

“There is No Difference:” Neoliberalism and Latin American (Police) State Legitimacy

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Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between neoliberalism and patterns of violence in Latin American cities. I argue that those neoliberal policies which have so impacted key agricultural and manufacturing sectors in Latin America also disrupt economically-driven social relations, making that the region's transition to democracy a violent one. Although transitions from authoritarianism to democracy as a whole remove old relations between the government and the public, the criminalization of poverty as created and perpetuated by neoliberal ideology leads to higher rates of incarceration while colluding with criminal organizations in order to avoid lengthy and expensive urban renewal programs. When forced to confront any such collusion, states often turn to extrajudicial killings and widespread punitive measures. However, this is perhaps beginning to change. In selected case studies, the author analyzes the benefits and potential future of community-based policing in response to the challenges faced by Venezuela, Mexico, and Brazil in tackling these issues.

Introduction

Most living in Western democracies tend to assume that with increased wealth and a representative government come decreased levels of violent crime. Especially in the United States, a rhetoric of bringing people happier, safer lives tends to accompany pushes for economic reform. Even after the end of the Cold War's epic battle between state-controlled economies and neoliberalism, world economic agencies continue to draw a correlation between personal safety and national wealth. However, empirical evidence in Latin America, along with highly publicized patterns of violence, from the 2014 Olympic Protests in Rio to the infamous Mexican Drug War, is far from supportive. More troublesome still is the accompaniment of police brutality in these statistical increases in violence. Why? Are such trends simply an example of a failure to develop institutions strong enough to handle an open market, or are they the effect of new state-minimizing policies?

I argue that neoliberal policies across Latin America, by displacing labor, in fact increase rates of violence in major Latin American cities. However, this process is not simply through the so-called 'criminalization of poverty,' the means by which states and societies criminalize poverty itself. Instead, the process of removing the state from the economy, by disrupting old social norms and privatizing security forces, also creates openings for self-proclaimed 'civilian defense' groups to impose their own will on communities in major Latin American cities. At the same time, the region's democratization provides an opportunity for a tyranny of the majority to emerge. The poor are punished for being poor by a wider population that sees them as inherently dangerous, while politicians seek votes by playing off of the middle and upper classes' fear of the poor. Thus democracy paves the way not only for far harsher measures when dealing with petty

crime, but also makes possible private and independent security as more communities turn to the latter for respite from the corruption of state forces. Ironically, the problems generated by these self-defense and private security forces are made possible by democratic processes.

Such a combination is uniquely dangerous in that it both increases levels of violent crime, and actively delegitimizes already weakened states. This trend is especially troubling in Latin America, as the population continues to express worrying levels of skepticism about democracy, a fundamental distrust of state mechanisms, and the continuation of corporate behaviors in elections which inhibit change in crucial areas that would enable higher levels of human development throughout the region.

The Cold War to the War on Drugs: A Historical Narrative

Examining the consequences of police violence in Latin American cities first requires a recounting of the economic history of the region which has in turn generated an increase in permanent unemployment. In so doing, the specific political, economic, and social factors which have contributed to the development of neoliberalism as an economic logic, and the global implementation of that logic, deserve an exploration.

Open Markets, Small Government: The Development of the Neoliberal State

‘Neoliberalism,’ like terms like ‘globalization’ or ‘democracy,’ lacks a singular definition. However, for the purposes of this paper, I will use the commonly-held political definition of neoliberalism as a cohesive series of policies which minimize state involvement in the national economy (Oksala, 2011). Structural adjustment programs, an emphasis on external-oriented

growth strategies (market liberalization), and stable inflation all constitute economic policy in neoliberalism (Joronen, 2013).

Contemporary neoliberal ideology is largely the brainchild of Cold War interpretations by Friedrich Hayek, most famous for his work *The Road to Serfdom*. A direct response to the tyranny of 20th century fascist and communist regimes, Hayek interprets the state and the economy as two mechanisms for advancing or withholding individual liberty (Feser, 2006). By Hayek's logic, the state which aims to advance individual freedoms must therefore limit its own involvement. The market functions as a smoothly-operating machine, and interference, rather than the Keynesian conception of money as propelling industry forward, in fact disrupts the balance of credit between producers and consumer-workers. Rather than encourage domestic growth, this disruption restricts the money supply, thereby driving up inflation and unemployment (Feser, 2006).

However, as David Harvey (2007), as well as other political economists (Deukmedjian, 2013; Goldfrank and Schrank, 2009; Joronen, 2013) note, neoliberalism is more than an economic strategy. A neoliberal economy requires a fundamentally neoliberal state. Despite the interpretation of such a state as being entirely market driven, it in fact relies heavily on institutions, both formal and informal. Without a proper enforcement of individual property rights through mechanisms of state control, international capitalists are hesitant to invest in economies in which their property might be at risk (Harvey, 2007).

The Dominance of the Washington Consensus

The narrative is well-rehearsed: the Soviet Union and the United States battle for political supremacy throughout the so-called “Third World.” The choice for Latin America is clear: become an enemy of the United States by siding with the “Red Menace,” or bow before the imperialist power to the north. With few exceptions (such as Cuba and Chile) the region attempts to straddle both superpowers with a leftist agenda becoming their populist roots, and appease the United States by leaving private companies to their own devices. Powerful *caudillos*, or “strong men” would make promises of economic reform, equality, and employment, even as they rolled into the capital on tanks in the middle of yet another military coup (Bernal-Meza and Christensen, 2012).

The weapon of choice in the destruction of underdevelopment: import substitution industrialization. The process was meant to develop a domestic market strong enough to eventually compete on an international stage. However, doing so required an injection of capital that Latin American states lacked. Fortunately for *El Presidente*, cheap credit was becoming all the more readily available (Iniguez-Montiel, 2014).

By the 1970s, so-called ‘petrodollars’ from OPEC members reaping the benefits of the 1973 Oil Crisis were flooding banks with cheap credit, gladly borrowed by the development states of Latin America (Oatley, 2005). By the 1980s, however, the long-term economic development strategy of import-substitution industrialization, meant to generate new sectors and boost employment, was no longer working. Instead, these states found themselves in the middle of the

economic ‘Tequila Crisis’ spreading from Mexico to Argentina.¹ Inflation rose, and employment sank (Kohli, 2009).

Under pressure from both Washington and domestic elites craving international markets, Latin American governments adopt the “Washington Consensus” model, that package of open markets, privatization, and fiscal austerity. Out with the old and inefficient nationalized companies and hefty tariffs, and in with privatization and budget cuts. Now, increasing gross domestic product would come from engagement with the international market, not by shying away from it (Harvey, 2007).

The Changing Role of ‘El Presidente:’ The Democracy Wave

Such an economic upheaval did not occur in a vacuum. Even as neoliberal restructuring redefined the economic playing field, democracy also spread across the region, in large part as a response to the economic dysfunction and displacement caused by the recession and subsequent ‘shock therapy,’ (the sudden and dramatic opening of the economy to the global market). Brazil, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Argentina, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Colombia, Peru, Guatemala, Honduras, and Bolivia all underwent a period of democratization between the 1980s and the mid 2000s (Fernandez and Kuenzi, 2010). While democratization is often considered a positive development, the process of becoming a democracy involves the breakdown of existing, authoritarian institutions, both formal and informal. When combined with an economic

¹ The “Tequila Crisis,” also known as the Mexican Peso Crisis, was the 1994 rapid devaluation of the Mexican peso against the dollar. The crisis was caused by capital flight, first in Mexico but then spreading to several other countries in Latin America, including Brazil and the rest of the Southern Cone of South America (Oatley, 2005).

program which tends to cause displacement, those institutions pave the way for policies more likely to generate violence from both within and outside of the state.

