

The Militarization of Law Enforcement

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Q: Does this difference matter?



Flores-Macías and Zarkin. 2020. "Militarization and Perceptions of Law Enforcement in the Developing World: Evidence from a Conjoint Experiment in Mexico," Working Paper, Cornell University.

Overview

- 1. Drivers of militarization**
- 2. Public Support**
- 3. Prevalence in Latin America**
- 4. Key Features**
 - weapons, training, organization, jurisdiction
- 5. Consequences**
 - violence, human rights, police reform, legal framework
- 6. Inference challenges**
- 7. Stakes**

1. Drivers of militarization

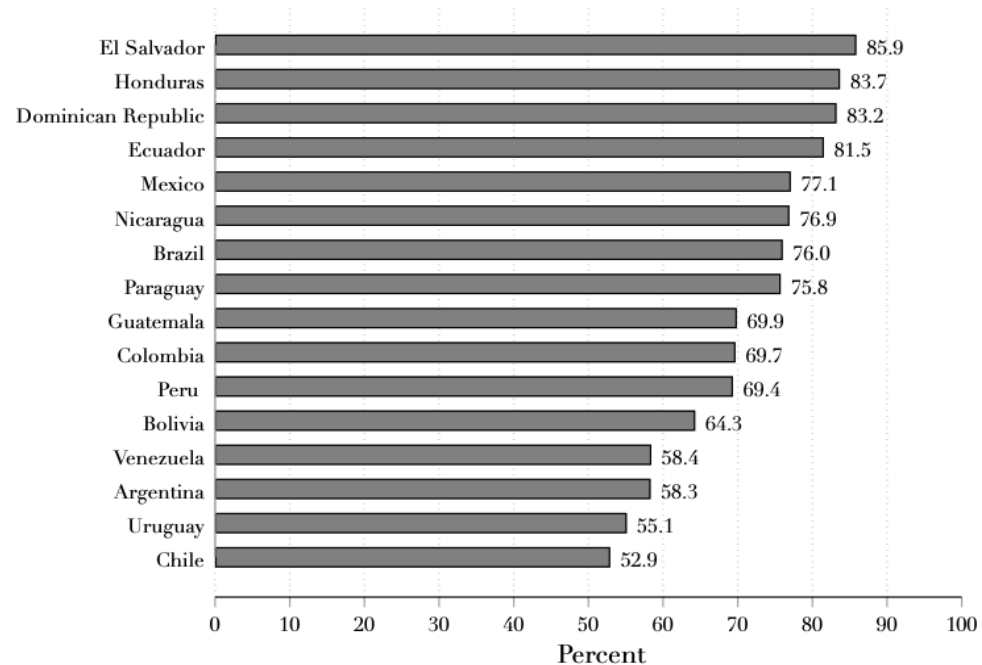
1. State weakness
2. Electoral incentives
3. US foreign policy



Source: Prensa Libre

2. Public support

Support for constabularization in Latin America



Note: Bars indicate support for whether “the armed forces should combat crime and violence,” based on LAPOP’s Americas Barometer 2014 wave.

2. Public support



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3. Prevalence in Latin America



