the Mexican armed forces in driving increasing rates of violence against women places the government in a politically awkward situation—the institution officials have heralded and funded as protectors of public safety is responsible for worsening gendered violence. Since the Calderón administration, Mexico's security strategy has been to place the military in charge of an increasing number of responsibilities, for many of which they were never trained. Statistics on the military show that their murder rates are much higher than their detention rates which demonstrate how ill-prepared soldiers are to take over public safety, particularly when compared to the same statistics from police forces. Military members are not trained to investigate or follow judicial protocol; they are trained to deliver objectives in combat situations in which the death of adversaries is an acceptable outcome. It appears that the government's choice to use the military to police drug trafficking was not one based on an objective assessment of their capabilities so much as a desire to appear committed to fighting the cartels. This commitment to use the military to fight the cartels is backed up by the drug certification process detailed in chapter three. Further, the government's reliance on the military has allowed them to avoid undertaking certain reforms; first, restructuring the police forces, which would involve training, increasing wages, and tackling corruption among their ranks; and second, reform of the judiciary, which currently grants impunity to powerful actors such as

military members accused of violence against women. Thus, the data indicating an increase of abuse by the armed forces against women during mostly arbitrary detentions becomes a politically costly reality which must be made invisible.

Invisibility normalizes violence by denying victims justice. Impunity is wielded as a weapon against women who seek justice against their aggressors. The government institutions responsible for investigating these crimes are not trained to help women and, in many cases, revictimize women seeking help. In many cases the prosecutor's office will manufacture a scenario to protect the abuser or will simply not pursue charges because of their ties with security forces or cartels. This fomentation of impunity creates an environment in which women would rather stay quiet than face retribution or revictimization for trying to seek justice against their abusers. This normalizes the violence, makes it invisible and creates new harms.

For the first time in recorded Mexican history, violence against women in public spaces has overtaken domestic violence. However, in addition to failing to prosecute offenders and record transparent measurements of violence against women, the government has created campaigns about gendered violence which frame it as a domestic issue, to be addressed in the home. At the same time, programs, shelters, and even surveys that focus on violence against women are defunded by the government, which has reinvested those resources into politically popular projects, such as the Mayan train[24]. In response to these failures, civil society groups have collaborated to expose the violence against women and several of the injustices carried out by the institutions designed to help survivors of violence. These organizations have led protests to create visibility around the issue and formed focus groups with objectives ranging from

[24] The Mayan train project is part of several big infrastructure projects (that also include a new airport) that the current President Andres Manuel López Obrador has propelled. These projects are expensive and have gone over budget, but are politically valuable as they represent the achievements of the current administration.

researching the sources of gendered violence to service provision for survivors. Some of these organizations work with the families of victims of femicide or those who have been disappeared to provide everything from emotional to legal support. However, rather than supporting these organizations and using them as a tool to tackle gendered violence, the government has defunded them and obstructed their operations as will be detailed in the following sections.

6.2. The mismeasurement of violence against women as a form of violence

As this study demonstrates, the Mexican government has failed to measure rates of violence against women. I argue, following feminist insights on violence like those from Jan Jordan that describes how silencing is a critical component of oppression." (Brown and Walklate 2012, 254), that the erasure of this experience becomes a form of violence in itself. Tactics such as manipulating and erasing statistics about gendered violence and the military's involvement in perpetuating it prevent officials, researchers, and service providers from understanding the issue and how certain policies impact it. Further, these failures take away crucial resources from survivors of violence, and create impunity for abusers by preventing survivors from accessing justice through the courts. NGOs such as Amnesty International and Equis have described in their reports the relentless hurdles imposed by authorities on researchers documenting violence against women, particularly at the hands of Mexico's security forces (Tucker 2020). Several reports demonstrate the military's refusal to respond to requests for data and interviews (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 26).[25] The government statistics would thus be more politically palpable when they were published. The Mexican government knows that statistics and research can be

[25] The strategy of manipulating data is not new for the government, as exposed in my article *Climate Change, Drug Traffickers, and La Sierra Tarahumara*. In the Sierra Tarahumara, the government mislabeled children dying of malnutrition by classifying them instead as dying from other causes directly related to malnutrition.

politically harmful, so they have taken an active role in manipulating data in a number of contexts as will be detailed in the following section.

Members of the government also pressured investigators to minimize the number of interviews they conduct with women who have survived abuse at the hands of the military. On several occasions investigators for Amnesty International have found security forces either trying to spy on their interviews with abused women or intimidating women who agreed to speak to researchers (Amnesty 2016, 10). Every administration since Calderón has taken action to protect the military from scrutiny, particularly by minimizing reports of abusive behavior. Publicity of these issues would be politically costly for the government, which has become reliant on the Mexican military to provide public security.

Marcela Villalobos, president of Amnesty International in Mexico provides more details about the obstacles of trying to do research about women's violence in Mexico. In our interview she explained:

> Several of these women who were tortured sexually in prison were also or said they had been sexually tortured by the security forces including the army and the police. This valuable research has happened with a snowball methodology of interviews of victims, so the chain of interviews of women in prison talk about the torture they lived through at the time of their detention or at whatever other time, including interviews. So, almost all said they had been victims of violence at the hands of authority, several said they had been victims of sexual violence. Our researchers also investigate how women activists have been repressed violently by municipal police. That is the other face of the discourse trap that says the police don't work so let's use the army. Let's professionalize, increase pay and better the conditions of police. There is repression and abuse, even sexual torture, against women, even minors in some cases. The issue we see in our investigations is that several victims are afraid as they have been threatened, so they do not want to make their case public. So, we do not really know the complete panorama of the repression that they experience. We have seen in the state of Mexico the institution of the prosecutor's office be completely overwhelmed. There are prosecutors' offices that have millions of cases they will never be able to attend (Marcela Villalobos).[26]

[26] 26 of October 2021 over zoom, Mexico.

Research on violence is also affected by silencing techniques employed by the government's security forces. The use of fear by security forces that have themselves perpetuated violence against women is key to maintaining silence regarding the issue. It not only silences the survivors of violence but also silences the researchers that could present an alternate way of thinking and achieving security. Government agents that impose silence do not simply seek to quiet survivors of violence they seek to appropriate their reality and control the solutions to a problem they continue to perpetuate. Ackerly, Stein, and True (2006, 109) point out that "silence in gender is a determining characteristic of institutions of hegemonic masculinity" (Ackerly, Stein and True 2006, 109). They explain how silencing can be perpetuated as they indicate that "individual silencing can lead to collective silence. Burying women's traumas thickens the silence and therefore contributes to the denial of justice" (Ackerly, Stein and True 2006, 144). Silencing works temporally, conceptually and spatially. Oppressive silencing as defined by Jarowski can thus silence women in three different time frames (Jarowski 1988). It can silence their past experiences, their present condition and future alternatives. Conceptually, silencing can make defining or understanding a particular issue very difficult. Spatially it can silence externally as it is not talked about, but also internally as demonstrated by violent experiences that can be normalized both externally by society and internally by the survivor of the abuse. In this way silence serves as a system of control and domination that can transform external and internal perceptions and understandings of the past, present and future of those silenced. Silence can thus become a tool to redefine reality. The redefinition of reality can appropriate the reality of others, but it can also be reappropriated which is why seeking voices that have been silenced is an important endeavor in combatting oppressive silence. A key component to this redefinition of reality caused by oppressive silencing are statistics. Greenhill

and Andreas explain how statistics can frame a particular narrative or version of events. They argue that many statistics are poorly constructed, uncritically accepted, and then widely reproduced because they are assumed to be produced by experts with specialized knowledge (Greenhill and Andreas 2010, 13). The Mexican government has become adept at manipulating statistics to frame the violence against women and contribute to their oppressive silencing.

Women have been historically constructed in Mexico and several other nations as objects of protection. Countless wars around the world have been fought with the justification of protecting women, even though they are generally negatively affected by war. In Mexico, this history is repeating itself. That women must bear the cost of a militarized strategy to fight drug trafficking is not a reality the government wants to advertise. The war on drugs has become increasingly politically costly to uphold, which is why President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador campaigned on the promise of "hugs and not bullets" and committed to returning soldiers to their barracks. Unfortunately, the addition of responsibilities handed over to the military and the creation of the new National Guard, led by a military hierarchy, demonstrates that the government has no intention to demilitarize drug policing.[27] Soldiers were not returned to their barracks; the government just gave them new uniforms and organized them under a new name (Tucker 2020).

Several organizations in Mexico conduct research about violence against women that illuminates the ways the government has failed to measure or define violence against women correctly. One of these organizations is Data Cívica, which exposes the mishandling of the term

[27] I explore in the article *The Propaganda War of the CJNG and AMLO*, the state's failed attempt to capture Ovidio Guzmán López (El Chapo's son) demonstrating that the promise of returning soldiers to their barracks and having a new strategy to tackle DTO's was false. After authorities arrested López, the state of Sinaloa broke out into a full-out war against the Mexican government, and the government forces had no choice but to release López and retreat (Weisz Argomedo 2021).

femicide by the Mexican government. This organization points out that the government has not integrated academic theories of femicide appropriately into the Mexican penal code (Data Cívica 2020, 14-15). As an example, the authors of the report reference Marcela Lagarde, a critical feminist theorist in Mexico who writes about the importance of impunity regarding the context of femicide (Data Cívica 2020, 15). Lagarde points to state impunity as a major element regarding violence against women and criticizes criminal codes in Mexico for not always including it as a key element to understand the murder of a woman as feminicide (Data Cívica 2020, 14).The report discloses that the government does not include the term impunity in most of the penal codes defining femicide in Mexico, showing an ever-growing gap between the theoretical definitions of these terms and how they are used by the Mexican government (Data Cívica 2020, 15). Consequently, definitions of femicide vary from state to state (Data Cívica 2020, 15). INEGI is the central governmental agency in charge of collecting data on violence against women in Mexico. The Data Cívica report demonstrates the disconnect between the legal criteria used to define femicide in Mexico and the data collected by INEGI regarding women's deaths. In the legal code, femicide is established by searching for proof of sexual assault on the victim's body. However, INEGI does not keep a register of variables for homicides of women, making it impossible to determine which homicides were femicides and which are not (Data Cívica 2020, 16).

There are several problematic omissions in surveys conducted by the government when it comes to information about the Mexican armed forces. For example, the ENVIPE survey, which evaluates citizens' perception of the armed forces, does not provide data on whether armed forces were involved in crimes. Surveys of tribunals in Mexico require respondents to share how many members of the armed forces were processed through the justice system; however, they are not

required to disclose whether they were members of the military or police. Even the most significant survey measuring violence against women, the ENDIREH survey, only has a few basic questions regarding violence committed by members of the armed forces. Still, the 2016 ENDIREH survey provided some limited insight: 97,000 women older than 15 reported being abused in some form by either the army or the marines (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 81). However, the problem remains that even when surveys document proof of high rates of gendered violence caused by members of the military, the government's response is to cover up the data and obstruct future research.

The current administration has defunded important studies of violence against women. In 2019, INEGI announced that the government had cut its budget by five billion pesos. As a result, INEGI was forced to cancel several studies about violence against women, such as the National Survey for Social Cohesion to Prevent Violence and Crime. Perhaps the most damaging of all was the cancelation of the National Study of Prison Populations (ENPOL) (Animal Politico 2019). ENPOL is the survey mentioned in chapter 3 that directly linked the military to higher rates of abuse and violence against women during arrests. This survey is crucial to demonstrate the violence that militarized public security forces perpetuate against women compared to police forces. After pressure from civil society, civilian organizations, and the UN's Committee Against Torture, the ENPOL was reinstated and released in December of 2021. This is important as the ENPOL is the only official survey measuring violence committed by the armed forces against women.