On the whole, democracies tend to manage neoliberal economic transitions very differently from authoritarian regimes. Instead of decrees supported by militaries, responsive democracies must negotiate the effects of neoliberalism. Indeed, the level of responsiveness within a democracy will impact the degree to which an already disruptive transition will lead to further destabilization. A more responsive political system would be able to demand social safety nets to mitigate the negative side of neoliberalism, as well as demand a higher degree of accountability from the state's representatives themselves, including the police (Wiatrowski, Pino, and Pritchard, 2008).

However, within every democracy the loudest voices are the most powerful. In societies that already suffered from high levels of inequality, such as most Latin American states, democracy does not necessarily lead to the aforementioned improvements in governance (Wiatrowski, Pino, and Pritchard, 2008). Rather, the poor are unable to financially persuade politicians, as the former's economic input is impacted yet does not impact the state's liberalization of trade. A small-scale farmer might lose her ability to sell maize for a livable price, but Mexico's national food prices will likely decrease with imported maize instead (Bernal-Meza and Christiansen, 2012).

With the power of the military behind them, authoritarian governments had no need to genuinely fear backlash for the ill-effects of economic experimentation. In Chile, for example, Pinochet was able to use the "Chicago Boys" and their hard right economic policies to turn the country into a neoliberal economic dream (Boas and Ganse-Morse, 2009). However, his role as

dictator also sheltered him from having any real fear of repercussion from the population which struggled under massive cuts to social welfare spending. Indeed, so successful were Pinochet's policies at reducing inflation that he remained surprisingly well received until his voluntary departure in 1990 (Boas and Ganse-Morse, 2009).

Nowhere was this process more noticeable than in the case of urban migration. Mike Davis (2007) explains the differences between the development of Latin American slums and those in Europe and Asia. Under Latin American dictatorships and juntas, the emphasis was seldom on social welfare programs, or on incorporating informal settlements into the wider city. Instead, these cities were meant to serve as a vehicle for dictatorships to demonstrate the state's power, progress, and Europeanization (Goldfrank and Schrank, 2009). A massive increase in migrants would damage the carefully cultivated urban investment environment. Where East Asian economies like South Korea and China focused on bringing people into cities in order to generate cheap labor for export-oriented industrialization strategies, Latin American dictators were far stricter about who could and could not enter the urban workforce. While it is true informal housing districts did emerge in periods of dictatorship, they were frequently demolished, and their explosion in size and capacity did not occur until after the beginning of the democracy wave (Davis, 2007).

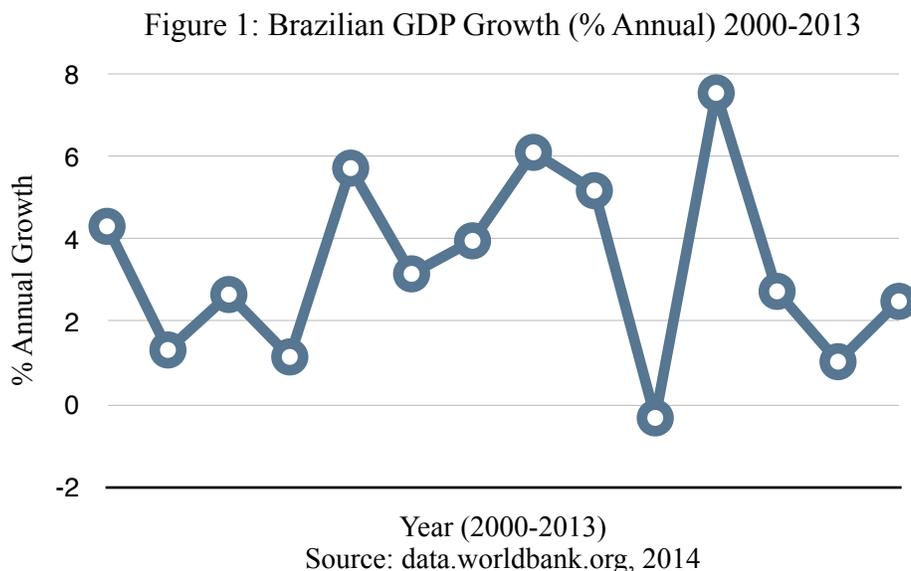
The New Left

Despite global economic engagement and a reduction of barriers to trade, the successes of neoliberalism are highly debatable. An open trade policy was not providing the long-term economic growth needed to push Latin America into the "first world" of high technology and fi-

nance. Indeed, from the years 1980 to 1999, the height of neoliberalism in Latin America, GDP per capita across the region was consistently erratic. One year GDP per capita would jump a thousand dollars per person, only to plummet by another thousand two years later (World Bank, 2014).

Worryingly, even in those countries with superficial gains, such as Mexico, whose *maquiladoras* have inspired hopes of long-term economic growth, gains have remained isolated by sector (Moreno-Brid and Paunovic, 2008). Brazil, whose economic growth prospects looked so promising only a few years ago, appears to have squandered the gains. Though GDP projec-

tions look upward, the numbers have certainly fallen far behind the hopes of only five years ago (World Bank, 2014a), as demonstrated by Figure 1, at right.



While the impact of funding two global events may have certainly played a role in the setback, so too has a sluggish economy with minimal job creation.

In response to these failures of neoliberalism (or of its implementation, if neoliberalism’s advocates are to be believed) a new school of thought has emerged. The “New Left,” as Moreno-Brid and Paunovic (2008) have termed it, is not an exact return to import substitution industrialization. Rather, it centers the discussion again on populism and public spending, deepening the

role of the state in a greater level of response to concerns voiced by the citizenry (Moreno-Brid and Paunovic, 2008). The ousting of that Mexican powerhouse, the PRI, the election of Lula and his left-wing Worker's Party in Brazil, and the ongoing support for Hugo Chavez and his policies even after Chavez's death all demonstrate an increasing willingness of the populace at large to make their voices heard in the public sphere.

While always a fairly left-leaning region, Latin America's governments have generally been able to promise sweeping reforms for the sake of gathering votes, while never changing those problematic policies. Geoffrey Hodgson (2005) and the political-economic school of thought which focuses on institutional development pose the suggestion that a growing middle class tends to precede demands for political participation (Hodgson, 2005). In Latin American countries where a middle class has indeed emerged, economic ties to the United States and Western Europe have run concurrent with the adoption of new constitutions and implementation of free and fair elections. However, this democratization process, in melding with economic policy that excludes a substantial part of the population, leads to not simply a removal of so-called "safety nets," but in fact actively removes 'undesirables' from the political community (Martinez, 2009). This process has largely manifested itself in the form of begrudging acceptance of violence against civilians by police, and increasingly punitive measures against the poor.

Popular Lynchings and Police Violence: The Criminalization of Poverty in Latin America

The Ballot and the Bullet: Rising Violence in the Face of Democracy

The morality of economic policy is not within the scope of this paper. However, while Hayek certainly may have intended to keep the suffering of those living under totalitarian

regimes from spreading as much as Reagan or Thatcher genuinely feared Soviet domination, the system that emerged only served to deepen economic divides, prevent social mobility, and keep developing economies out in the cold. As wealthy western economies have begun to recognize (as indicated by the popularity of Thomas Piketty's book *Capital in the Twenty First Century* or any number of popular Nicholas Kristoff articles on inequality in America), too much removal of state mechanisms, most notably social safety nets and investments, has generated profoundly disruptive, even backward, patterns of poverty and criminalization. Latin America, far from escaping these cycles, has experienced an upsurge in violence and stagnation.