4. Features: militarization as a continuum



Ministerial



Community



Militarized



Constabularized

Police

Soldiers

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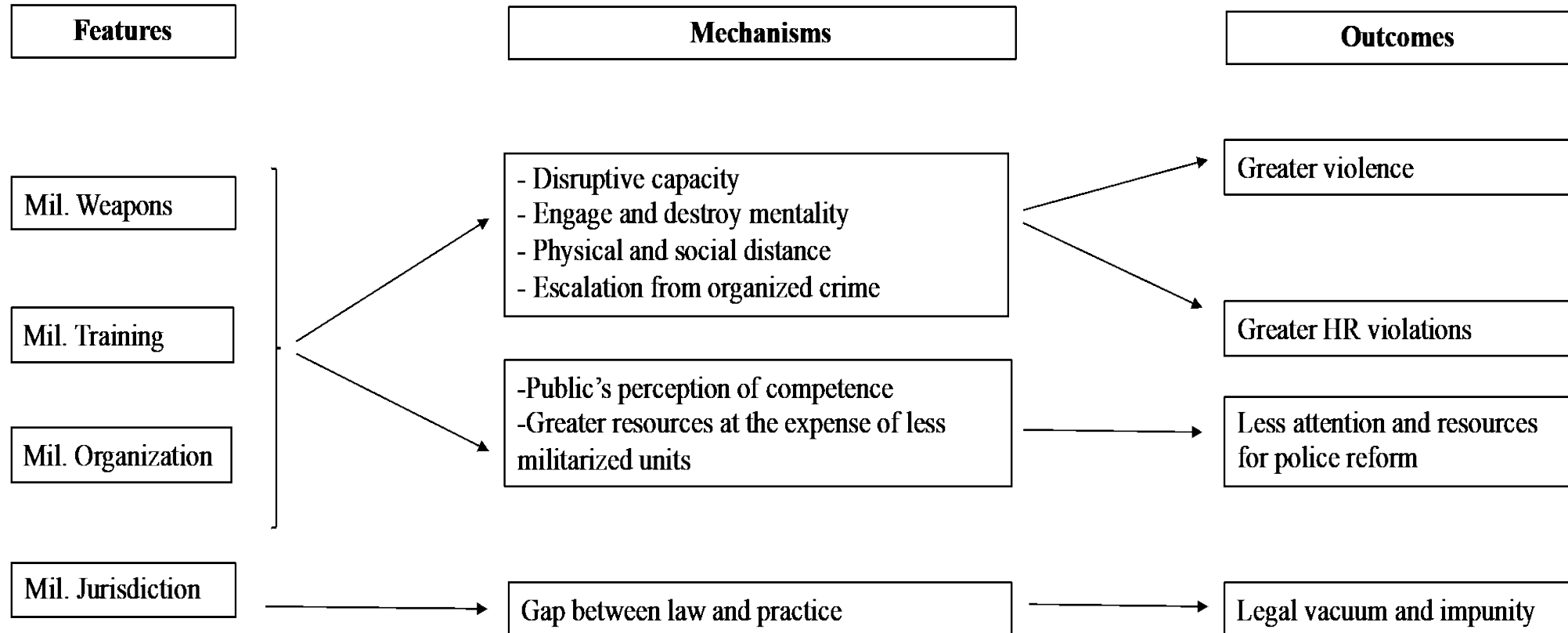
4. Features: militarization as a continuum

Figure 1. Law Enforcement Types Based on Degree of Militarization

	Non-Militarized Police	Militarized Police	Paramilitary Police	Constabularized Military
Accountability	Civilian law	Civilian law	Civilian law (with some exceptions)	Military law (with some exceptions)
Weaponry	No access to heavier weapons and equipment	Some access to heavier weapons and equipment	Some access to heavier weapons and equipment	Full access to heavier weapons and equipment
Training	Maintain public order (focus on community development and use of force as last resort)	Maintain public order (non-lethal use of force)	Maintain public order (non-lethal use of force)	Engage and destroy
Organizational Structure	Low degree of centralization and hierarchy, bottom-up command, deployed in small groups	Medium degree of centralization and hierarchy, bottom-up command, deployed in small groups and formed units	High degree of centralization and hierarchy, top-down command, deployed in formed units.	High degree of centralization and hierarchy, top-down command, deployed in formed units

← Least militarized Most militarized →

5. Consequences of militarization



5. Consequences: Mexico

Compared to civilian law enforcement, Mexico's constabularization has led to:

- **Higher levels of violence**

Homicides (+17/100,000)

Kidnappings (+ 1/100,000)