Surveys are often considered politically inconvenient and discontinued; this leaves researchers with years-long gaps in data, making comparisons over time impossible. These data gaps are a form of indirect violence against women conducted by the government, which is

invested in protecting the military at the expense of women's safety. Statistics and reports are defunded or discontinued when they become politically unsavory or point to security forces and the current militarized drug war strategy as a cause of violence. Fortunately, pressure from civil groups has led to the reinstatement of crucial surveys such as the ENPOL. Still, even when these surveys are being conducted, these organizations have to fight to make the findings publicly available. Then, researchers working for organizations such as INTERSECTA and Equis Mujeres must sift through the metadata to disseminate what security forces are responsible for human right violations, torture, and abuse. The general summaries written by government officials exclude this data, which is buried in spreadsheets. This is another form of data manipulation which creates impunity for security forces and jeopardizes women's safety.

Several observers testify to the severe human rights violations involving the Mexican military (Beittel 2019, 6). The government's statistics on military operations labels some victims as "civilian aggressors," but according to a press investigation, the government data does not specify which of the 3,900 individuals injured or killed were armed and which were bystanders (Beittel 2019, 6). Further, data on the military's role in injuries and killings has not been released to the public since 2014 (Beittel 2019, 6). This lack of data directly affects women as they experience higher rates of abuse by armed forces when detained. Spivak's "subaltern subject" explains how the process of making a group's experience or voice invisible also becomes an instrument of domination (Spivak 1988). In Mexico, the government controls the narrative of women's violence and, in doing so, silences the lived experiences of Mexican women, denying them a voice and denying them justice. The government's responses and policies perpetuate the formation of the subaltern subject as the government cannot adequately respond to women's

problems if the government is unwilling to acknowledge the value of women's voices or experiences.

The government systematically ignores the links between its militarized strategy to fight the war on drugs and violence against women. Jonathan Ávila has criticized the attorney's office for failing to register or identify the possible links between drug cartels and violence against women (Avila 2017). REDIM (The Network for the Rights of Children in Mexico) provides a specific example of the impact of these omissions on public policy, warning that the government has failed to implement an alert system for gendered violence, choosing instead to politicize the matter by ignoring the urgency of applying alert systems (REDIM 2018). REDIM argues that this lack of implementation of alert systems reflects the institutionalization of machismo violence that guarantees impunity for abusers and contributes to violence against women, such as their forced disappearances (REDIM 2018).

Data on the armed forces in Mexico is unreliable and systematically suppressed by the government. Atuesta and Vela find discrepancies in data about military confrontations provided by Mexican authorities. The authors were forced to use three different data sources to piece together a comprehensive list of confrontations the military in Mexico has been involved in. They explain how the first database, CIDE-PPD (which is publicly accessible), only includes data from 2007 to 2011. While data released by SEDENA and SEMAR both cover the period from 2007 to 2018, there were discrepancies in the number of battles, the number of people injured, and the number of people killed when the datasets are compared (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 26). The authors explain that for the same time period, the CIDE-PPD registers 1,748 battles involving the SEDENA, but the SEDENA database registers 1,904. Further, the CIDE-

PPD database registers 148 battles in which SEMAR participated, but SEMAR's database only registers 102.

The databases of SEDENA and SEMAR are only accessible through formal requests for access to public information, and the authors note that when they filed identical requests information, they received inconsistent data. For example, the SEMAR said in one release that 445 civilians had died in a year, while a second release raised the number to 715 (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 26). There is no way to independently verify the information, since the media only covers a fraction of battles, and this coverage generally contradicts official reports (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 27). The SEDENA and SEMAR databases also contain limited information compared to the CIDE-PPD and lack detailed information on the trigger of violent confrontations and which actors were involved (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 47-53). These examples provide further evidence that the Mexican government and armed forces fabricate, obfuscate, and manipulate data, making research about the military difficult.

The CIDE-PPD database was published in 2016 by the Program on Politics of Drugs run by *Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas* (CIDE), a research institute. This database was formed after an anonymous leak of information from a database that registered violent conflicts related to the war on drugs from 2006-2011. In collaboration with Centro GEO, the research institute traced back the information leak to the source of the database for deaths that occurred due to presumed delinquent rivalry published by the presidential office (Atuesta and Vela 2020, 27). There were two important discrepancies between information shared by the president's office and the data leak; firstly, the leak included details of the events, while the presidential office only reported the total number of deceased, and secondly, the leaked report included data until November 2011, while the president's office only shared data until 2010

(Atuesta and Vela 2020, 28). The researchers verified the leaked information, coded it to obscure identifying information, and then published the CIDE-PPD database.

Even when data is presented, it is rarely contextualized vis-à-vis the findings of experts or the testimony of those with lived experience of violence. Arturo Sarakhán, the former Mexican ambassador to the US, explains that the data on violence released by Mexico is problematic because it does not present a complete picture; he provides as examples the fact that indicators of violence such as homicides went down in 2013 and 2014, and explains that this presented an incomplete picture of the problems occurring in Mexico. He notes that issues including rent extortion and money going into political campaigns from DTOs increased but weren't represented in measurements of violence (Payan and Correa-Cabrera 2021, 21). This example illustrates the nature of the issue; when data on violence is presented, it is generally incomplete, and is constructed more for political purposes than to illuminate the reality. So if the government wants to show positive progress towards violence it makes sure that the definition of violence measured only includes measures that show violence lowering versus violence that is on the rise. Researcher and Professor Fernando Escalante explains that this problem applies to the justification for the war on drugs. The idea that there was a crisis requiring military intervention against DTOs was manufactured by Calderón based on information supplied by the DEA and the US State Department, which had a vested interest in presenting data that would justify their budgets and existence (Payan and Correa-Cabrera 2021, 22). As Escalante states, "there was no security crisis, they reproduce newspaper notes and government sayings… the academic production regarding these issues is bad… and the imaginary numbers combine with prejudices to construct a particular image. All decisions are taken with basis on the information and analysis

produced by Stratford consulting which gets its data from the DEA and the State Department." (Payan and Correa-Cabrera 2021, 22).

Thus, Calderón's description of Mexico as a country in crisis was built upon decontextualized statistics and the influence of a foreign government. The problem is that although the country was not in a security crisis, trying to resolve this constructed problem would lead to a real crisis for women's security. The US government would support this version of a security crisis in Mexico as it would mean that Mexico would use the United States' preferred strategy to combat DTO's. Jorge Carillo Olea, director of Mexico's intelligence agency (CISEN) from 1988-1990 states that Calderón did not take an institutional diagnosis of the situation but based his vision of insecurity on information from two or three people. Fernando Escalante, a Mexican sociologist, argues that Calderón constructed an imaginary reality of organized crime through poor data and pulses of violence in Mexico (Payan and Correa-Cabrera 2021, 26). Data is powerful, and in this case was wielded by politicians to convince the public that it represented a complete picture of reality in alignment with a political agenda. Statistics present a fraction of the truth, and it is clear from the Mexican context that they can create a distorted, incomplete version of reality. However, politicians in Mexico have used data to justify their ideas, creating false narratives which, in the case of Calderón, shape the strategies considered to provide security for the country.

Laura Atuesta, an expert in violence statistics in Mexico, explained in an interview some of the issues with government statistics:

> Regarding governmental databases, the big fight with SEDENA to give us the data on confrontations, I don't know if you know the story, but they didn't give the information until April of 2014 and then said they did not collect this information anymore. The PPD and thousands of NGOs started using legal means to get the data from the SEDENA. They fought and it went from 2014 to 2019, and in 2019 they released the data to Data

Cívica. We used Article 19[28] but it was a fight of collaboration, asking the information until they gave it to us. In that data we know what confrontations happened, the dates and number of casualties, detained and injuries of civilians and the military, but it does not give data on gender.
The database helps to understand the violence due to the army's confrontations. The only information on violence from the government are the deaths from the INEGI that comes from vitality statistics and homicides. There are a lot of characteristics of the violence: age, gender, and cause of death. Then there are the secretariate's databases, that use investigation files, but since 2016 they have included femicides. The problem with these investigation files is that, as we both know, in Mexico most crimes are not investigated and there are prosecutors that are better with some crimes than others. So, if I go to Oaxaca, they will not have the institutional capacity to do the investigation and will not open a file. If I'm in Mexico City they will. This creates regional problems that depend on the institutional strength each state has. And there are a lot of people that do not report crimes, so the file is never opened. This is the issue with this database, and I don't use it. More files could mean more efficacy, not necessarily more crime.
This leaves us only with the INEGI, but the problem is determining that homicides are tied to organized crime. We tried to do a comparison using homicides with firearms compared to the homicides we find on the PPD database that does include violence caused by the war on drugs. Only for 2007 and 2011 at the national level they work very well, but when we move to the states, we start seeing huge discrepancies. If the state has a lot of organized crime and violence the data more or less works. If the state does not have, like the State of Mexico that has no organized crime but has femicides and other important violence, the gap is huge. If the state has almost no violence, like Aguascalientes, then the data is useless. INEGI does not give us absolute truth and outside of that if we only use a firearm, we are not counting people in common pits or strangling, that are leaving a lot of modus operandi of organized crime out. If we try to find that in causes, we will not be able to find it. There is no database created by the government that works but we are trying to create a new database using Google News that could help (Laura Atuesta).[29]

Atuesta describes the difficulties facing researchers when trying to do research on women's violence in Mexico. The first issue is simply getting the data, which as mentioned in the interview required the use of lawyers using transparency laws to get the data. Then the data is generally incomplete, it does not provide several indicators including gender that could be important for research on violence against women. Then different states have different prosecutors with differing capabilities and limitations that

[28] Article 19 references a transparency law that requires the government and its agencies to share information they have at their disposal.
[29] 13th of October 2021 over zoom, Mexico.

also limit the value of data regarding violence against women. The lack of a unified and transparent system to gather data on violence against women perpetuates silencing issues as it limits the understandings and solutions researchers develop.

Adriana Ortega, Coordinator of data for Intersecta, expanded on the issue of statistics in our interview:

> We use what we have, so we use what is available. We use a lot of surveys that are done by the INEGI, in particular the survey that measures the indices of violence against women in different contexts and places in their lives. It is a very complete survey, and we use its information a lot. The problem is that they only make this survey every five years, due to the pandemic they were supposed to release it last year, but they didn't, so we hope they release it at some point this year. This is an obstacle; the information is not as new as it should be (Adriana Ortega).[30]

Not having consistent reports makes statistical analysis and the uncovering of patterns much harder for researchers. The problem is that the budget for the INEGI is controlled by the government, which has shown a willingness to suppress the research of these issues. Itzel Cora is a researcher for the for the Mexican Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights also discussed some issues she has experienced with government statistics through her research in our interview. She states:

> We do use government statistics and during these last few years we have emphasized on the gender lens and the different forms of violence experienced by men and women. This information is important, but we know that the information the government gives us is incomplete and is not the most reliable to understand the phenomenon. This information helps us understand the problem and also how the government is managing the data and the problems at hand. For example, data on women's violence that differentiates violence based on gender is very new, starting in 2015 and 2018. So, we don't have sources of information that can be used to trace historical patterns and to see how they have evolved. We also use other non-governmental information to triangulate the data and identify the deficiencies and differences of the data the government provides (Itzel Cora).[31]

[30] 10th of January 2022 over zoom, Mexico.
[31] January 21, 2022 over zoom, Mexico.