From Sao Paulo to Ciudad Juarez, cities across Latin America have seen an increase in per-capita murders, assaults, thefts, and lynchings. Nowhere is this increase more stark than in reported murder rates. Between 1985 and 2005 alone, the number of murdered adults between the ages of 15 and 44 actually increased in most of the region's most heavily populated countries (Fernandez and Kuenzi, 2010). In some, like Venezuela, the murder rate for adults between 30 and 44 years of age more than tripled, from 15 to 47 murders per 100,000 urban residents (World Bank, 2014c). While some degree of increase is perhaps unsurprising considering the rapid growth of these urban areas, these increases remain both startling and concerning because the rate per 100,000 itself increases, rather than simply the number of people who are being murdered. These rates are not simply not found in other developing regions whose economies or government transitions are comparable to those in Latin America. Vietnam, for example, had a reported homicide rate of 3 per 100,000, while India, to whom Brazil is often economically compared, had twelve reported homicides between 2010 and 2012, nearly half of Brazil's in any one of those three years (WorldBank, 2014e).

These statistics disguise one of the more disturbing trends: the increase in police-on-civilian violence. A surprising percentage of these reported murders are actually extrajudicial killings by police officers (Ungar, 2013). Far from an unexpected phenomena, I argue this is the result of an ongoing process through which the poor become criminalized by the same government that originally implemented polices meant to lift all economic boats.

Rise of the Informal Sector

With neoliberalism comes economic displacement. As Susan Eckstein (2006) argues, import substitution industrialization, while largely considered a failure, did provide workers with a high degree of protection from international market forces, as well as higher levels of civic engagement. The removal of those tariffs and non-tariff barriers in turn disrupted that relationship. The influx of cheap imports put those less efficient businesses out of work, displacing thousands of urban workers (Eckstein, 2006). Worsening the situation, industrial technologies have actively reduced the number of required employees (Marx, Stoker, and Tayneet, 2013). Instead, patterns of arrests within cities as well as new government policies have indicated a shift in employment distribution. Those workers who lost their jobs in the liberalization of the market, or those whose decision to move to the city in search of work comes up empty, turn to the informal sector (Goldfrank and Shrank, 2009) .

This informalization has fueled criminalization and violence in a number of ways. At a purely logistical level, informal housing needs to draw on resources outside of legal channels. Attempts at solving informal institutions of need based theft, such as formalizing electricity lines between the rest of the city and slums, both criminalize existing practices, and end the access res-

idents required and to which they had become accustomed (Felbab-Brown, 2011). Such is newly the case in Brazil's *favelas*. Where households previously tapped into the state's power grid informally, after the pre-Olympic "improvement" programs, such access now requires payment, both criminalizing informal practices and limiting access (Tianhao, 2012).

However, the most common form of criminalized informal activity is instead the informal retail sector. These "criminal enterprises," as Mexico's Civic Culture Law of 2004 (Becker and Muller, 2013) calls them, take the form of small street vendors selling fruits and vegetables, pirated movies, clothing, and other cheap products. Hawking their wares on the sidewalks and in the wide plazas of cities does good business, but their presence also has a tendency to frighten investors (Becker and Muller, 2013).

Latin America's leftist tendencies do not prevent it from engaging in the international market. Indeed, if anything many Latin American countries have ramped up efforts to attract international investment since the Washington Consensus was first introduced. Mexico continues to court investors for its manufacturing sector, while Brazil attempts to sell itself as the new economic hotspot by hosting the 2014 World Cup, the 2016 Olympics, and increasing its service and energy sectors (World Bank, 2014c). These efforts, while lucrative in today's market, require the kind of capital investment Latin American countries tend to be unable to make. Instead, they must present themselves as an underdog: scrappy enough to provide a real return for investors, yet poor enough to suggest tantalizingly cheap labor (Oatley, 2005). However, when potential investors go to investigate the city housing the factory or to hold meetings with local business people, they tend to see groups of street vendors in downtown areas or in front of public build-

ings as indications of public instability and a weak domestic economy. Such concerns then affect the company's decision whether or not to invest in the country (Becker and Muller, 2013).

Making the task of appealing to international investors all the more difficult is the inconvenient fact that in most Latin American countries, slums have only recently been recognized by the state (Huget and de Carvahlo, 2008). Because of the restrictive nature of movement to Latin American cities before democratization, these communities were themselves illegal and informal, reflected in the structure of houses built on top of one another, with little access to formal state infrastructure or to public services. This obstruction left a state-sized hole in the every day management of slums, a hole eagerly filled by criminal enterprises (Felbab-Brown, 2011).

The average Latin American government thus faces a choice: either leave the street vendors and lose the same investments that have the potential to improve the domestic economy, thereby providing those same vendors with a place in the formal sector, or crack down on the informal sector to attract foreign capital. Most governments appear to choose the latter. In Mexico City alone, over two hundred informal vendors and sex workers a day have been arrested under the new Civic Culture Law, which lists no fewer than forty-three new types of offenses punishable by monetary fines or up to thirty-six hours in jail (Muller, 2013). An attempt to "reclaim" these spaces from the poor, the new laws effectively make poverty and the pursuit of employment in the informal sector a criminal act, criminalizing poverty itself.

While these processes isolate significant portions of the population, many continue to argue it is 'worth it.' After all, thirty years ago, no Latin American country (apart from perhaps Argentina) would have been considered middle income. Today, however, Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, and Chile, to name only a few, are all classified as middle income. Indeed, without the gains

lost from violent crime and corruption, and the fear of of the two, some economists (Joronen, Kohl, Maia and Menezes) project an economic environment much closer to that of middle-income European states. Indeed, the region has potential future advantages in an open market with its linguistic connections to Western Europe, its proximity to the United States, and its natural and structural resources. Considering its gains thus far, many politicians claim the region's economies should not be so quick to abandon neoliberalism, but should instead stay the course (Portes and Smith, 2008).

The process has been solidified by the continuation, even intensification, of the association in the hearts and minds of both the public and the government, between criminal organizations and the poor (Zimring and Johnson, 2006). The lucrative nature of the drug trade makes overpowering and out-arming local communities a relatively simple task. Particularly after the ascent of cocaine and the crack-cocaine market, cartels have completely taken over the management of slum areas in across the region (Briceno-Leon and Zubillaga, 2002). While some residents turn to jobs in the drug trade willingly, others are reportedly forced (Martinez, 2009). However, the omnipresence of the cartels makes drawing little distinction between civilian and cartel member easy for police units.

The Role of Militarized Police in Increasing Violence

More often than not a product and vestige of military dictatorships, police presence in Latin America is in turns resented and ignored by local communities. Over years of relative autonomy and interaction with cartels, the police, never seen as a bastion of public service, have grown ever more corrupt. A wide variety of studies and policy briefs have attempted to under-

stand the root cause of this corruption, to come to the general conclusion, articulated by Diane Davis (2013), as a combination of low pay, a high risk occupation, and a high level of autonomy from any sort of public scrutiny (Davis, 2013).

Like the military, police forces in Latin America have been structurally separated from the rest of the government. Often, police forces are not supervised at the municipal or regional level, which would enforce accountability to the local population in incidents of police brutality, or forge strong lines of communication between local communities and police forces. As a result, most Latin Americans have come to see police not as protectors of public safety, but as just another face of cartel-style violence. Latinobarometro, a major data collector and surveyor, asked 1200 Mexican citizens for their level of confidence in the police. An astounding forty five percent of those surveyed had “no confidence at all” in the police. Colombia and Brazil each demonstrated a mere twelve and five percent who demonstrated “a lot of confidence,” respectively (Latinobarometro, 2013). Clearly, Latin America’s public security faces a crisis of legitimacy.

Despite this disconnect between the citizenry and the police, governments across Latin America are using the same process to remove cartels as they have for informal street vendors. Since the blossoming of the drug trade between Latin America, Europe, and North America, governments have begun special projects to neutralize cartel control over slums (Munoz, 2014). Such projects have previously taken the form of a more militarized force operating under the logic that the police can outgun or physically outmaneuver the cartels. Most notably, after the debacle that was the Colombian government for years in the face of cartel impunity and the subse-

quent success of the militarized fight against the notorious Medellin Cartel and killing of Pablo Escobar, other Latin American states followed suit (US Embassy in Bogota, 2014).