- **More Human Rights abuses**

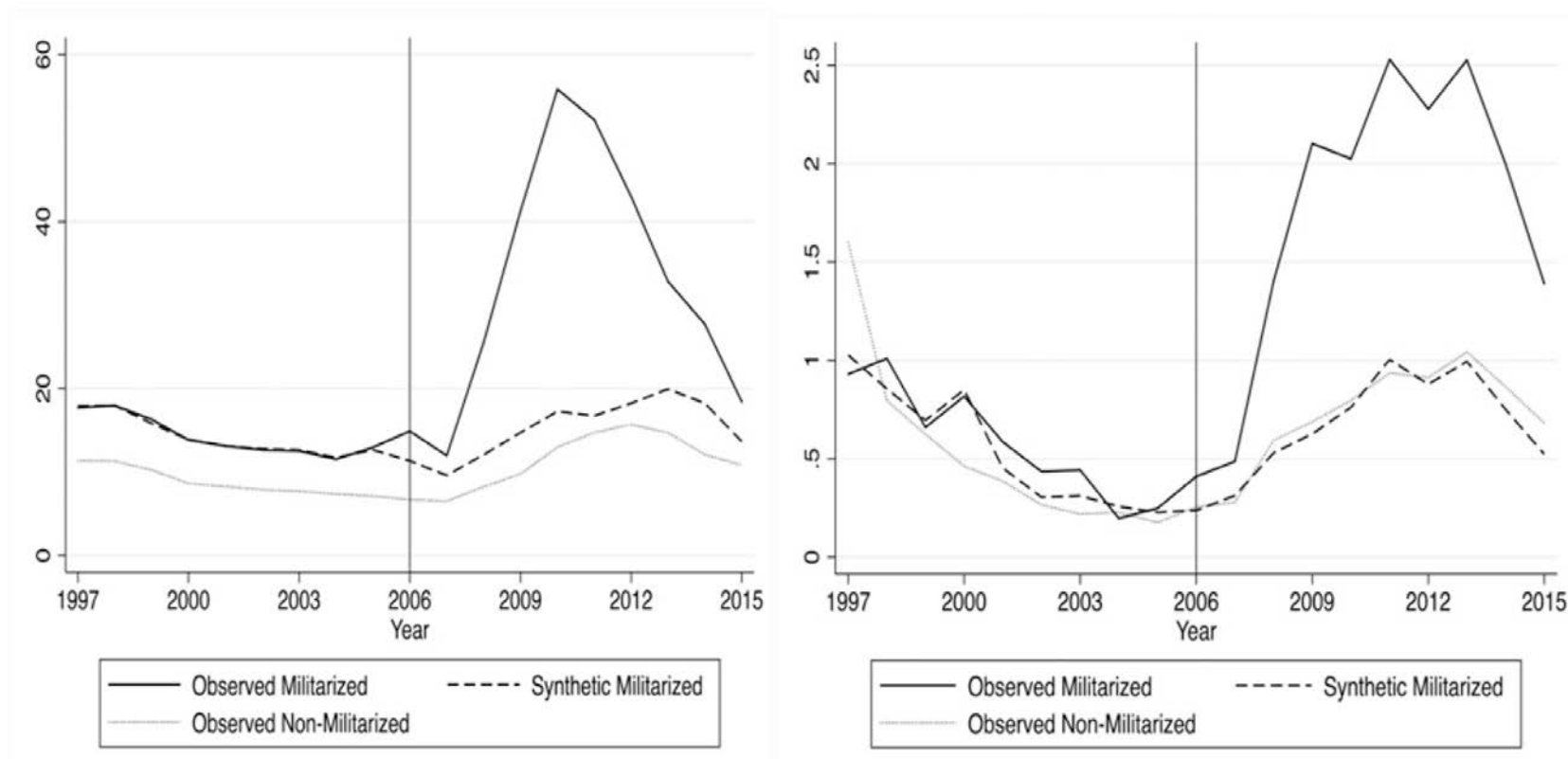
160-250% more complaints during first two years

- **Police Reform**

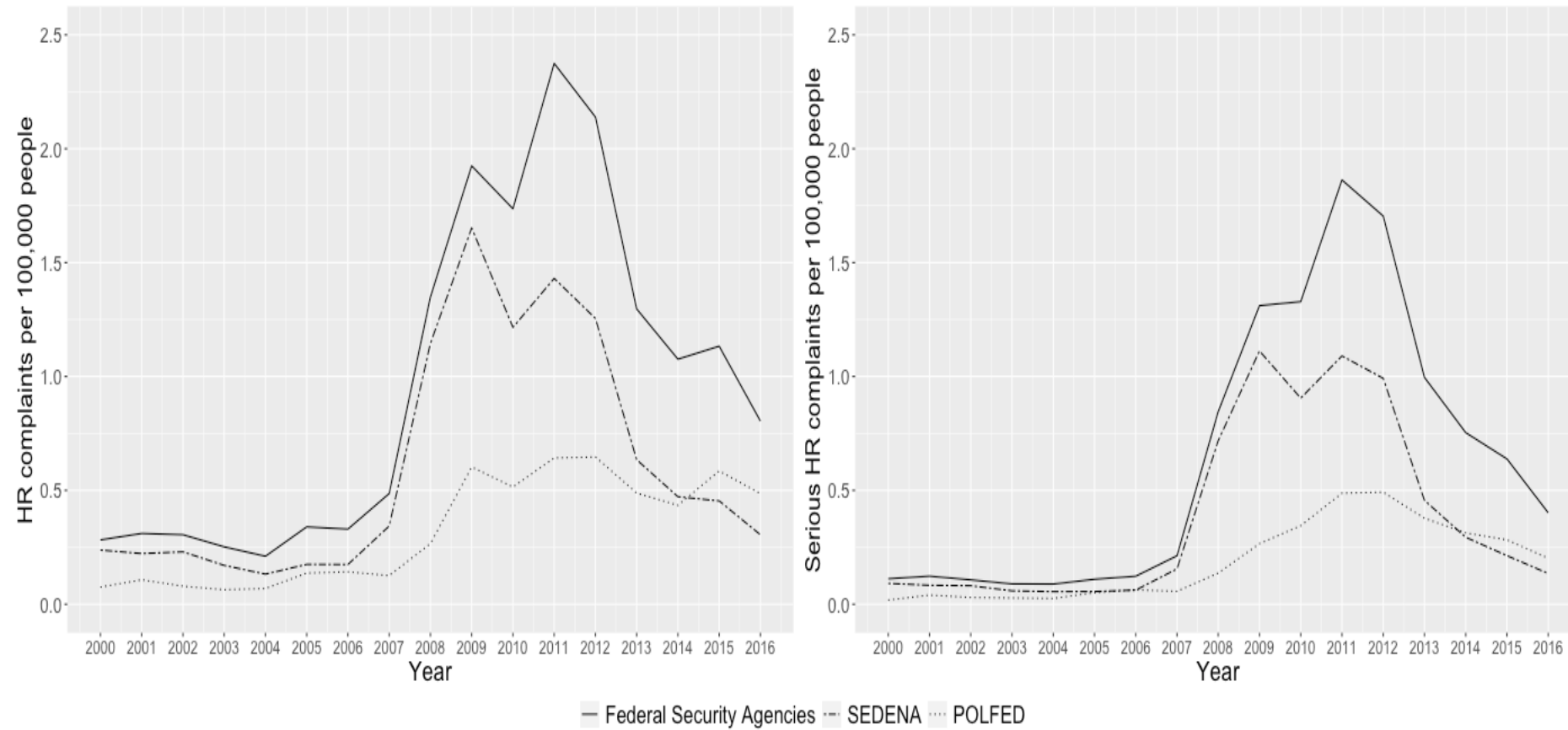
Diversion of attention, resources, talent