Itzel Cora essentially reinforces the importance of triangulating government sources with other data to have a better understanding of the phenomenon, because government statistics alone are insufficient to understand the issue at hand. Experts responsible for compiling data on violence related to organized crime argue that muddled data needs more contextualization. Sigrid Arzt, the technical secretary for the National Security Council from 2006 to 2009, uses as an example the case of a woman who was found bound by tape and with a shot in the head, a murder which was connected to organized crime. However, the victim had been the wife of a politician in Sinaloa who had a relationship with a police officer. Her husband ordered her assassination and requested that the hitmen stage the crime scene to look like an organized crime hit. This example is just one of many that illustrate the complexity behind trying to construct data that are a consequence of a public policy (Payan and Correa-Cabrera 2021, 30).

Oscar Aguilar, a professor with close ties to Calderón's administration, explains that politicians' obsession with homicide rates influenced policy. He explains that "several decisions were made on the basis of the measurements of deaths" (Payan and Correa-Cabrera 2021, 31). However, this strategy simplifies complex situations into numbers that present only a fraction of reality. This has resulted in failures, including disregarding the other forms of violence chosen strategies could have on civilians. Every security agency had different data, and the government tried to compile it all into one database, but this was unsustainable as there was no universal definition to classify any of the data. There should be a consolidated definition of violence and anything else that is being measured by government institutions so that a singular database can become a reality. For example, different states should not have differing definitions for feminicide as it only makes measuring or understanding feminicide as a whole much harder.

Adjustments to the database were entirely improvised, just like the military operations that preceded them (Payan and Correa-Cabrera 2021, 31).

Other issues with data were exposed by William Booth from the *Washington Post*, who revealed that by 2012, police forces in Mexico had a list of more than 25,000 disappeared people, but that the government had failed to keep this list transparent and reliable (Payan and Correa-Cabrera 2021, 32). The statistics on violence in Mexico were never constructed to analyze the efficacy of the drug war as a public policy. There was never a definition of success or failure other than the capture of drug kingpins, which was a measure imposed by the US to assess whether public security was going well or not (Payan and Correa-Cabrera 2021, 132). The statistics on violence became politicized as it was evident that they would damage the reputations of officials promoting the increasingly costly militarized strategy. Once the militarized strategy was embraced, the costs were hidden as much as possible through statistics to avoid the militarized strategy's political costs. The mishandling of the lists of disappeared individuals, the failure to analyze and research the militarized strategy, the defunding of politically sensitive research into the military, and the barriers to researchers investigating violence against women are all rooted in politics. Once the government committed itself to a militarized strategy, multiple administrations manipulated data to hide the deficiencies of this approach to drug enforcement.

In conclusion this section has analysed both the suppression of and discrepancies in the data related to violence against women. This section shows how the government’s neglect is a form of indirect violence that has affected the research and better understanding of violence against women. In some cases, security forces directly suppressed the research by threatening survivors of violence to avoid them testifying against them. In others the data presented by the government is inconsistent and with severe gaps making analysis of their data very unreliable.

6.3. Government Institutions' Response to Violence Against Women

The Mexican government and its institutions to address violence against women are not only insufficient and inefficient but also reproduce more violence. Wendy Figueroa Morales and Cecilia Toledo Escobar produced a report for the *Red Nacional de Refugios* (National Network of Shelters) examining the current government's actions to prevent violence against women. The authors argue that the current government has failed to create a program to prevent, eradicate, and attend to gendered violence, which experts have recommended as a tool to establish objectives, strategies for action, and indicators to combat violence against women (Figueroa and Toledo 2020, 26). The secretary of government in Mexico released an emergency plan that called for coordination between the three branches of government to provide prevention, justice, attention, gender violence alerts, legislative reforms, and accountability for perpetrators of violence against women (Figueroa and Toledo 2020, 26). However, this is a disarticulated list that provides no real strategy and recompiles past measures that do not take human rights or other problems identified in investigations on violence against women.

Government discourse on gendered violence makes no mention of Indigenous women, sexual diversity, or women with disabilities. Researchers believe this information is important as it could help uncover new factors that affect women's security or have compounding effects on security that need to be analyzed. Officials simply instruct victims to call emergency services, despite failing to follow recommendations to improve these services, such as including geolocations for emergency callers. At the same time, the current government is cutting subsidies for battered women's shelters, and recently announced that the state would use a new model operated by a single civil association in Nuevo Leon that has only created one shelter (Carretto 2019). The federal government does not have data on how many women have been helped with

this strategy (Figueroa and Toledo 2020, 27). Further, Escobar's investigation found evidence that most local governments refused to use their budgets to attend to violence against women (Figueroa and Toledo 2020, 28). When researchers requested information about the new shelter strategy, including how many women had been helped, the budget, and personnel, the government was unable to provide answers. One of the pinnacles of the government's new strategy was accountability, but accountability is impossible with no transparency. There has been no information released on femicide, and the organization INMUJERES (The Federal Office Working for Gender Equality and that Combats Violence and Discrimination Against Women) has seen its budget slashed by the new government. INMUJERERS registered a loss of 18.4% of its budget, hindering the institution's distribution of materials and publication. In doing so, the government has violated Article 58 of the federal law on budgets and responsibility, which bans the cutting of budgets to programs dedicated to gender equality and international commitments to guarantee women's rights to live without violence and discrimination (Figueroa and Toledo 2020, 30).

Another issue with the government's approach to gendered violence is the way that women that are survivors of violence are treated at government institutions when reporting their abuse. As Marcela Villalobos describes in our interview:

> In a country where every day ten women are murdered and several others disappeared, it is difficult to speak of security for women or how well the government is doing. They are not even being considered humans, so we keep hearing these stories of violence within the family but also in public and revictimization. Institutional violence is also a big problem in Mexico, and we hear stories from girls that are sold and are then revictimized by the authorities. It appears there is no light, that there are only more women that are murdered with absolute impunity or disappear, and nothing happens. It would seem that our lives are disposable, and nothing happens (Marcela Villalobos).[32]

[32] 26 of October 2021 over zoom, Mexico.

Rita Canto also provides insight on why women are afraid to report violence against them to governmental institutions. In our interview she details:

> Women don't want to report violence they have survived to governmental institutions because of the methods of victimization and revictimization that occurs inside prosecutors' offices in Mexico. We have a report where we detail the elements that are systematically used by the agents of the prosecutor's office and in general all the people in the judicial system that revictimize women. We have accompanied court cases that are very important like that of Lezli, the student from the UNAM that was assassinated by their partner in the campus in 2017. A lot of feminist collectives accompanied the trial, and it is very difficult to go through this process, we witnessed how the government elaborated a strategy of defense to help come up with a story that would help the aggressor. He ended up accusing her of her own death by stating it had been suicide. Two years and seven months this strategy continued at an interesting level with expertise that was presented. Expertise in terms of forensic architecture that was the first expertise that had ever been presented at that level in a Mexican tribunal to show that the hypothesis in which the case had been investigated was erroneous.
> All this is part of a strategy that works inside the prosecutor's office in our country. There are ranges of prices for those who commit femicide. The public ministry says we have different options for those that commit violence, through suicide etc., they build the investigation files in this way to secure the liberty of those who commit femicide. The problem is that something that appears like a femicide in the private sphere becomes a state crime when the body of a woman reaches those spaces. After the case, a lot of the young women working on the case said, most are young defenders of human rights, I'm not scared of dying in this country, young women are still terrified of death and the forms in which they can kill them, torture and treat them with extreme violence. What scares me the most is that my body will reach the hands of the Mexican government. This is to explain to you why we have reports that we have presented to the prosecutor's office, but even the smell of installations for sexual crimes, the smell is horrid, they have not cleaned that place in decades. Those details, even the forms of extreme violence of women that have denounced the prosecutor's office of sexual violations and are reviolated in these offices for a second time. Forms of torture and violence that happen at the hands of the Mexican state with impunity in a systematic form are not random. It does not matter what functionary is in charge, this is something that has been systematically developed starting from Juarez and that has greased the machinery to produce victims in this country. I can tell you that the prosecutors' spaces are new forms of production of victims at an extreme level in our country (Rita Canto).[33]

These governmental institutions are violent spaces for those they are intended to serve. How can the government expect to understand violence against women, when those who retain

[33] 14th of October 2021 over zoom, Mexico.

the most important information regarding the issue are silenced and revictimized within government institutions. This revictimization within government institutions only contributes to the increase of dark figures (cases in which violence is not reported) as women rightfully distrust the authorities who are intended to protect them. There even seems to be more help provided to those that commit the violence than those that survive it as Rita Canto explained during our interview. The fact that the prosecutor's office presents different options of what "happened" for a criminal to pick from only makes the state a collaborator of the violence being perpetuated. Nicole Huete also discusses the myriad of issues associated with the government institutions that handle violence against women. In our interview she explains:

> The government institution I go to can't help me and doesn't know how to guide me to another institution that helps with violence. Here you have already lost a ton of women, then the few that dare go to the right institution for help find a hostile environment. The public ministry is a hostile environment for everyone regardless of gender, so if you add the fact that you are a woman, they will probably treat you very bad, like if you are an idiot. They will also probably revictimize you, they will tell you are insane or that you are exaggerating. There is a problem and that is that there is no gender perspective in the judicial system.
> There are also complex dynamics in small municipalities, a lot of the time either your aggressor is part of those institutions, that happens a lot, like the case of Mariana Lima whose husband was a police officer. So, either your husband is a cop because there are places where men have about three possible jobs, either they work with the police or is a soldier or is part of organized crime, so again nothing will happen. So, in order for people to use these mechanisms they need to have trust in these institutions, and we simply don't have that in Mexico. There is nothing that would motivate you to go and report a crime. And you do have a lot to lose, the fear to reprisal for activating this mechanism is real. Even if you do trust in the institution, they will not be able to protect you from reprisals against you for reporting. Then you also need access to lawyers and then you think about how many cases they have to go through; they don't have time to listen to you and take care of you. What they want is to get you out the door quickly. It is a complex issue that has to do with hostility and the fact that they don't know how to handle these cases. When people survive violence, they don't want to go to the police, they rather report it to the institution where it happened, either school or work, before going to the police (Nicole Huete).[34]

[34] 13th of October 2021 over zoom, Mexico.