Much of the success of this militarization came from the assistance and encouragement of the United States. The success of the multimillion dollar Plan Colombia, an assistance package for the Colombian government which provided the weapons and training used to dismantle much of the Medellin Cartel, was then used as a template for later aid flowing from the United States to Latin American governments struggling with cartel-based violence (US Embassy in Bogota, 2014). By 2008, the United States government passed a new bill, the Merida Initiative, which provided a similar level of military assistance and training to the Mexican government in its fight against the cartels (Muller, 2013).

The result of this collaboration has been to retain, if not strengthen, the longstanding tendency of Latin American states to blur the lines between the military and the police. The architect of many respected police policies, the United States has itself undergone a period of quiet militarization of civilian police forces. At the same time, the United States actively encouraged crackdowns on minor criminal offenses (Zimring and Johnson, 2006). Perhaps the best example of this process took place under New York City Police Commissioner William Bratton and the implementation of James Wilson and George Kelling's "broken windows theory." The theory argues by raising repercussions for smaller offenses, criminal behaviors at all levels are better discouraged (Roberts, 2014).

In conjunction with this militarized policy, Latin American governments began in earnest to push harder against the cartels by attempting to mitigate collusion between police and criminal enterprises. However, as O'Malley and Hutchinson (2007) argue, police forces in Latin America

that use private security forces ultimately have few benefits. In reality, private security companies use the same labor force as the state. Indeed, low salaries drive police officers to join private security companies for a second shift (Ungar, 2007). Equally common is the strategy of increasing one's career prospects by moving between the public and private sectors. An officer might begin in the public sector, before moving to a private company to gain work experience and a pay raise, and then moving back into the public sector in a much higher position (O'Malley and Hutchinson, 2007). The relationship between these private security forces and rates of violence serves as a basis for most of the theory surrounding increased violence and neoliberalism more broadly in Latin America.

Just a Phase? Conflicting Theories and Literature on Violence

What mechanisms drive the perpetuation of this level of violence? At a theoretical level, four camps have emerged explaining both the persistence of this violence, and what the future holds. For some theorists, there is no connection between neoliberalism and violence. Instead, democracy is the driving factor. However, for others, economics determines whether a democratic transition will suffer from an increase in violent crime.

Casualty of the Greater Good: The "Modernization" Thesis

Neoliberalism as policy is known to create structures which shrink the labor market accessible to the most marginalized, a process described in depth by Susan Eckstein (2006). A focus on individual over collective rights also creates a narrative of individual responsibility over collective support, and is generally used to actively undermine populist policy. If in exchange for faster growth rates the national economy is focused on reducing unemployment in the Keyne-

sian sense, neoliberals argue the resulting glut of both labor and money both reduces the quality of goods and services (if everyone is guaranteed a job, the incentive for high quality performance is low), and drives up rates of inflation (Kholi, 2009). Because high inflation rates make purchasing goods and services more expensive, it reduces the market, effectively eliminating economic opportunities for the vast majority of people. The best way to prevent such an economic crisis is to cater to the capital market. While not on the surface the most democratic choice, neoliberals would argue by prizing capital accumulation over job security, more people will actually attain a higher level of material wealth than they would in a leftist economic model (Martinez, 2009).

A necessary aspect of such catering to capital involves the preservation of private property as a sacred right. Extending centuries back in Western cannon, the idea of “life, liberty, and property,” as John Locke put it, has been exported and encouraged everywhere Anglo influences have spread through either colonization or soft power. In the preservation of private property, more authoritarian states and polices are generally more successful at bringing in outside capital precisely because they adapt more militant policies toward anything which could potentially jeopardize private property, putting them in the good graces of investors, and in a disciplinary relationship with the average citizen (Kohli, 2009).

This highly-disruptive process, when combined with the already traumatic shift from authoritarianism to democracy increases violent crime. However, as modernizationists like Neumann and Berger, as recounted by LaFree and Tseloni (2006), argue, this level of violence will decrease as democracy gains legitimacy within the system (LaFree and Teloni, 2006). Though unfortunate, the criminalization of poverty is simply the byproduct of capital accumulation,

largely unintentional, and can be gradually expected to decrease as the democracy expands to include the poor (LaFree and Tseloni, 2006). Using the same logic, the development of a private security complex does not indicate a crisis, nor is it even necessarily unexpected. Instead, the government aims to cut costs where it deems reasonable in an effort to prevent raises in inflation.

Criminalization and Intent: Foucault's Prison Complex

Theorists like Michel Foucault argue this process is not an unfortunate result of well-intentioned capitalism, but is instead deliberate. Foucault's theses on disciplinary society as articulated by Deukmedjian (2013) argue that the criminalization of poverty is simply a facet of a wider securitization of public space. Under neoliberalism, argues Foucault, the dedication to capital accumulation and consumerism moves the focus of society and the determinants of government action from the collective to the individual. Just as the individual with capital power benefits from the system, so too is the individual responsible for his or her own success within that system (Deukmedjian, 2013). Those with capital, in having more clout in government decision making, actively develop systems of disciplining other individuals falling outside the market. Operating on the same individual level as the market itself, the securitization and discipline of society also takes place at the individual level.

The privatization of that mode of disciplinary action and source of "stateness" in general, in other words Weber's monopoly of violence, is the natural progression of capital's control over governance. As such, the privatization of security in Latin America serves as a means of better regulating the individual's movements and behaviors in a kind of contemporary panopticon. Such is reflected in the regulation of "public space" in Latin American cities, from evictions of

vendors from public squares to enforced curfews in dangerous areas (Becker and Muller, 2013). Considering the strong and direct relationship between capital's interests and a privately funded police force, a Foucauldian perspective would argue that this privatization of security should indeed be feared, but will also remain a force to be reckoned with until some kind of seismic shift in the consciousness of the marginalized.

The (Il)Legitimate State

In a different school of thought, Moreno-Brid and Paunovic (2008) argue that police violence and resulting changes in internal security structures are not a deliberate process. Rather, the adoption of neoliberalism and increased police replacement with privatized security companies are only indirectly related. Neoliberalism as a whole is a recognized source of political tension across Latin America. With such widespread economic displacement and a consistent popular affiliation between the Washington Consensus and American neocolonialism, Moreno-Brid and Paunovic claim it is unsurprising Latin American states would shift leftward (Moreno-Brid and Paunovic, 2008).

However, this shift to the left is not simple populism, which would suggest a rejection of previous policy. Instead, this "post-neoliberalism" aims for both a revival of state involvement in development, and a commitment to engagement in the international economy (Grugel and Riggirozzi, 2012). Part of this redefinition of the relationship between the people and the state requires the modification and improvement of the police forces, the face of the state to the majority of marginalized populations. Especially in slums, this redefinition will require the restoration (or introduction) of legitimacy of the state's ability to control violence in the public sphere. The pri-

vatization of security is therefore used in this theory as a means of developing such legitimacy. By temporarily removing authority from the corrupt and disrespected institution that is the public police force, the government is better able to address security issues (Asfura-Heim and Espach, 2013). Once the cartels have been brought to heel and the state restored as the single, legitimate source of force and violence, then public security can safely be reinstated.

Phases and the Process of Democratization

Like Moreno-Brid, Ungar argues that economics and security are not as directly related as Foucault would suggest. However, where Moreno-Brid sees the process culminating in a replacement of delegitimized state structures, Ungar (2007) takes a wider look at the process of democratization in general to come to the conclusion that some degree of violence is to be expected in emerging democracies, but will consistently decrease.² As part of this process, all state structures, including the police, do lose some degree of legitimacy by the people.