5. Consequences: Violence

Figure 1 Homicide and Kidnapping Rates, Average Militarized States vs. Synthetic Control

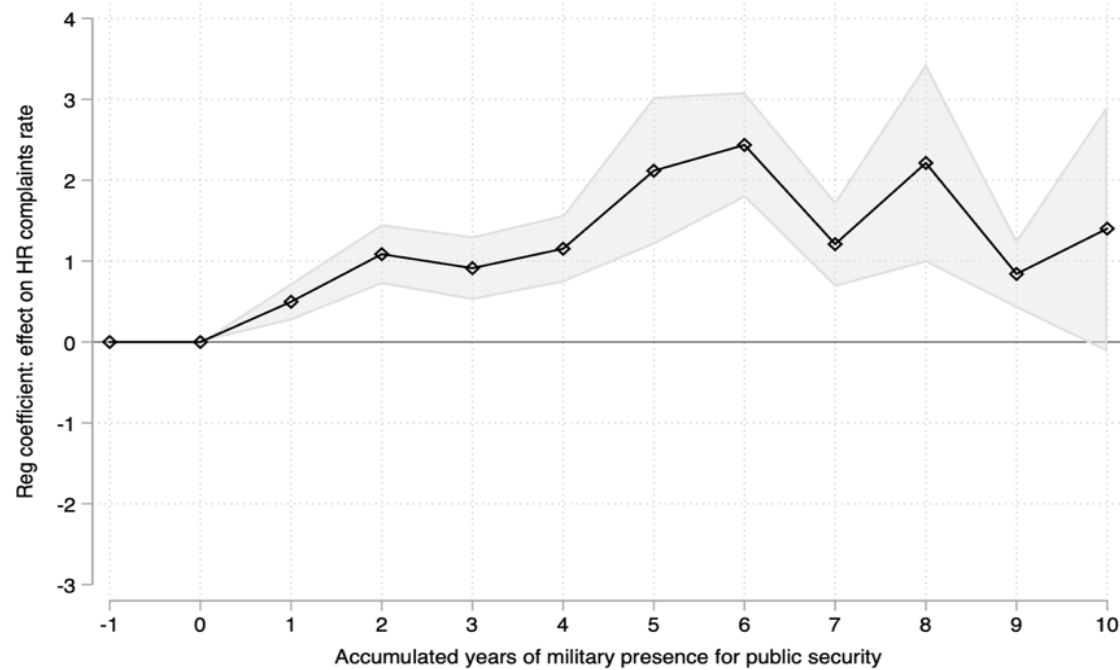


5. Consequences: Human Rights



Flores-Macias and Zarkin. 2020. "The Consequences of Militarization for Human Rights: Evidence from Mexico," Working Paper, Cornell University.

5. Consequences: Learning?



6. Inference challenges

- Reliable data
- Coexistence of different types of law enforcement
- Militarization of police vs. constabularization of the military
- Non-random assignment

7. Stakes

- “Mano dura” approaches -> criminalization of poverty
- High correlation between income and race/ethnicity
- Addressing crime vs violence
- Crucial deficit in quality of democracy

Thank you!

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