Thus, the government's institutions that handle violence against women are places that revictimize women and reproduce violence against them. This revictimization perpetuates a culture of impunity and silence as women understand they will be punished for breaking their silence. This culture of impunity, in turn, reinforces the mentality that silence is the only way to react to violence as those that speak up are punished. The issues are not only limited to the reporting phase. Often, even when a victim is able to report the violence, there is a structure of impunity ingrained in the judicial system that makes it almost impossible for aggressors to face justice. Cecelia Farfan discussed impunity in our interview and stated:

> I do think that in the last 30 years in the context of the war on drugs, what has become very clear, as of today, is that in some cases the State has very little capacity but also very little political will to do things, so I think it's a combination of impunity and inaction, I think it's both. And I can see how when you see cases, especially some that have really made it into the national news, like the case of this student at the UNAM who was raped and then killed, and her body was just found there, I do think it sends a message of nothing happens. There's this phrase right now in Mexico: the country where nothing happens and then we forget. I think it has shown that violence is very cheap here in Mexico, because you can insert it and really the consequences are going to be few, if any. There is also the case of this woman called Wendy Sanchez, who also disappeared going from the library to a route that she would take to go see her family. Her case is interesting because in a way she's a perfect victim, in the sense that she owns her own gallery, she did all these things like working for her community. So, it's hard for the authorities to say, oh she must have been involved in something, which is what we hear about most victims. Even in cases like this, there are still no huge social demands to the government asking, where is this woman? How can someone just vanish into thin air right and nothing happen?
>
> I think another fact that is interesting and very depressing that follows Latin American trends is that low-income women who are used as drug mules do end up in prison at very high rates and we have seen an explosion of the incarceration of women. So, it's like impunity exists for some types of violence and some types of crime but the state has been very effective at incarcerating low-income women who have really no means of defending themselves, and also without considering the circumstances that led them to that particular activity. In these cases where they send women to prison for like 15 years for non-violent offences, we see another form of violence occur. These incarcerations are creating more violence, not only for the women who are incarcerated but the families that are fractured that now may not have an income, so then that pushes the kids perhaps into other types of criminal activities that may generate an income. The snowball effect of

> these incarcerations is huge in an area where you would say well, impunity is low there, but the violence that it's generating is very high (Cecelia Farfan).[35]

Farfan points out how impunity does not serve every Mexican equally. Low- income women are not able to get the same legal impunity than their male counterparts, who find a much more flexible judicial system for violent crimes. Marcela Villalobos noted in our interview how:

> "We don't trust the authorities and they don't trust citizens, and nobody trusts anyone, but it is that the majority, 60% on average, feel like they do not trust authorities and it is linked to impunity. We know that there are crimes in the country and probably 12 are denounced and out of those 12, eight may open an investigation file and maybe one will reach justice and be prosecuted" (Marcela Villalobos).[36]

This section has analyzed the governmental neglect that has led to the revictimization of women within governmental institutions designed to help survivors of violence. The silencing created by the governmental neglect perpetuates violence against women and strengthens the impunity of aggressors of women. The government lacks trained, professional centers that can adequately treat survivors of violence. Instead, the government's response to violence against women has been to focus on the violence that occurs at home and disregard the violence that women experience due to the militarization of the country and the war on drugs.

6.4. The Count to Ten Campaign

The Mexican government represents the violence women experience as a private problem that can be addressed at home, ignoring the fact that most women experience violence outside of their homes. The media campaign created by the current government tries to shift responsibility to women and men in their homes, so that the government is no longer responsible for addressing

[35] 1st of November 2021 over zoom, USA.
[36] 26 of October 2021 over zoom, Mexico.

the issue. The government's campaign to address gendered violence is called "count to ten." The campaign began in May of 2020 with several spots on tv and radio as well as printed materials (Soto 2020). The campaign received a lot of criticism so after four months they decided to complement the campaign with messages that stated women should call 911 if they experience violence (Soto 2020). The original message of counting to ten remains in the new campaign which has been defended by the government (Soto 2020). The slogan states "before the violence takes over you, before you get mad: count, count, count. Count until ten and take out the white flag" (Arteta 2020). One of the campaign videos depicts a woman losing her temper towards her father and breaking plates, thus including an image of a female aggressor in a campaign purportedly intended to stop violence against women (Arteta 2020). The campaign also makes women responsible for abuse in some cases by representing them as the aggressor within the tv spots. The campaign banalizes violence against women as stemming from a sort of impulsive anger that momentarily takes over the aggressor, who can count to ten to resolve the issue. This simplification of the issue disregards the systemic problems fueling violence against women, and does not represent the experience of women who are increasingly targeted in public. For example, in 2017, 2.5 homicides of women per 100,000 inhabitants occurred in the public sphere, while only 1.5 per 100,000 inhabitants happened in the private sphere (Data Cívica 2020, 19).

The campaign created by the government also falls into traditional gender and family roles by suggesting that women can resolve the situation and should stay with their violent partners. The campaign never recommends shelters for women or mentions reporting the aggression. Instead, the campaign tells battered women that the violence they experience can be easily resolved at home by staying with their abusive partners and urging them to count to ten.

An image from the campaign has a couple arguing in the back while a message on the side says "don't lose your patience and count till ten" (Soto 2020). Selin Akyüz and Feyda Sayan-Cengiz conducted research in Turkey analyzing a government campaign to battle violence against women. The campaign was very similar to the count to ten campaign employed by Mexico as it centered on understanding violence as an individual problem of "anger management" (Akyüz and Sayan-Cengiz 2016). The authors concluded that these types of campaigns cannot resolve violence against women as they marginalize "feminist efforts to question the social and structural patterns of male violence, it deprives women of political agency essential in the struggle against this problem" (Akyüz and Sayan-Cengiz 2016, 1).

Many women cannot leave their violent partners due to economic instability, lack of institutional support, and fear. The government should not recommend a specific course of action for victims of violence, but it should provide women with the support to leave if they choose to. Programs that provide shelter, judicial, and economic support for abused women would be a crucial step to help women leave their abusive partners. However, the "count to ten" campaign puts the responsibility to stop violence on women themselves.

Women from shelters were asked by researchers to share their opinions on this campaign and its strategy of counting to ten to combat violence against women. One woman responded, "I tried to control him, but he could not be controlled, the advice given to the aggressor is to count to ten. Believing that counting to ten removes violence is the idea of someone who has never been assaulted" (Figueroa and Toledo 2020, 32). This strategy takes the responsibility to combat violence away from the government and minimizes the fact that violence against women is against the law. By privatizing the violence, the campaign discourages victims from reporting

crimes against them, and does not promote human rights principles. Further, this campaign disregards and minimizes the experiences of survivors of violence.

Another woman living in a shelter commented on the campaign, “I don't believe breathing or counting to ten is going to change the situation. With my aggressor, it never worked. It is not easy to count to ten and get rid of violence with those steps” (Figueroa and Toledo 2020, 33). The government could have easily conducted surveys at shelters to hear the experiences of these women and established a campaign which considers their experiences. Another woman notes “they tell us to be tolerant, that never worked for me, the person I lived with would not stop for a second. A white flag will not stop violence, and the reality is that he would drag me and hit me and my white flag” (Figueroa and Toledo 2020, 34). One woman expressed anger over the campaign, saying "it is a pathetic attempt to stop violence against women. I tried controlling my aggressor and was never able to; if I can't control him, why would he be able to control himself?" (Figueroa and Toledo 2020, 35). Another notes that "taking out a white flag and counting to ten, at least for me, never worked, because it was not about breathing, the punches were instantaneous" (Figueroa and Toledo 2020, 35). The last one of these comments on the campaign to ten is by a 19-year-old that points out the biggest issue with this campaign that recommends women stay at home and resolve the issue within the home: "This does not work for me, it is not about taking out a white flag and count till ten, because that does not happen. They tell you to stay at home, and that is not what you should do. One has to leave to seek for help, not stay at home and count to ten" (Figueroa and Toledo 2020, 36). The domestication of gendered violence suits the government’s interests; if they took responsibility for rising rates of public violence, they would face pressure to build shelters and fund organizations to combat violence against women.

I include these responses from women in shelters to demonstrate the complete separation between the government's actions to stop violence against women and the experience of women who have been abused. Policies to combat violence against women need to be bottom-up approaches that consider the experiences of survivors of violence and incorporate them in the process of developing policy solutions. It is easier to domesticate violence against women than to fund institutions designed to address the issue, and the government's budget, which reallocates shelter funding to other projects, demonstrates that tackling gendered violence is not a priority.

> As Nicole Huete from Intersecta described in our interview regarding the government's budget, the State's money is finite, but we have documented that the government is cutting back services for women and giving tons of money to the security forces. As a friend who is an economist says: if you really want to see a government's priorities look at their budget. Beyond the fact that we need to get more money, that rich people should pay much more taxes in this country and that we need a fiscal reform (even though it won't happen) with the money we do have, if we want to reduce violence against women, we need to use the money differently. We are not only not spending money on institutions that protect women, but we are heavily investing on institutions that harm women(Nicole Huete).[37]

These decisions are all forms of violence against women that continue to perpetuate a cycle of violence. Budgetary cuts that defund shelters and research and the creation of campaigns that privatize violence against women are all decisions that represent an institutional form of gendered abuse. The continuous efforts to hide, mishandle, or manipulate statistics regarding violence against women impedes resolution and the development of new policies to tackle the issue. The logic of fighting the drug war and providing public security using military forces has had negative ramifications for women in Mexico. The government's reliance on the military has led it to cover up these negative ramifications. The militarized strategy and the protection it receives from the government have become a part of the cycle of violence by obstructing possible solutions to combat violence against women in Mexico.

[37] 13th of October 2021 over zoom, Mexico.

In conclusion this section looks at the government campaign ‘count to ten’ which constructs violence against women as a problem that occurs at home and that can be resolved at home within the family. This construction of violence is convenient for the government as it does not require the government to deal with the issue. Instead, the government places responsibility for the violence and its solution within the home. This is an illustrative example about the privatization of violence against women by the government. Budgetary decisions have only exacerbated the situation as the government increases the funds directed at the military and public projects like the Mayan train while slashing the budget of shelters for battered women and research on violence against women.

6.5. Responses from Civil Society

In Mexico, civil society organizations have played an increasingly important role in raising awareness regarding violence against women and creating organizations to help tackle and better understand the violence. It is through civil society that several women have claimed agency and had the space and opportunity to address the violence that plagues them. Civil society groups have taken actions ranging from protests that have made headlines across the world to the organization of collectives that help search for women who have disappeared. Several of the organizations formed by civil society have served as the basis for this research as they have created independent reports on the violence against women. In many cases these organizations also work directly with survivors of abuse and provide them with help. It is not uncommon in Mexico to see civil society rise to the challenge when the government is unable or unwilling to resolve a crisis. For example, the student movement of 1968, in response to police violence and Mexico’s undemocratic institutions, was the first civilian movement to create organizations to advocate for change in the country. In 1985, civilian groups campaigned for aid and conducted

search and rescue operations after the government refused to adequately respond to a powerful earthquake in Mexico City. Today, violence against women is the crisis civilian groups are campaigning and organizing to address.

Daniela Cerva argues that the new feminist wave is characterized by its ability to break the silence created by patriarchal institutions that normalize violence against women using mass mobilizations and protests enabled by social media, which links feminist groups across the world (Cerva 2020). In Mexico, protests do not only target violence against women, but also the revictimization that occurs within government institutions. The government's response to feminist protests has been dismissive. Cerva highlights institutional responses to several important protests to trace how the protests have intensified as a response to the government's dismissal. A protest in August 2019 was organized online as a response to reports of the rape of an underaged girl by police officers in Mexico City. The response from the chief of police in Mexico City, Jesús Orta, was that he saw a very radicalized climate. Further, Claudia Sheinbaum, the governor of Mexico City, stated that it had not been a protest but a provocation (Cerva 2020). These responses ignited more protests as the government tried to dismiss these women's concerns and portray them as radical or extremists.

In February 2020, massive protests were organized after the femicides of Ingrid Escamilla and Fatima Cecilia Aldrighett, who was underage. AMLO responded to these protests by dismissing organizers' concerns as a distraction to a lottery he was organizing. AMLO said:

> The information has been manipulated, you are taking away from the original purpose of this conference, and I don't like that, I don't want to have these femicides take away from the lottery, this is simply a case of distortion and false information … Look, I don't want the theme to be only about femicides. There has been a lot of manipulation about this subject by the media, not in all media of course, only those that don't like us take advantage of any circumstance to generate defamation campaigns with false information (Cerva 2020).