However, if democracy itself can become institutionalized at a cultural level, the people grow accustomed to a more responsive system. As public servants paid by public taxes, the police, in turn, grow more responsive. While private security may certainly play a role in the transition between an authoritarian and a democratic system, its use poses its own dangerous consequences. Private security is even easier to buy off than public officers, as the former lacks any obligation to the public other than a financial transaction. As such, Ungar would argue that private security should be actively avoided. Instead, Ungar suggests the secondary trend of commu-

² Ungar does not use the term, but this process has been referred to as the “civilization” thesis, articulated perhaps most concisely by LaFree and Tseloni (2006) as a downward-sloping line.

nity-based police efforts as far superior. While these programs have historically lacked supervision or proper training, with enough of both, such programs would build legitimacy between the people and the state, while avoiding the dangerous undermining of that same legitimacy from private security (Ungar, 2007).

State and Non-State Violent Actors in Caracas, Mexico City, and Rio de Janeiro

The specific social, political, and economic factors which have enabled neoliberalism to generate an increase in violence in Latin American cities are best tested at the domestic level. The following three sections discuss the local policies of Caracas, Venezuela, Mexico City, Mexico, and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and address the circumstances surrounding each city's increase in militarized responses to cartels. Then, in an evaluation of each state's proposed policing programs meant to address violence, I will compare the three propositions, and discuss their implications for future state success or subsequent loss of legitimacy by the national government.

Caracas

Venezuela serves as both an outlier and a typical Latin American state. While not a strictly neoliberal state, as the Venezuelan economy has only been partially nationalized, it is still impacted by neoliberal economic and state policy. Like most of the rest of the region, Venezuelan police policy follows the established pattern of penal statecraft (Muller, 2013). A disastrous economic situation brought on by the 'Great Recession' in the United States and Europe has led to higher levels of theft and criminal activity, while at the same time the Venezuelan government's

increased reliance on community policing efforts in the face of police-targeted attacks have done little to decrease violence by either civilian groups or the Venezuelan police.

Unlike Mexico or Brazil, Venezuela has made a conscious decision to step away from market capitalism, and instead uses a centralized, semi socialist model. However, as some political economists have argued, Venezuela's state socialism still embraces aspects of neoliberalism in that it needs to find ways to stay competitive in the global marketplace in order to sell its one major commodity, oil (Ungar, 2013). Though domestic economics has little direct effect on Venezuelan oil prices, the rampant levels of crime are linked over and over again to Venezuela's high poverty rates.

Like most Latin American states, Venezuela's police-civilian relationship is a tense one. As Gabaldon (2009) explains, police officers have strong distrust of the general public. Out of all police officer deaths, 87% have been the result of ambushes, only deepening the police's genuine fear of criminals (Gabaldon, 2009). Despite the police's fear, there are still eleven documented civilian deaths for every police ambush (Gabaldon, 2009). No amount of initiated police reform from assistance from the United States (such as when William Bratton, one of the architects of Zero-Tolerance Policing in New York City, came to Caracas to train police officers) or official policy adaptations from the National Commission for Police Reform have had any impact on lessening corruption and violence (Al Achkar, 2011). Indeed, after recent protests, the distrust between police and civilians has only increased.

This mutual distrust extends well past the Maduro administration. In 1939, the so-called "Law of Vagabonds and Crooks" enabled police officers to arrest citizens before any crime had been committed if the person was considered a "threat to society," usually for homelessness or

loitering (Ungar, 2003). While struck down in 1997, the institutionalized attitudes toward the poor as the enemy of society in Venezuela remains, and still serves as the source of legitimacy for the police’s extrajudicial actions (Ungar, 2003). Such a legacy provides the police cover for widespread corruption and near complete lack of accountability to either the people or the Venezuelan government itself. While Maduro might promise to “revolutionize” the police forces (Weigold, 2014), police are still estimated to have committed one out of every five crimes in Venezuela (Human Rights Watch, 2011b). The

Figure 2: Venezuelan Satisfaction With Police

| Base=1200 Weighted re- sults | Number of cases | %/Total |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------|
| Very satisfied | 82 | 6.9% |
| Rather satisfied | 228 | 19.0% |
| Not very satisfied | 570 | 47.5% |
| Not at all satisfied | 319 | 26.6% |
| Doesn’t know / No answer | 1 | 0.1% |
| (N) | (1,200) | 100% |

Source: Latinobarometro, 2014

chart at right, Figure 1, illustrates overall lack of satisfaction with Venezuelan police from a pool of 12,000 Venezuelans (Latinobarometro, 2014). From this data, it is clear the established relationship between the police and the citizenry has not resulted in a more respected or responsive police force.

Such distrust extends between the citizenry. Most alarmingly has been the dramatic increase in civilian-on-civilian violence in Venezuela over the last ten to twenty years, most notably in lynchings. Taking criminal justice into their own hands, these independent groups, referred to either as gangs or civilian militias, are tracking down criminals and publicly prosecuting them, often trying and prosecuting them in the community as an independent organization (Ungar, 2007). These groups not only act with the support of the victims of those on the receiving end of this vigilante justice, but also with the surprisingly common support of the police

themselves. Under the Chavez administration in particular, vigilante groups went from being prosecuted as criminals themselves to being upheld as examples of citizen engagement in the New Venezuela (Ungar, 2007).

These gangs provide a fascinating testament to Venezuela's unique political position. As semi-socialist, the concept of the proletariat-masses serves as the norm. The violence exhibited by these private actors then legitimizes the state from a social standpoint as much as its embrace of violence destabilizes the Maduro administration. Within a tyranny of the 'majority,' that is, the so-called 'protector of the community,' the contradictions between safety and autonomy prove divisive and dangerous, completely contradictory to any civilization thesis as outlined by LaFree and Tseloni.

However, these groups are still unstable, and their increasing connections to drug traffickers makes them an unpopular choice with many in the current administration. In search of an alternative, private security is on the rise. In the past ten years, private security in Caracas has grown by over five hundred percent (Ungar, 2007), an unsurprising statistic considering the number of private property crimes which have gone without prosecution in recent years.

Unfortunately for Venezuela, this use of private security, while it intends to disassociate the corrupt police force with new public safety measures, only undermines the state's authority. In a state like Venezuela, whose economic downturn, wild dissatisfaction with the administration, and genuine fear for personal safety (Werlau, 2014) have already undermined the government's image, this increasing reliance on private security forces, many of whom themselves come from the police forces (and two percent of whom themselves have criminal records) (Al Achkar, 2011) serves more an admission of failure than a commitment to future success.

Mexico City

Mexico has elevated its efforts to expand economic neoliberalism after the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Though this process has strengthened Mexico's connections to the United States, boosted its international political image, and led to some degree of political reform, it has also generated the same levels of massive economic displacement as other states in the region (Moreno-Brid, Santamaria, and Valdivia, 2005). This economic displacement to Mexico City has only increased the predisposition of cartels (already growing in strength by NAFTA's implementation) to prey on the urban informal sector. In dealing with the brutality of the cartels, the Mexican government has militarized and privatized its police forces (Davis, 2006). Rather than reducing cartel violence, however, this process has only solidified these issues in Mexico City. As a result, more citizens are joining self-defense forces, or *fuerzas autodefensas*, whose role in the drug conflict, while undefined, holds potential for either genuinely addressing the violence at the communal level, or further destabilizing the Mexican state.

Mexico's neoliberal state polices stem from the country's connection to the United States. Since the 1990s, the country has become the poster child for for what Markus Muller (2013) terms "penal statecraft," that is, the process of using incarceration and arrests to manage social problems. The use of penal statecraft, combined with the massive emphasis on a small state, has created the exact steps described earlier of economic displacement leading to a criminalization of poverty. Mexico's police reforms, even as they are supplemented by the private sector, appear unable to address the most important existential security threat to the state: the drug cartels ("Transcript" 2014).

Of the three, Mexico holds the strongest connection to the United States. With the adoption of NAFTA, the Mexican government openly adopted participation in the global free market and small government as public policy. Trade with Canada and the United States facilitated the creation of *maquiladoras*, or factories meant to spur widespread economic development through a manufacturing sector based on cheap labor. Like any other state with a neoliberal model, rural populations moved to the cities in search of work, in this case to Mexico City (Bernal-Meza and Christansen, 2012). Crucial to note is the significance of NAFTA as security policy. The relationship NAFTA created takes the pattern of investment based on the security of private capital to the national level. As such, ongoing violence and informalization of the Mexican labor market has come to be treated by both the United States and Mexico as a direct hinderance to the economic benefits NAFTA aims to provide (Olney, 2012).

NAFTA does indeed provide positive economic gains. Mexican GDP has steadily and significantly risen over the past ten years. While the economic recession which more deeply affected the United States and Canada, Mexico did see a dramatic drop in 2008, the wider GDP numbers have recovered and continued to rise (World Bank, 2014). However, these numbers hide a significant economic pattern. NAFTA's agricultural stipulations meant to benefit United States corn manufacturers destroyed much of Mexican domestic agricultural production. Now without desired skills, many farmers unable to make living on crop production move to the city slums, fueling Mexico's informal slum economies (Moreno-Brid and Santamaria, 2005).

Indeed, the shock of opening the economy irrevocably damaged the domestic market, even in *maquiladora* production. The growth which has continued has remained both geographically and economically isolated. Rather than fuel a domestic boom, the development of Mexican

manufacturing has remained in the north along the US-Mexican border, and only in manufacturing. The manufacturing sector itself imports the majority of means of production, and then exports the products themselves, preventing the economic growth in this sector from spreading to the rest of the economy (Moreno-Brid and Santamaria, 2005). Now, the Mexican government has shift the focus of economic development to the technology sector as well as manufactured exports. Rather than expanding the job market, by focusing on high technology industries, those economic opportunities for former farmers and others currently in the informal sector shrink (Iniguez-Montiel, 2014).

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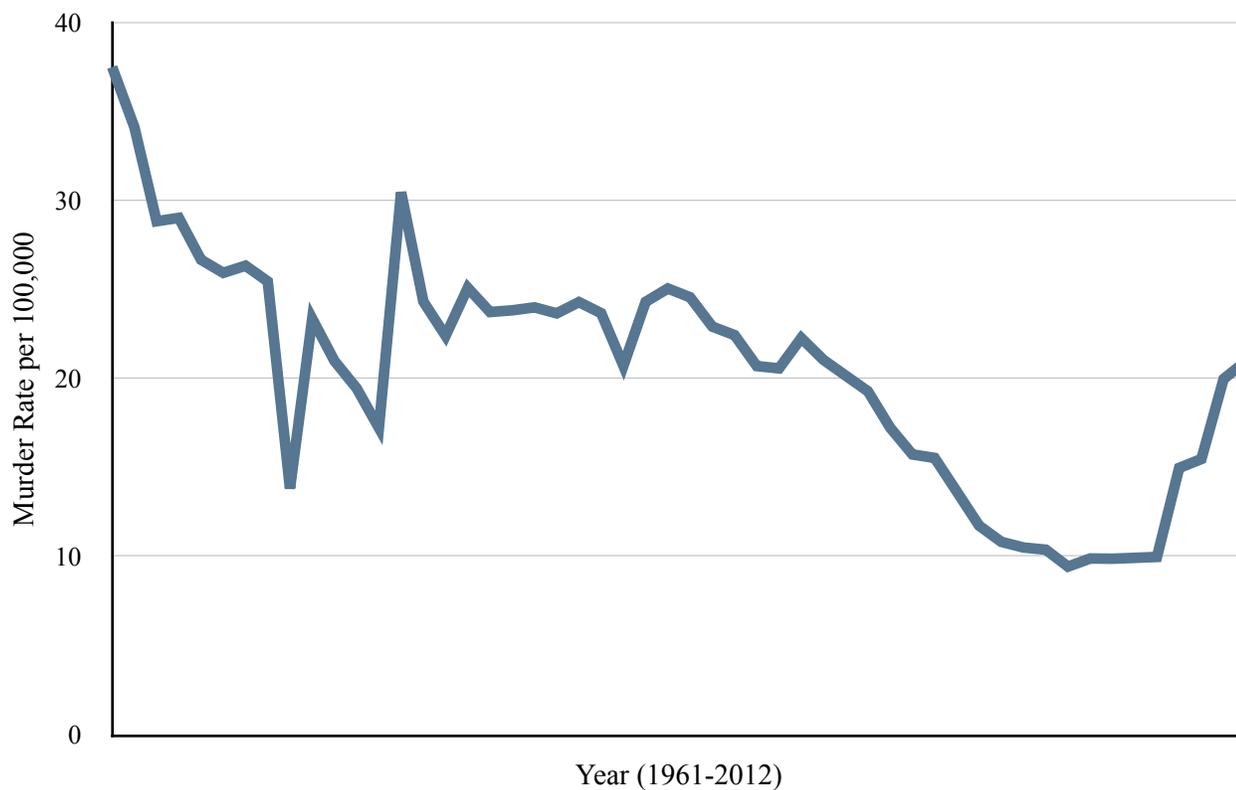
Mexico City serves as just one of many battlegrounds in Mexico in the "War on Drugs." While other cities, especially Ciudad Juarez, have higher rates of violent death (WorldBank, 2014b) (who can forget the stories and images of average people snatched and murdered by local cartels to terrify the population into submission?), Mexico City's position as a center of government courtship of foreign investors makes it better suited to this discussion.

The Mexican government's strong relationship with the United States is reflected in its police policies as much as its economic ones. While cartels have operated within Mexico for years, the fracturing of Colombian organizations after the success of Plan Colombia encouraged the development of uniquely Mexican cartels. After the Cardenas administration militarized the

fight against the cartels, groups like Los Zetas, comprised of former military personnel (in an ironic twist of fate trained by the United States) gathered support. In response, the United States created the Merida Initiative, a multi-billion dollar fund meant to train and equip specialized anti-cartel units (Muller, 2013).

A replication of the United States’ own militarization, the increase in punitive measures for low-impact crimes (or entirely new crimes) since the 1990s has been termed “penal statecraft” by Markus Muller (2013). The process of using incarceration and arrests to manage social problems, penal statecraft, combined with the neoliberal emphasis on a small state, has effectively criminalized poverty in Mexico City’s public spaces (Muller, 2013). Mexico’s Civic and Culture Law increased incarcerations per day to over two hundred in Mexico City alone. Coinciden-

Figure 3: Murder Rate in Mexico (1961-2012)



Data: World Health Organization, 2014

tally, the same year of NAFTA's adoption, 1994, saw a massive spike in crime. Today, Mexico has a homicide rate of 21.5 per 100,000 (World Health Organization, 2014), largely considered the result of Cardenas' militarization of the Drug War. That these figures are at the same level seen between 1961 and 1963 bodes ill for the Mexican state's ability to address violence, particularly since those levels are a net increase from a period of relative decline in homicide rates from 1995 to 2006, as demonstrated by Figure 3, above.

Despite what the state's policy would suggest, poverty does not necessarily lead to a life of crime, and connection between the informal economy and the significance of these crime statistics is not automatic. Rather, the factor that shifts the relationship between the people and the state from one of mutual ignorance and disconnect to a serious security threat for the Mexican state itself comes as a direct result of cartel activity and power in the informal sector.