AMLO continued by stating that other groups were taking advantage of these protests and blamed neoliberalism and past governments for the increase in homicides.

The responses from the government, which dismissed the concerns of women and framed the feminist movement as a tool used by opponents of the administration, triggered outrage. Civil society groups continued to organize massive protests to challenge the president's narrative and shine a light on the crisis of violence against women in Mexico. In March 2020, an allegiance of feminist organizations planned a massive strike, known as "a day without women," in which women would stay at home (Villegas and Semple 2020). They would show Mexico what life without women would look like by not attending work, school, driving, or taking public transportation. The protest successfully garnered media attention and raised the profile of the issue. However, the Mexican state responded with violence against peaceful protesters.

An Amnesty International report looked at the response to peaceful protests in the states of Guanajuato, Sinaloa, Quintana Roo, Mexico, and Mexico City. The security forces violently repressed the demonstrations, threatened female protestors with sexual violence, and in some cases committed acts of physical and sexual violence against the protestors (Amnesty International 2021). Tania Reneaum Panszi, executive director of Amnesty International in Mexico, describes how authorities framed women protestors as violent and questioned their motives (Amnesty International 2021). Reneaum denounced the use of sexual violence by security forces to "teach them a lesson" for protesting (Amnesty International 2021). These violent repressions aim to silence and delegitimize women's movements, the leaders of which are framed by officials as violent agitators plotting against the current government. In March 2021, on the International Day for Women, protests erupted in response to AMLO's characterization of feminist's protests and his support of a politician accused of rape (Abi-Habib

and Lopez 2021). The government set up metal barriers around the National Palace where AMLO resides. The protestors tried to dismantle the barriers and were met with flash bang grenades from the security forces. At least 81 people were injured during this confrontation. On the morning of the protests AMLO doubled down by accusing the conservative movement in Mexico of coopting the feminist movement (Abi-Habib and Lopez 2021).

However, civil society was not to be silenced. In November 2021, massive protests ignited across Mexico to commemorate the International Day for the Eradication of Violence Against Women. Civil society organized 16 days of activism in which thousands of women protested against the government's failure to respond to the violence against women (UN News 2021). The peaceful protests included a group of mothers who had lost family members to femicide, who sang and demanded justice (UN News 2021). Other protestors wrote the names of hundreds of women who have not received justice. The names were written in *Paseo de la Reforma*, an emblematic place in Mexico where revolutionaries marched through to take the capital and which is a main avenue with monuments (Castañeda 2021). When the names were painted over on the orders of the governor of Mexico City, protestors repainted them all (Castañeda 2021). It's important to recognize the symbolism of these acts; the government erases the names of victims of femicide just as their policy erases the experiences of women victimized by violence. Civil society is responding by reclaiming historically important public places through protests and art. Protestors placed a wooden figure with her fist raised high and painted in purple, the color associated with the feminist movement, on the pedestal where a statue of Christopher Columbus used to sit. Several spray paintings also cover the monument, listing femicides (Castañeda 2021). By leaving their message on these monuments and public spaces,

civil society groups contest the government's erasure of their experiences and make themselves heard.

The pressure of these protests brought attention to the crisis of gendered violence and triggered important changes, including the decriminalization of abortion in several states, the creation of a public registry of sexual aggressors, and the hardening of criminal penalties against gender-related crimes (UN News 2021). Unfortunately, many of these changes to the penal code are symbolic and have yet to result in a real decrease of violence against women. Civil society has succeeded so far in raising the profile of the issue and needs to continue to push to counteract the government's silencing of statistics and experiences of victims, while pursuing research that sheds lights on the root causes of violence and allows service providers to better care for victims. Several civil society organizations demonstrate how research can be conducted effectively on gendered violence, the experiences of survivors, and what types of programs are effective in aiding the recovery of survivors. It is crucial for the government to support these organizations and consider their field experience when establishing strategies that can help combat violence against women from the root.

The list of civil society addressing violence against women is huge, and the list below mentions only a few of the most influential ones. Marcela Villalobos describes the work of Amnesty International in Mexico:

> Amnesty International is a global organization of more than ten million people around the world: members, activists, etc. I have been a member of Amnesty for several years and what we do here is the defense, promotion of human rights. We have focused the last few years in violence against women as well as other human rights violations, such as defenders of the environment who have been attacked for defending the environment within their territories. Another theme we will be working on in our new strategy has to do with disappearances, and we have a reactive agenda. With the crisis new themes continue to rise with problems and new cases that need to be attended to. There are a lot of refugees, people in movement, and new things that come up, such as the new government reforms that were proposed that are regressive to human rights or the budget

> cuts that have been made. The militarization of Mexico, in this government with the National Guard is worrisome and we continue to participate in different spaces with collectives like Security Without War, looking into what ways we can give this cry for help regarding the militarization that continues to grow and looks to have no end. I'm an international volunteer from the presidency and as an activist I focus on the defense of human rights, and I'm an activist and I go with collectives that are searching for their loved ones in Guanajuato (Marcela Villalobos).[38]

Rita Canto describes her work in a feminist collective in Mexico City that helps families of women who have been killed or disappeared. This organization represents a type of civilian group that has been growing in number across Mexico due to the current crisis of violence against women. Canto describes in her own words the work this collective does, as well as her work with the UN in El Salvador:

> A group of us feminist academics and lawyers set up the search for disappeared women. Before that we had participated in suits for demands of truth regarding justice for victims of femicide in the UNAM. So, these other processes began to evolve from this event. What I did in the search for Mariela that continues to this day has become a new type of search. I gave documents for the investigation that come from academia, like context analysis, to show how and why, beginning with the context, it is important to give the juridical status of disappeared people at the moment of disappearance, when in Mexico City there was no special prosecutor's office or search commission and there was still a general law on the matter but there were no institutions for the search of women. Things have expanded and I now study the phenomenon from a regional standpoint, and I accompany a process of immediate search of women for the UN for the office against drugs and crime in El Salvador. This experience has helped expand the horizon of my work (Rita Canto).[39]

It is important to note that these issues are expanding across Latin America and the work Canto has done with her collective in Mexico and the lessons she has learned are now being applied to other countries in Latin America.

[38] 26 of October 2021 over zoom, Mexico.
[39] 14th of October 2021 over zoom, Mexico.

The following is a list of organizations and their work which I include for two main reasons. Firstly, women need to know what organizations exist in Mexico to help them or their loved ones when they have experienced violence; the problem of gendered violence is exacerbated by the fact that many survivors don't know what resources exist to support them. Some organizations have attempted to address this issue. For example, the Equis website includes a full directory of organizations across Mexico through the following URL: https://equis.org.mx/directorios-ayuda/. Resources like this directory should be widely available to the public and distributed to women fleeing violence at governmental or civil society organizations. Secondly, these different organizations have already laid the foundations for change in Mexico. These groups are producing the research necessary to understand and address violence against women. Their work includes establishing metrics to measure the success of policies, the recording of testimonies from survivors, and the creation of supports for victims, ranging from shelters to search committees. They have done much of the hard work needed to address the crisis of gendered violence in Mexico, and their knowledge should be used to the government's advantage in the creation of new policies to address violence against women.

Intersecta produces research on the phenomenon of militarization and its effects on women's security. Specifically, they disaggregate data from government sources to produce reports with information that is not presented by government reports. Some of this data includes the violence against women generated by the army, navy and police. Nicole Huete and Adriana Ortega describe the formation of the organization and their roles within it:

> We began working in 2017. The theme of militarization is a fundamental reason why the organization started. Estefania Vela is our executive director. She worked with Data Cívica in a document called "keys to understanding and preventing the assassinations of women in Mexico." In that paper she noticed that there had been dramatic changes in the

> homicidal tendencies in Mexico. So, they noticed that the homicide patterns began changing since 2007. The tendencies since the '80s was of a reduction of homicides overall and in 2007 they not only change in terms of forms and locations, but it increases exponentially. So, they pinpoint the change in strategy of the security forces in Mexico as the key variable to these dramatic changes in homicide rates.
> Me and Adri have been part of the organization since the beginning and this issue convinced us of the importance of joining the organization. There are not a lot of feminist organizations that touch on this subject. We have worked to bring these themes to the public conversation, and I now see other feminist colleagues speaking about how militarization has affected us. When Intersecta started, it was us, data Cívica, and Equis Mujeres that were the only ones in Mexico City to be touching these themes. Outside Mexico City there are other organizations that have touched on these themes as they have been directly affected by militarization, but in Mexico City we were the only feminist organizations that had this theme at the center of our agenda. In Intersecta we look at the phenomenon of militarization in terms of public security but also in terms of how it has changed how the military is even in the soup.[40] Daira Aranda is a researcher that is a good colleague of Intersecta, and she states that militarism has made civilian matters go into the army's hands and shows how this is related to the phenomenon of lethal violence. We do look at other types of violence during detention, but what we see the most in terms of militarization is homicidal violence that relates to other themes we work on, like armed violence, in which Adriana is an expert on. Then we also have this other leg of our work that has to do with the penal system. We understand militarization as the raw expression of a continuum of punitivism that has been the solution presented by the State for public and social problems. We look at jails and people who have been incarcerated. We do investigation and try to create spaces for dialogue. We do not work directly with victims, we do second level research. The nice part of our work is thinking about solutions to this shitshow that we live in. We pay special attention to vulnerable groups like women but also those that are racialized, the LGBTQ community, and those with disabilities. Then we try to build alternative security and justice for them that does not need to pass through the penal system (Huete and Ortega).[41]

Data Cívica is a feminist organization using data and technology to produce research on violence against women in Mexico. Data Cívica was established in 2015 as a civil association and since then they have positioned themselves as leaders in data analysis and the development of technological tools to advance human rights research. They seek to promote social change, promote and defend human rights, and strengthen civil society and journalism in Mexico. Their agenda focuses on fighting against gendered violence, identifying human rights violations,

[40] This is a Mexican phrase, meaning that they are involved in everything.
[41] 13th of October 2021 over zoom, Mexico.

assisting in searches for disappeared persons, generating memory and truth processes, promoting transparency and accountability, and reducing the gap in the use of data and technologies. To achieve their objectives, they have followed a comprehensive strategy that includes advocacy through research, journalism, and data analysis, and the development of technological processes and tools (Data Cívica).

EQUIS Justicia para las Mujeres (Equis) is a feminist organization focused on creating independent research to transform institutions, laws, and policy to improve access to justice for all women. Equis promotes new ways of addressing gender violence and non-discrimination. Their approach goes beyond the use of criminal law and examines structural causes of violence. Equis works directly with government and judicial institutions to offer proposals based on research and solid evidence. Transparency tools are their main resource to achieve advocacy. Through alliances with civil society organizations, they seek to strengthen citizen oversight and auditing.