Most of Mexico City's poor are not cartel members. However, the lack of state presence in slums has created a perfect breeding ground for the cartels to form their own empires out of the urban landscape. This is made not only possible, but lucrative, because of the cartel's own connections to police and state forces (Munoz 2014). Perhaps the greatest example of this twisted relationship between the "law" and the criminal organization is that of Los Zetas. Comprised of former crack troops in the Mexican military who turned rouge and hired themselves out as killers for the Gulf Cartel before splitting and forming Los Zetas, are the most effective and technologically advanced cartel in history (InSightCrime, 2014). Beyond their military-grade capacity, Los Zetas have created an effective terror organization with public body dumping, beheadings, rapes, and bombings which has served to alternately subdue and enrage the population. Currently, Mexico City is not occupied by any one cartel, but it lies on the fault line between Los

Zetas, La Familia Michoacana, and the Sinaloa Cartel who, if they manage to close in on Mexico City, will certainly embrace the same model they have in previous cities (InSightCrime, 2014).

The government's response to cartel violence both stems and results from Mexico's transition to democracy. In Mexico, citizens have become more aware of their voting power after the historic ousting of the PRI in 2000. Now demanding a more responsive democratic process, the Mexican government finds itself needing to cater to the needs of the middle class. As the group most impacted by the random violence in cities like Juarez, the middle class in Mexico City has become the most vocal proponent of more aggressive policy toward the cartels (Malone, 2014). This comprised a large part of Cardenas' platform, leading to his electoral triumph and subsequent declaration of a "war" on the cartels (Asfura-Heim and Espach, 2013). Though others suggested instead a civil police-based approach which would treat cartels as any other criminal, the perceived corruption within local police and desire for a tougher stance made Cardenas' policy the more popular (Davis, 2006).

The Drug War, far from ending cartel violence, has deepened it. In Mexico City, these attempts have involved both extrajudicial and community-based approaches. Policing, never especially civilian friendly, have only become more punitive. Victims are themselves implicated in crimes which affected them, and those arrested are guilty until proven innocent. Instead of addressing cartel violence, this type of "Zero-Tolerance Policing" has served to alienate large portions of the population (Davis, 2006). The deepening of the association between cartels and the poor takes away the potential for police to connect with those communities most in direct connection with the cartels.

In a new approach, the Mexican government has attempted to move to the community level. Mexico United Against Delinquency and Citizen Protection Units both serve as examples of what Muller (2013) terms “public-private partnerships.” By funding and coordinating private community groups to provide community support in sectors the state has not reached, the program aims to institutionalize police-citizen communication (Muller, 2013). However, many of these community efforts sprang from frustrations from those same communities from the state’s inability to act. These *fuerzas autodefensas* are made up of citizens who equip themselves and train together to protect themselves from the cartels. Theoretically, such a shift toward community policing is beneficial for Mexican democracy as well as for the lower classes. In *autodefensas*, the poor gain control over their own security, flipping the narrative of the ‘dangerous poor’ on its head. As a literal part of the Weberian monopoly of violence, their involvement legitimizes both the state itself as a functioning system, and the relevance of the poor in a democracy. Thus tendencies of the *autodefensas* to themselves turn to crime become only even more tragic. While these *autodefensas* are mostly found in rural areas where police forces have trouble accessing communities to be of any help, in recent years urban communities have followed suit as local police have become more deeply connected to the cartels. Unfortunately for both, *autodefensas*’ likelihood of turning to criminal actives including drug trafficking and extortion is no lower than that of the police (Asfura-Heim and Espach, 2013).

Rio de Janeiro

Rio de Janeiro, like Mexico City, finds its high rates of violence connected to the criminalization of poverty. Poverty in the Rio's massive slums, or *favelas*, like Mexico City, was previously entirely informal, but has in recent years undergone a serious incorporation effort by the Brazilian government with the implementation of two wildly popular and successful conditional cash transfer programs, *Bolsa Familia* and *Bolsa Escola*; two programs that exchange cash for keeping one's children in school. By formalizing impoverished urban communities, the government aims to bring the benefits of Brazil's dramatic increase in economic development and state capacity since the beginning of the new millennium (Maia and Menezes, 2014). Unlike Mexico, the process that has led to community and independent policing in Brazil is not the result of cartels or collusion with the United States. Rather, it is the result of Brazil's unique public policy structure.

Rio is by no means unusual in the scope and newness of its informal housing. Rio's *favelas*, through among the earliest informal urban settlements in Latin America (populated by former slaves and ex-soldiers as early as the 19th century) were not formally recognized by the Brazilian state until 1979 (Perlman, 2010). This incorporation took place at the same time as the arrival of cocaine to the city which generated an explosion of violence and gang activity, though never to the level of Mexico's cartels (Huget and de Carvahlo, 2008).

Brazil has always had a militarized response to gangs even after the country's transition to democracy. However, by 2002 the failure of traditional policing was clear. In Brazil, underpaid and undertrained police units actively worked alongside gangs (Alves and Evanson, 2011). Unlike other state systems, Brazil's police forces are divided into two departments. Investigating

crimes after they have been committed are the civil police. A reactionary force, they have little contact with communities outside of investigations, and have proven easy for drug lords to buy off. In another branch are the military police. A kind of SWAT team, they interact with favela communities only in a violent context (Huget and de Carvalho, 2008). Underpaid and under-trained, yet deeply feared by the populace for their connection to the dictatorship of previous years, they share the civil police's reputation for corruption. However, in a more sinister twist, these officers also share a reputation for shooting first and asking questions never (Perlman, 2010).

It is from these extrajudicial killings that the incentive for a new method of policing comes. In recent years, rates of police "resistance killings" have exploded. Since 1980 alone, over twelve thousand Brazilian citizens are estimated to have been killed by elite and civil police squads in firefights or straightforward murders (Human Rights Watch, 2013a). As Human Rights Watch explains from its 2009 survey, the Brazilian state and society as a whole began to see a strong disconnect between human rights and public safety in terms of criminal justice. Indeed, before the wide sweeping protests preceding and surrounding the 2014 World Cup, few civilian groups demonstrated against this trend en masse. In fact, patterns of increases in extrajudicial killings, rather than arrests can be easily linked to important political events and international stances for the Brazilian state. In these cases, police officers actively cover up the killings, or never report the death at all (Human Rights Watch, 2013a). Far from advocating more supervision, Brazilians when asked explain their opinion that stronger regulation of police forces in fact makes them weaker and less capable of addressing criminal behavior (Human Rights Watch, 2013a).

Unlike Mexico City, where security policy moves from the top down, these policies have so far been widely supported by non-*favela* residents. The New Left has, in Brazil, emerged largely triumphant. While it could be argued Brazil has squandered its economic gains, the country has seen dramatic improvement since 2000. Successfully paying off all international debts and bringing down inflation, the country saw itself rise to the top in investor confidence, earning its place among the 'BRICs.' Like other Latin American states, Brazil's economic policies have generated wide spread structural unemployment, especially in the agricultural sector (Evangalista, 2013). However, with the election of Lula and the passing of social welfare programs like *Bolsa Familia*, Brazil's youth population is far more educated and economically advantaged than the Brazilian youth of the 1980s and 90s.

With this economic development at the individual level comes the increasing democratic connection between the people and the policy makers. Brazil remains relatively unique in Latin America because of its strong municipal system imposed by the 1988 Constitution. Compared to the national government, municipalities have greater control over education and infrastructure, making the people's connection to policy makers fairly strong (Sugiyama, 2013). At the same time, the large number of parties in the Brazilian legislature makes the opinions of the Brazilian people relatively strong compared to both Brazil's own history and Latin America as a whole. Thus, the policies which prove successful in one part of the country can indeed be adopted in another after the encouragement of the population (Sugiyama, 2013). Such was the case with the expansion of the conditional cash transfer programs in the early 2000s, and the process seems to be gaining ground with community policing.

At the same time, those same vocal youth sectors have become more critical within the *favelas* of widespread police corruption, and have somewhat successfully demanded new methods of policing. Better educated than their parents and immensely frustrated by the perpetual siege on their communities and discrimination from the “people of the pavement” (the term for non favela residents by those within *favelas*), these communities have begun to work with both nongovernment and government organizations to develop new police methods (Rodriguez, 2006). The result has been the development of the *Grupamento de Policiamento em Areas Especiais* (Police Group for Special Areas).

These police units operate under an entirely different set of assumptions. Where civil and military police are reactive, the GPAE is proactive. Working alongside community leaders, the forces develop community-police goals which include gun control, a prohibition of police violence, prohibitions of children’s involvement in drug trafficking, and a prohibition of police corruption. In the pursuit of these goals, the Brazilian federal government has proven far more strict than ever before (Huget and de Carvalho, 2008). Out of a group of 100 GPAE officers, 70 were fired for corruption (Huget and de Carvalho, 2008). By openly cracking down on internal misdemeanors, the GPAE earned the trust of the communities in which it worked. After only three years, homicide rates in GPAE communities reduced dramatically as community members worked with the police to find drug runners and gang members, and as the police eased the practice of blind shooting in residential areas (Huget and de Carvalho, 2008).

Brazil, then serves as perhaps the textbook example of the potentials of a well-functioning democracy, which with enough economic and social support, could devolution of security into a strengthening and legitimizing force for the state. If paired with a responsive and untainted

police force, communities can legitimize their grievances even as the state proves its capacity. If this trend can continue, so the upward swing posted by the modernization thesis after the trauma of transition.

However, these programs remain isolated in specific communities whose rates of violence tend to be lower, decreasing the risk to police and making more likely a public relations success. Instead of working with a specialized community police force, many other communities have created their own special units in the form of militias. Tired of seeing the police as an enemy against whom the community is defenseless, some community members turn to themselves. Comprised mostly of either off-duty or retired police officers and disgruntled young men, these self-appointed militias instill their own set of rules onto the community in efforts to drive away the gangs (Alves and Evanson, 2011). Imposing curfews and controlling who enters and exists the *favelas* by charging admission and setting up checkpoints, these groups are coming into conflict with both the police and the drug gangs who would control these areas (Perlman, 2010).

Community-Based Policing

How then, is a weak democracy to manage the stresses of a corrupt police force, a drug cartel threat, and self-defense groups whose imposition of will seems to position them alongside the latter far more than is hopeful? Studies within Rio have demonstrated successes with community-based policing efforts (Tianhao, 2012). However, these efforts have only taken place thus far in middle-income areas of the city, in conjunction with a specialized, organized crime-fighting federal unit. Mexico, too, is using community policing through its *autodefensas*, though within cartel-controlled areas. Though largely isolated to specific spaces, community policing

has the potential to spread, adapt, and improve along the lines of previous, successful policy initiatives.

Whereas top-down, militarized policies in Mexico have backfired and only led to an increase in violence, and the corruption of local police forces combined with divisive and marginalizing economic policy, community-based policing offers a different means of addressing violent crime. In working against organized crime, community-based policing offers the ability for police units to learn how the cartel operates within an area. If a degree of trust can be established, it becomes possible to root out headquarters for criminal operations within the maze of a *favela*, to figure out the route drug shipments take, and who within the community is involved (Wiatrowski, Pino, and Pritchard, 2008). At a departmental level, community connections also enable the police to prove corruption within their own ranks and remove those officers who collude with the gangs. In Brazil, whose community-based policing efforts have proven fairly successful at lowering rates of violent crime, improving relations between police and civilians, and lowering incidences of police brutality (Arias and Ungar, 2009).

What will be necessary for the policy to work will be the kind of social shift within policymaking circles seen in Brazil in the early 2000s in the creation and adoption of the *Bolsa* programs. Creating such a shift requires, in Sugiyama's analysis of government policy changes, requires a personal inclination toward such a change from both politicians and technocrats within the government (Sugiyama, 2013). In Latin America, such a suggestion might seem at first surprising. The clientelism of most Latin American states, particularly those with high rates of violent crime, would suggest that politicians need only to exchange promises for votes, while relying on elites for institutionalized support. However, ideology and political motivation, when in-

stitutionalized from within the government, provide the kind of unified front necessary to plan and execute a particular policy, and then continue with the policy long enough to move beyond initial disruptions and into potential successes (Sugiyama, 2013).

Such changes would face serious obstacles. As Arias and Ungar note, the same structures so essential to the success of community-based policing are weak in high-crime, low-income areas. Because community-based policing requires the heavy engagement of the citizenry, it also requires their trust (Arias and Ungar, 2009). As most communities do not trust the police, other civic organizations need to be created in order to provide the bridge between the communities and the police.

Community-based policing requires both the community's involvement and the police department's. While politicians and high-level bureaucrats are essential for the creation and support for such a program, the cooperation and support of mid-tier and low-level police officers are key to the success of community-based policing. Without their support, such attempts at trust-building will fail. Preventing police from seeing these efforts as a usurpation of authority will require long-term retraining, difficult in the wake of legacies of authoritarianism and police forces used to high degrees of independence (Arias and Ungar, 2009).

This independence will need to change in several countries. Most Latin American states hold the police in a uniquely confusing position in the government apparatus. Not a military operation, but not fully under the authority of either the federal or provincial governments, all three claim some degree of jurisdiction, but wield little power over police within cities across the region. To hold police accountable in an effort to build the trust necessary for a community-based

policing strategy, police will need a clearer chain of command extending all the way up to someone who can be held accountable to the people (Felbab-Brown, 2011).

Brazil has used this strategy in its dual GPAE (community-based police)/military police strategy. By pairing a specialty-trained force with a militarized one, Brazil has been able to build some degree of trust between communities and police while continuing to match the firepower of the criminal organization. Indeed, areas within Rio de Janeiro which have adopted this strategy have seen decreases in homicide rates per 100,000 inhabitants between 2001 and 2006 from police, in Copacabana as much as 25%, from 10 to 7.5 (Arias and Ungar, 2009).

However, to be successful in other states (as well as to maintain a level of success within Brazil), the dual strategy will need to address its serious problems of capacity. Already Brazil's numbers of homicides in GPAE areas are slipping back up. To prevent the GPAE or the *autodefensas* from becoming yet another corrupt police unit, thereby discrediting themselves and community-based policing as an option for other states, training and disciplinary measures will need to stay at the center of the strategy, rather than become a minor aspect.

Conclusion

What then is the role of community policing in addressing the violence which seems to blossom with the smaller state? While the object of this paper is not to prescribe any particular policy, it is worth noting the advantages and disadvantages of this particular trend. The Latino-barometro survey cited earlier reflecting startlingly high rates of disinterest in democracy, provides an important indicator of the social context surrounding community police efforts.

When the same states accused of incompetence and treated with skepticism openly admit

to their own inability to manage public security, it sends a signal to both those who already express concern, and those who still have faith in the government, that they have good cause for concern. Mexico already faces accusations of being on the path toward failed state status (Al Jazeera, 2013). Colombia still struggles to shake off perceptions of being a kingpin's playground, while Brazil and Venezuela have both seen the largest protests in years over the past few months. In such a social context, it is important for Latin American states to consider what public policy is expressing at a social level. While a neoliberal dream, private security is not considered in the public service by the left-leaning populations across the region, whose experiences with militarized police working on behalf of specific sectors harkens back to the region's dictatorial past. While such a specified public policy might not lead to the complete collapse of Latin American states with community policing efforts, the fact that these programs are so far unsuccessful will neither deepen the state's legitimacy nor strengthen the state's image as a safe bet for investors.

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