Jorge Lule and Itzel Cora work for the Mexican Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights, which works directly with survivors of violence in Mexico. They describe their organization's work and their roles within the organization:

> We both are part of the Mexican Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights that has been serving the community for 30 years. Specifically, we belong to the area of investigation. In our research we work on different themes. We have focused on themes that look at grave violations and crimes in all of Mexico. We focus on assassinations, torture, disappearances, femicide and arbitrary detentions. These are our lines of investigation. We emphasize on the investigation of the armed forces in Mexico and how the militarization and the war on drugs has impacted the existing dynamics of violence in our country and have resulted in the current human rights crisis we have in our country. The organization has another eleven areas that include communications, administration, institutional development, and other areas that are tied to the objectives of the commission, such as the psychosocial and emotional accompaniment of victims and survivors of torture and other grave violations to human rights and the juridic accompaniment for survivors of different crimes. Additionally, we have an area that promotes the defense of these cases in international arenas and promotes the betterment

> of public policies that regulate and focus on themes of torture and disappearances. We have two areas that do research in the center, it is our area and there is also an area that focuses on themes of human mobility and forced displacement. We also have an area that focuses on applications for asylum and refugees that focus on mobility to have an inclusive defense that goes from communication all the way to the accompaniment of victims (Lule and Cora).[42]

Nicole and Adriana for Intersecta also mention a handful of other important organizations that work on the subject:

> There are a ton of civic organizations like REDIM that work directly with women who are survivors of violence and need a place to stay. It depends, the *Casa Mandarina* is an NGO that works with survivors of sexual violence. There is also the CDM in Chihuahua that is the Center for Human Rights of Women that began to support women who survived domestic violence. However, when the war of Calderón started in 2007, they also started accompanying a lot of cases of disappearances and extrajudicial killings as well as accompanying women that experience violence. Most of these organizations are civilian organizations. Some institutions that are governmental that do work are centers of justice for women that are initiatives where everything is in the same physical space, where women can access everything they need in one spot. The CONAVIM also has programs for survivors of violence but most of the women that are survivors of violence are attended by civilian organizations (Huete and Ortega).[43]

In conclusion, this chapter has analyzed the responses to violence against women enacted by the Mexican government, but it concluded with an examination of the primary civil society organizations working to support women and address violence against them.. The Mexican government is responsible for perpetuating both direct and indirect forms of violence against women. The government fails to measure violence against women in an effective manner that allows researchers to better understand and tackle the phenomena. Because the government has become so reliant on the military, the goverment is compelled to protect the military and are disincentivized to record information about crimes that may cast the military in a negative light. Further, the government has obstructed research investigating violence caused by the army,

[42] January 21, 2022 over zoom, Mexico.
[43] 13th of October 2021 over zoom, Mexico.

hiding statistics relating to the armies' confrontations and human rights abuses and interfering in interviews with female survivors. Unfortunately, the institutions responsible for helping survivors of violence have become revictimization centers that are neither trained nor capable of supporting victims. The government has also defunded several shelters for women, childcare centers, and research on violence against women, exacerbating women's insecurity. The government's campaign to address violence against women seeks to frame the issue as a private matter and exposes the government's ignorance regarding the issue. Fortunately, Mexican NGOs have organized to address violence against women and form new spaces to create research, policy solutions, and support systems that address both direct and indirect forms of violence.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Mexican government and its armed forces are responsible for direct and indirect forms of violence perpetuated against women. They are responsible through a combination of militarized policies to fight the war on drugs that use armed forces for public security tasks and the government's active neglect of violence committed against women. Both forms of violence work together to protect each other and continue to perpetuate one another. The reinforcement of violence against women by the military and the government normalizes violence against women in Mexico and makes it invisible in many ways. Violence is a lot like a virus. The more violence is experienced and justified or made invisible the higher the likelihood that violence will become a common part of life. Violence can become engrained in society and reproduce itself both within and outside of the home affecting everyone it touches. Violence, simply put, reproduces more violence, which is why new forms of understanding security and violence need to be implemented. Targeting violence with violence has only served to create more violence so it is time for new strategies and solutions to be implemented in order to target violence at its root and begin to create a peaceful future for all.

7.1. Generalizability

The use of the military in public security is occurring across Latin America. The transnationalization of the US military strategy to address organized crime and DTOs continues today. The drug certification process is still active, and the US continues to use it to push their preferred military strategy on lower-income countries by threatening economic sanctions, even though this approach has been proven to exacerbate the intensity of the drug war rather than deliver results. The more governments invest in the military to fight DTOs, the more DTOs adapt and corrupt these institutions to continue making a profit. The costs to human rights continue to

increase, and the state mechanisms designed to protect are used to extract sexual violence. Governments become increasingly reliant on the military, and therefore are incentivized to cover up their human rights violations. The reliance on the military for drug enforcement weakens police forces and circumvents normal investigations and judicial processes to capture criminals, resulting in high rates of deaths and low rates of arrests. These countries allow the military to use heavy-handed and lethal tactics that replace police work resulting in impunity and increased rates of violence.

The militarization of public security in Latin America has accelerated in recent years, placing the citizens of these countries in a dangerous position. Militaries are being given increased power and allowed to operate with impunity, resulting in human rights violations and threatening democratization and peace processes. Mexico is only one example of an alarming trend across Latin America. In Brazil, for example, soldiers patrolled the streets for 100 days in 2016 (Flores-Macías and Zarkin 2019). In Honduras, the government in 2014 established the Military Police for Public Order (PMOP), with 6,000 soldiers collaborating in joint tasks with the police (Flores-Macías and Zarkin 2019). Today, there are no cases of non-militarized police in Latin America, and Costa Rica and Panama are the only Latin American countries with militarized civilian police, because neither country has a military (Flores-Macías and Zarkin 2019). Argentina, Chile, and Paraguay have paramilitary-style police forces and have managed to keep the military from policing activities other than providing intelligence and technological assistance in some cases (Flores-Macías and Zarkin 2019). However, most Latin American countries use the armed forces in sustained law-enforcement tasks (Flores-Macías and Zarkin 2019).

Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, and Peru involve the militaries in limited law enforcement operations which focus on combatting drug operations in limited places and times (Flores-Macías and Zarkin 2019). Even though armed forces' involvement is limited in these countries, this doesn't mean its negative effects are any less severe. Robert Muggah exposes the issues arising from militarized policing in Rio de Janeiro. He notes that "the military police were involved in killing 920 residents" (Sullivan and Bunker 2018, 326). The author also exposes how extrajudicial killings by security forces have skyrocketed. Many armed confrontations with armed gangs result in stray bullets that have injured or killed several civilians (Sullivan and Bunker 2018). Camila Fiuza, a Brazilian journalist, covered an event on women and demilitarization that gathered several academics, journalists, and activists. The event catalogued gender violence related to the militarization of Brazil and reflected on women's experiences in a militarized context. Mônica Cunha is the co-founder of *Movimiento Moleque*, and she explains how militarization resulted in the killing of her 15-year-old son at the hands of the state (Fiuza 2021). Many times, women are also impacted by the loss of family members and the generalized higher levels of violence caused by militarized public security. Many participants were victims of sexual harassment, and others described how militarization had changed the public policy agenda in the *favelas*. Rather than responding to women's demands for social welfare in the favelas, the government increased militarized policing in these areas (Fiuza 2021). The impacts of militarization on women are not only limited to direct interactions with the military, but include the defunding of social welfare to their communities and, in many cases, the loss of their loved ones. It is difficult to quantify the psychological and physical pain caused by the loss of life due to militarization strategies across Latin America. In Brazil, the authors and researchers profiled by Fiuza have begun to consider race in their analyses of the effects of militarization on

women and Black women (Fiuza 2021). The researchers understand the violence they experience under militarization as a continuation of racism, where peripheral Black women see the most substantial impact of these policies (Fiuza 2021).

Kristina Hinz provides further evidence that the militarization strategy under President Jair Bolsonaro has harmed the lives of Black and marginalized women (Hinz 2019). Bolsonaro has engaged in a militarized strategy and relaxed laws penalizing excess violence committed in armed operations (Hinz 2019). This policy has created an environment of impunity in which armed forces can use excess force in the favelas with little to no fear of retribution. Hinz explains that a study carried out by the Office of the Public Defenders of the State of Rio de Janeiro uncovered several complaints against the military during their intervention in 2018 (Hinz 2019). During the intervention, several women and girls reported being raped or molested by state forces (Hinz 2019). Investigators also found evidence that sexual violence was used as a tool by the armed forces to retaliate against drug traffickers (Hinz 2019). Security forces raped several partners of drug traffickers instead of arresting them (Hinz 2019).

Plan Colombia dramatically increased the use of the military to fight the war on drugs in Colombia. Flores-Macías and Zarkin note that "300,000 armed forces members work in citizen security activities throughout the country" (Flores-Macías and Zarkin 2019). Similarly, the Dominican Republic began using the military in policing in 2001, and in 2013 created the *Comando Conjunto Unificado*, a new security force uses 2,000 soldiers to patrol the country's main cities to form joint operations with the police (Flores-Macías and Zarkin 2019). In 2010, Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa increased the responsibilities and number of operations in which the armed forces would participate (Flores-Macías and Zarkin 2019). In 2011 the armed forces were involved in 30,710 crime-fighting operations, and by 2014 this number would

increase to 52,355 (Flores-Macías and Zarkin 2019). In El Salvador, the military's involvement in public security became prominent in the early 2000s, and by 2009 the military was involved in a number of operations ranging from car theft prevention to prison security (Flores-Macías and Zarkin 2019). In Nicaragua, the armed forces have been involved in public security operations since 2016, including highway security and patrolling (Flores-Macías and Zarkin 2019). By 2019, the military was involved in 92,416 operations related to public security (Flores-Macías and Zarkin 2019). In Venezuela, President Hugo Chávez dramatically increased the armed forces' involvement in public security. His successor, Nicolás Maduro, tasked the military with patrolling the streets and establishing security points across the country (Flores-Macías and Zarkin 2019). Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras are the other three countries with armed forces involved in sustained law enforcement. Since Mexico's militarization has been discussed at length, we can focus on the two remaining countries.

It is complicated to measure the impact of militarization because data for human rights complaints against the military are non-existent in any of these Latin American countries. Mexico is the only country that shares any data, and the data officials do release is flawed, as discussed previously. I focus on Guatemala and Honduras as two other examples in which the use of the military for public security has negatively impacted women. Although the evidence is limited due to the lack of research and transparency regarding military abuse, they both serve as interesting case studies which demonstrate that the patterns of violence in Mexico exist in other Latin American countries. Guatemala's National Institute of Statistics reports that violence against women has increased steadily. In 2008, there were 12,062 reports of gendered abuse; by 2016, that number had jumped to 62,354, and reports remained around that level for the years following (INE 2014; INE 2017). However, the measurements recorded by the Institute are not

specific enough to separate violence against women into different categories, such as domestic violence or abuse in detention, limiting the conclusions that can be drawn from this data.

Guatemala's path to militarization echoes that of Mexico. In January 2012, Otto Perez Molina, a former army general, was elected as president of Guatemala. Sotomayor notes that he was the first military official to become president of Guatemala since the end of its military dictatorship in 1986. He writes, "Upon taking office, Perez requested an overturning of a long-standing ban on Washington's military aid to Guatemala. Like President Calderón in Mexico, Perez ran on a mano dura campaign that promised to crackdown on organized crime. He too has requested more US military assistance to fight Mexican cartels" (Sotomayor, 54). Main notes that over 21,000 army troops have been tasked with policing missions in Guatemala and 40% of security-related positions in the country have been filled by former military officers since Molina's presidency (Main, 66). Militarization in Guatemala intensified in 2012, justified because of the war on drugs. However, in 2017, Guatemala began to demilitarize public security stating the army was no longer needed and that the police force was strong enough to operate independantly, removing nearly 5,000 soldiers from their law enforcement duties over the next two years (Meléndez 2018).

The World Organization Against Torture (OMCT) reports rates of violence against women which are similar to Mexico's for the period Guatemala was militarized. The organization found that 68% of homicides against women in 2017 were caused by firearms (OMCT 2018). I compiled data from the National Institute for Statistics (INE) in Guatemala to create a longitudinal graph of violence against women beginning with the intensification of the militarization process and ending with demilitarization. The lack of data on multidimensional updated poverty measures in Guatemala limits the conclusions that can be drawn from these

statistics, but they show a general pattern similar to Mexico. However, trends in the two countries diverge after Guatemala demilitarizes, at which point violence against women decreases.

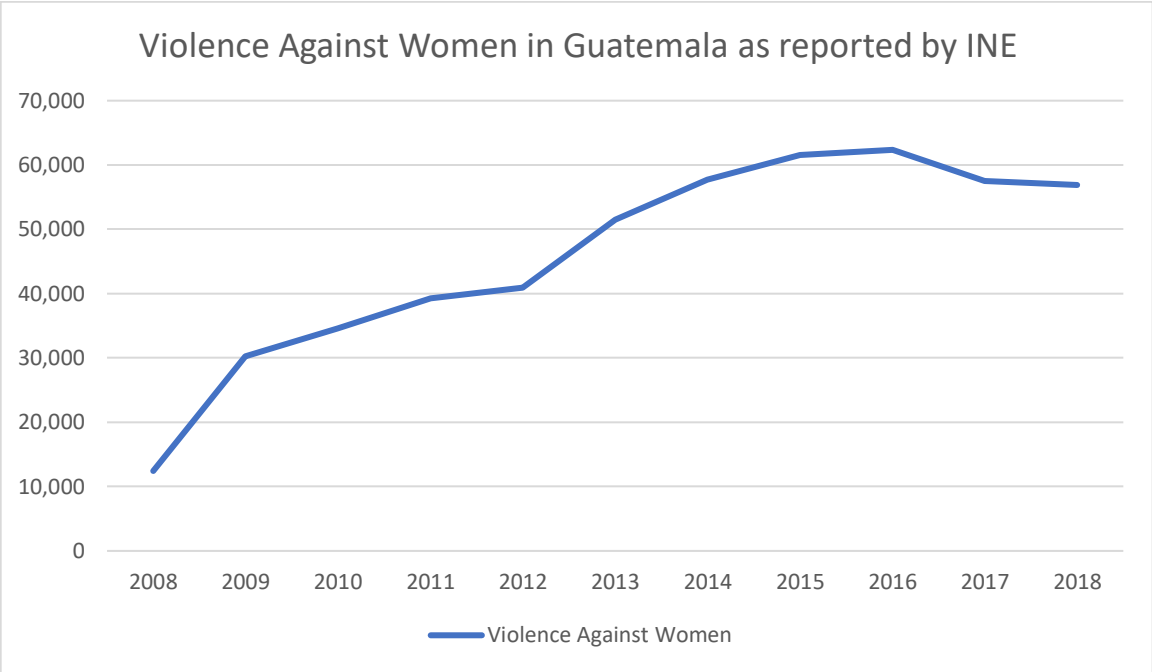

Figure 20

In 2002, Honduran President Ricardo Maduro increased the participation of the armed forces in public security (Flores-Macías and Zarkin 2019). Under President Porfirio Lobo, the use of the military in public security grew dramatically from 2010 onwards, during which time 7,000 soldiers participated in public security operations each year (Flores-Macías and Zarkin 2019). Lobo would also form the Military Police for Public Order in 2013, which included 5,000 soldiers working with the National Police (Flores-Macías and Zarkin 2019). Giorgio Trucchi reports that Honduras is experiencing a rise in violence against women. The author notes that in 2016, 463 women were violently murdered, and the National Commission for Human Rights in Honduras (Conadeh) estimates that between 2006 and 2016, 4,787 women were murdered (Trucchi 2017). The National Commission for Human Rights in Honduras also estimated that a

woman is raped every half hour and notes that 70% of the murders of women are committed with a firearm (Trucchi 2017).

Tacuazina Morales explains how militarization has affected families in Honduras. She notes that the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights found that at least 3,500 families had received death threats and experienced land displacement, kidnappings, intimidation, and generalized violence at the hand of the armed forces (Morales 2011). The coup d'état in 2009 is seen as the catalyst for the rise in femicides, which rose by 100% that year (Morales 2011). A member of a feminist group that wanted to remain anonymous in Honduras states that organizations have denounced the increase of the armed forces budget in their country and tried to raise awareness of the military's responsibility for rising rates of human rights violations, particularly against women (Morales 2011). A report published by the Feminist Organizations of Honduras also linked the militarization of the country to the increase in violence against women, recommending the creation of a new public security strategy (Organizaciones Feministas de Honduras 2014). The Observatory of Violence created by the National Autonomous University of Honduras notes that from 2005 to 2013, violent deaths of women increased by 263.4% (RedTDT). During the same period, Honduras increased its military spending more than any other country in the region (RedTDT). From 2008 to 2014, disappearances of women increased by 281%, and in 2012 Honduras had the second-most incidents of aggression towards female human rights defenders, with 119 reported cases (RedTDT). 62% of these incidents were committed by state agents (RedTDT).

Latin America has the highest rates of gender-based violence in the world (Wilson Center). The Inter-American Development Bank estimates that between 30-50% of women in Latin America have suffered from physical or psychological abuse from their intimate partners

(Bliss 2010). In Bolivia, a 2003 study revealed 53 pertcent of women experienced violence by an intimate partner (Bliss 2010). Across these countries, increasing military budgets come at the expense of social programs, resulting in budget cuts and the cancellation of supports which disproportionately affects women and occurs alongside increasing human rights violations against them. Militarization is also accompanied by an increase in the possession of firearms across these countries, which has resulted in a higher number of murders of women involving weapons (OMCT 2018, Trucchi 2017, Atuesta and Vela 2020).

Amid these conditions, many women try and escape the violence by migrating north. These attempts to get to the US are particularly dangerous for women. Women attempting to migrate from Honduras to the US inject themselves with contraceptives, knowing that sexual assault is almost certain (Trucchi 2017). Amnesty International reports that 80% of women who migrate by land to the US encounter some form of sexual abuse along the way (Trucchi 2017). In Mexico, migrant women are often targeted by cartels who seek to either exploit them sexually or extort their family members for money.

Drug trafficking is the main reason for militarization in Latin America, but other countries outside of Latin America have seen similar effects on women's security following militarization of public security. In February of 2021 the military seized control in a coup in Myanmar. Within a few months of the military taking over a high number of reports of violence against women at the hands of the military began to surface (Kuehnast and Sagun 2021). Interestingly, according to Khin Lay, director of the Triangle Women Organization in Myanmar, like what occurs in Mexico, it is during interrogation that women are most vulnerable of being assaulted by a security force member (Kuehnast and Sagun 2021). Unfortunately, the scope of this project prevents a deep analysis of all these different cases. It is critical that academics

continue to break ground and explore these cases under the context of militarized strategies and expose the consequences it is having on women's security worldwide.

The harsh conditions women face are exacerbated by the involvement of the military, which is protected by governments that either refuse to release statistics about violence committed by the armed forces, or release manipulated data to cover up their crimes. The militarization in Latin America, combined with impunity, instigates an epidemic of violence against women. Significantly, this is not a situation created by domestic policy alone. Conditions in Mexico and other Latin American countries are the result of American policy, which sees a global superpower apply economic pressure on poorer countries to enable the export of military strategies benefitting the American economy and law enforcement. Currently all countries around the world are subject to the US drug certification program that promote militarized strategies to combat DTOs. The skyrocketing rates of violence against women as a result of this transnational militarization are not unique to Mexico, but occur all over Latin America. The militarization of the war on drugs continues to produce narratives of success that silence the failures of the strategy and its human cost. The ongoing militarization of Mexico demonstrates the state's dependence on an institution that fails to produce results against drug trafficking and is responsible for an alarming rise in violence against women.

7.2. Policy Recommendations and Solutions

Nicole Huete and Adriana Ortega from INTERSECTA argue that there are specific policy solutions that can make a major impact on women's security in Mexico. Huete argues that the first challenge is understanding the scope of violence against women in Mexico, which requires the government to conduct frequent surveys measuring violence against women and make the results publicly available. The government must force the military to be transparent and

release data and information on the confrontations they are involved in. Huete argues that the government should create media campaigns that educate women about gendered violence and the services and institutions available to help female survivors of abuse. Huete and Ortega also identify problems using the penal code to improve women's security. The fact that femicide penalties have been increased has not lowered the rates of violence against women, indicating a need to find alternative solutions beyond the penal system. When it comes to creating a strategy to address violence against women linked to militarization, there need to be two elements: first, measurements to quantify the impact of policy on women's security, and second, a demilitarization of the public security forces. This demilitarization needs to be accompanied by stricter regulation of firearms nationally and internationally, as the number of women murdered by firearm has been increasing since 2007. Within the country, there need to be disarmament campaigns. Internationally, due to the unprecedented illegal importation of firearms into Mexico, the US must implement stricter regulations on the sale and export of firearms.

These solutions, particularly demilitarization, are complex. In our interview, Laura Atesta described conversations with civilians in municipalities in Tamaulipas, who stated that the only visible authority in their municipality was the soldier in the corner. The citizens explained that if the soldier left, organized crime could do whatever they want—even if the military is not an ideal form of policing, for regular people, it is better than nothing. This recognition of organized crime's power in some regions reflects the impunity that exists in most municipalities. Less presence by the state means organized crime steps in, for better or worse. The reality is complex; now that we are 17 years into the drug war, organized crime has a strong foothold bordering on absolute control in certain areas of Mexico. There is no one answer to this problem. A series of policy changes will be needed to adequately address the issue. Mexico must reintroduce

neighborhood policing as it disarms the population and creates legal opportunities for those that benefit from organized crime to transition into civilian life again. This transition will require an enormous effort from communities and civil organizations that will need to help repair the social fabric that has been undone in their communities. Sport have been used in other places worldwide to bring communities together (Cardenas 2016). It will take effort, compassion, understanding, and forgiveness to be able to restore peace in these communities across Mexico.

A major challenge to reducing the influence of cartels is that members won't simply give up their livelihoods, and its challenging for law enforcement to infiltrate armed DTOs and make them do this. When the US faced similar challenges after prohibition, their solution was to legalize and tax the alcohol industry, decriminalizing the people who worked within it while generating revenue for the state. Applying this proposal to narcotics trafficking may seem unrealistic, but it could be an effective way to transition drug traffickers into legal work that can be taxed and regulated by the government, which would replace the adversarial relationship between DTOs and the state with a cooperative one. Many of the drugs transported and sold by cartels are needed by the world's pharmaceutical and medical institutions, including opium and methamphetamines. If cartels were able to become legal pharmaceutical companies, many of the people involved in drug trafficking would have the option to make an honest living. This transition would need to be accompanied by forgiveness pacts to many drug traffickers, which would be difficult, considering the violence they have imposed on Mexican society. However, this is arguably a better alternative than the continuation of a war that takes the lives of hundreds of thousands of Mexicans. Of course, an initiative like this would have to be accompanied by loan programs and job creation in communities heavily impacted by the drug war to provide a

myriad of different legal opportunities for people to make a living in place of their participation in organized crime.

Another policy initiative which could address the rates of gendered violence is the provision of educational opportunities and good-paying jobs for men and women. Many of the experts surveyed in this study mention that women need economic independence to have alternatives remaining at home in a possibly abusive environment. Especially if the abuser has links to either security forces or DTOs. As Nicole Huete and Adriana Ortega mention in their interview, another obstacle to women's security is violent partners tied to security forces and organized crime. This issue has to do with systemic impunity in Mexico, which keeps most people from reporting crime. Impunity can be tackled through neighborhood policing programs that regain the trust of communities and civilian organizations, and should be accompanied by reforms of the legal processes available to victims of violence. Reforms of Mexico's legal and penitentiary systems should involve civilian organizations whose expertise can inform the changes, and who can oversee the proper functioning of these institutions through the unique knowledge and experience they have accompanying the cases of victims of violence in Mexico.

As Rita Canto and many other experts mentioned in interviews, many public ministries and authorities are known to revictimize women when they report a crime and have no training to deal with victims of violence. As Huete explained, many medical institutions will even condition the access to plan B or anti-HIV medication after a rape to report the crime to the public ministry. Civilian organizations have been able to step up and fill some of the gaps that the government and its institutions have left for victims of violence. The government should support these groups politically and financially, as they are trained to support victims of violence and have the trust of the communities they operate in. These civilian organizations exemplify the

efficacy of a grassroots, bottom-up approach that, with proper funding, can result in positive results for women that have experienced violence. However, Cecelia Farfan and others interviewed mention that the government has defunded these organizations, many of whom work directly with survivors of violence, and reduced the number of resources available to women, including daycare centers and women's shelters.

The government does run one effective program for tackling gendered violence: centers of justice for women. These initiatives group all of the resources survivors of violence need in one space, simplifying the process for women fleeing abusers. These centers are not perfect—for example, no legislation exists to protect them, meaning they are vulnerable to the whims of the party in power. Further, they are only situated in larger cities, such as state capitals, making them difficult for rural women to access. Another issue is that the doctors and psychologists who work in these centers are employees of the health services and can be recalled to work at other institutions at any time. Supporting these centers with legislation, funding, and independent leadership and increasing their number in rural areas would strengthen their efficacy as a resource for women fleeing violence.

Service provisions focused on supporting the survivors of violence do not address the complicated question of handling the aggressors responsible for abusing women. Rafael Limones is a criminologist and psychologist specializing in violence who works at *Supera-Pro Superación Familia Neolonesa A.C.* in Monterrey. His work offers a case study in working with men who have committed violent acts against women which can be applied across Mexico. Limones was working with women who survived violence, and noticed that the more they reported feeling empowered and independent, the more susceptible they became to violence. This susceptibility was puzzling to him at first, but he noticed this was because the partners of the victims were

generally not reported or attended to. He now works with men that have been detained due to violence they have committed against their families (Orozco 2020). The groups have 24 sessions over six months. The first eight weeks focus on controlling violence and irrational ideas about their partners, women in general, or masculinity. The rest of the program focuses on guided meditation or mindfulness exercises. These exercises help aggressors identify what happens in the moment of anger and when they become prepared to use violence. The program has several tools to measure and evaluate the aggressors before and after the program and measure the risk of reoffending. The facilitators at Supera can then communicate the progress the aggressors have had directly to the judge in charge of their case (Orozco 2020).

Limones has found that the most challenging part of re-educating men is the concept of control of their partner or women in general, rooted in machismo ideas of gender roles. The program tries to make aggressors question their responsibility in a relationship and/or as a father. They make them challenge their role inside the house and question their justification for using violence. They fear losing control, and perceive a loss of control as a threat to their manhood. They justify irrational thoughts and behaviors regarding the life of their partners or women in general. As Limones states, “to eradicate gender violence against women, it is not enough to only help the victims; it is necessary to transform the ideas rooted in hegemonic masculinity, the same that materialize in the control of men over women's lives” (Orozco 2020). These types of programs need to be applied in conjunction with all the other proposals mentioned above to tackle the issue of violence against women in a multifaceted manner.

Finally, there needs to be political will to address violence against women. As Rita Canto stated in our interview:

> The government needs to be better at communicating, there is a systematic form in which there is a denial of women who are victims, and the challenge is great because we have to

> secure institutional spaces where there is no justice, where impunity is something that needs to be fought from the root in our country, I think that in our country, authorities need to understand the context in which we are in and the mandates that need to be followed, as well as human rights issues in the whole hemisphere. What happens here is alarming, and I think that to produce societies and spaces without violence for women, we need political will, and there is none. We have a president who is openly a misogynist. I think few institutions are pioneering justice from a gender perspective with very well-prepared women in charge, and these institutions, in very little time, are obtaining incredible results. Still, we need the political will to reproduce this in other places (Rita Canto).[44]

The political will to address violence against women will never come if the government continues to place all of its trust in the military. Having a militarized security strategy will inevitably blind the government to other alternate understandings of security. A process of demilitarization is critical to establishing a myriad of understandings of security that can open spaces for new actors to participate in the construction and achievement of security.

7.3. Militarization, violence against women and civil society as a path forward

A close analysis and critique of the current drug war policy in Mexico and Latin America is necessary to expose its consequences for women's security. The transnationalization of a militarized strategy to fight the war on drugs begins with the United States. This trend has increased across Latin America, driven by programs such as Plan Colombia and Plan Merida, which provide military assistance to fight DTOs. The US's outdated drug certification program is still enforced and serves as another reinforcement mechanism to use a military strategy to combat DTOs. In order to begin to address rates of violence against women, the US government needs to reevaluate its certification program using more objective standards of success such as price of drugs as well as levels of production, as the U.S. promotion of militarized drug enforcement has not been effective using measures such as the amount or price of illicit drugs

[44] 14th of October 2021 over zoom, Mexico.

entering the United States. On the other hand, the costs have been devastating for Lain America. There has been an increase in human rights violations against women, and countries' limited budgets continue to defund social programs as they increase the armed force's budgets. Several Latin American countries have permanently included the armed forces in public security tasks, which aggravates the consequences of this policy.

An analysis of Mexico's militarized policy exposes it as a failure: the strategy has not reduced illegal drug trafficking, and officials have had to manipulate statistics to cover up the military's abuses and justify the continuation of the strategy. One of the most significant challenges regarding militarization and its link to violence against women across Latin America is the lack of reliable statistical data and research. The link can only be explored in Mexico, as no other country in the region collects or shares data on gendered violence caused by the armed forces. When data is present, as is the case in Mexico, it is rarely accessible; the government is not incentivized to share statistics which cast its policies in a bad light, and officials are eager to protect the reputation of the military, which they rely on for many duties. When data is released, variations from different sources make it difficult to assess its accuracy. The Mexican government's failure to be transparent is demonstrated by its suppression of statistics about violent confrontations involving the armed forces, and its interference with Amnesty International investigations involving female detainees. Further, surveys about violence against women have either been defunded by the Mexican government or distributed inconsistently, making their findings difficult to compare across time. These issues present a major hurdle to combatting violence against women, as policies designed to tackle the issue must be grounded in objective data and statistics.

This dissertation shows how there are both direct and indirect forms of violence against women. The militarized strategy employed to combat DTOs only increased both forms of violence. Directly at the points of contact with the military or governmental institutions we see direct forms of violence employed against women while in detention as well as when reporting violence against them. Indirectly the governmental neglect and the diversification of DTOs into other illicit businesses like human trafficking also increased violence against women. The neglect also affects research, institutions designed to help survivors, funds and media campaigns that only perpetuate violence against women and further silences women survivors.

A survey of qualitative and quantitative data illuminates how the militarized strategy to fight DTOs affects women's security. Increased points of contact with armed forces result in higher reports of rape, abuse, and torture for women in Mexico, as evidenced by the testimony of survivors in reports compiled by NGOs and the limited statistics available. The military often arrests women into custody without warrants, signaling a lack of a due process in the detention of women. Once in custody, detainees were subject to abuse and denied access to independent medical professionals who could evaluate their reports of sexual assault by the armed forces. Several judges have admitted into consideration evidence collected under torture or illegal duress. Outside of detention, increases in overall violence connected to military operations against DTOs triggered an increase in violence against women in the short and long term.

The pressure from the military's kingpin strategy, which was encouraged by the US and led to direct confrontations with DTOs, pressured cartels to diversify their operations by participating in human trafficking. American support through Plan Mérida has focused too much on providing military equipment and training and not enough on the promises of judicial reform it had established for Mexico. This overemphasis on military support and the kingpin strategy

further jeopardizes the safety of women and contributes to overall rates of violence by fueling skirmishes over territorial control. The rates of violence and trafficking has pressured many Latin American women to migrate north. However, these migration routes are highly dangerous for women; traffickers prey on vulnerable migrants, and the majority of women who attempt to escape will experience sexual abuse along the way.

I expose the government's efforts to create a counter-narrative which depicts feminists as political agitators and their calls for reform the work of political adversaries. For example, the current president of Mexico has denounced the feminist movement as a pawn of conservative groups trying to remove him from office. This counter-narrative has silenced women's experiences and functions as a new form of violence against them. The Mexican government released a campaign called "count to ten," which frames violence against women as a domestic issue which should be addressed within the home, rather than by officials. This disregards the fact that, for the first time in Mexican history, violence against women is higher in public spaces than at home. Further, government institutions that handle survivors of violence are known to revictimize women who report abuse. These institutions are not trained nor interested in helping women and, in many cases, have been a place where women experience sexual assault at the hand of the authorities.

The military in Mexico is not only responsible for public security, but is also in charge of ports, customs, and even the transportation of medical equipment and school supplies. The government's reliance on the military means that evidence of violence committed by the armed forces is politically costly, and successive governments have repressed research about the topic. In turn, this grants soldiers who commit crimes impunity, evidenced by the fact multiple soldiers accused, and in at least one case convicted, of sexual crimes have been allowed to return to

service. In Mexico, the military is being overstretched as a patchwork solution to the issues of insecurity, violence, and corruption that plague the country. Rather than using the military as a tool to solve emerging problems, the Mexican government ought to commit itself to judicial and police reforms and work with civil society-led organizations.

The culture of impunity surrounding abusers is not unique to the military but is pervasive in a number of Mexican institutions. Most suspects accused of violence against women are neither reported nor sentenced. If the aggressor is a member of the security forces or organized crime, then as we found from the interviews, it is difficult for them to even get human rights lawyers that fear for their lives. Meanwhile, human rights activists (who are usually women looking for their loved ones) are labelled "troublemakers" for trying to seek justice. Many women do not report the violence they experience because they do not trust the government and understand that reporting violence can lead to severe consequences, including death as reported in the interviews.

Although the situation in Mexico is challenging, civil society organizations are taking up the responsibilities the government has neglected, providing services to survivors of abuse and mobilizing protests to raise public awareness about gendered violence. Several NGOs have conducted research and investigations into cases of violence against women and published their findings in publicly available reports which can help policy makers and service providers identify solutions. Further, volunteers at human rights-oriented organizations have developed cooperatives to assist survivors of abuse and families searching for missing relatives. They provide legal assistance, emotional support, and protection, and accompany victims as they report their abuse to authorities. Several other organizations focus on service provision, creating shelters and other services for survivors of violence. The employees of these organizations have

unique insights, as they have observed which programs are effective and which fail to support survivors of violence, meaning they can provide meaningful feedback and guide future policy decisions. Further, unlike the government, these organizations have the community's trust, meaning they are well-positioned to target violence with community-based programs. The government should support these organizations politically and financially and involve them in creating strategies to prevent violence against women. The path to resolving this epidemic of violence against women is not to impose high-conflict militarized strategies on the populace but learn to work with Mexican society to build solutions from the ground up.

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