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Doctoral Thesis

The effects of criminal violence and State weakness on human rights abuses: The Mexican case

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This thesis is dedicated to Mamá Kan, Tía Yaya, Tía Melón, Tía Lila and Tío Flores. I hope they are smiling for me wherever they are.

To the memory of José Luis Tehuatlie Tamayo.

To all the victim's relatives fighting for justice in a hopeless country.

Abstract

Scholars have found that traditional conflicts are the main drivers of human rights abuses. However, cases without civil or international conflicts could reach high levels of violence. This thesis is interested in the effects of criminal violence on physical violations of human rights, a type of conflict that is less studied. How the environment of criminal violence and state weakness affects human rights? The main argument is that this environment provokes systematic human rights abuses from State agents and criminals and generates distrust of citizens in governments. I test my idea through three papers that study the Mexican case, which is propitious because it has been in a criminal conflict since 2007. The thesis found that this environment increases State violence and disappearances and finally diminishes the elections, using official and original data obtained primarily through transparency requests.

Keywords: Human rights, criminal violence, State violence, disappearances, voter turnout

Declaration: I declare that this thesis is the result of my research and was written entirely by myself. Except where it states otherwise, the work presented is entirely my own.

Word count: 40,964.

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Writing these lines has been harder than I thought. I know that could be cheesy for some readers but, ultimately, it is something to write just once in a lifetime, and I try to recognise the collective effort that implied this thesis. I am happy that a descendent of the Mexican working class, both rural and urban, has earned a PhD abroad. Whenever I was overwhelmed, I thought about what my grandparents, parents and aunts survived, so writing a few lines or running a code in the early morning was not that bad. I hope they are happy about me wherever they are. I am entirely aware that these lines are not enough to greet my parents, Rubi and Toñita, for all the support and example they provided me. It is mandatory to thank my brothers, Pichi and Yoyó, for keeping the family alive during these horrible times. We made it.

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¡Hasta encontrarles!

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1. Introduction

How does the environment of criminal violence and state weakness affect human rights? This thesis argues that this environment creates adverse conditions for the physical integrity of society. This research is relevant as most studies have focused on the effects of traditional wars, such as international or civil wars, in eroding human rights – because state agents are threatened and, in response, focus on their survival (Cohen, 2001; Huntington, 1996). However, cases without 9traditional conflicts but with high levels of violence are widespread but less studied. Specifically, the environment of criminal violence and state weakness is very common in countries of the global south (Kleinschmidt and Palma, 2020). Furthermore, Violent Non-State Actors (NSA) – those groups able to use violence separated from the state (Aydinli, 2015) – can transit or develop non-political motivations over time in long-lasting traditional conflicts, such as the Colombian example (Berti, 2018).

First, in broader terms, my thesis improves the knowledge of the determinants of human rights abuse, including the effects of non-traditional conflicts, state capacities and political power distribution on the matter. Specifically, it contributes to the conflict literature focusing on criminal violence, a type of armed conflict different from traditional civil or international wars, because criminals are Violent NSA that do not want to overthrow states, although they are willing to control subnational levels of government.

Second, my thesis makes empirical contributions by studying human rights abuse. Concretely, this thesis studied two types of violence that pretend to be invisible by their perpetrators: disappearances and physical abuse by state agents. Although different, these types of violence are difficult to measure or

gather information to analyse. The information I use in this thesis is not public or challenging to obtain from local agencies. Consequently, there is no clear source of information for either state violence or disappearances. However, I found ways to study human rights abuses by adapting previous studies (Beer and Mitchell, 2004) and collecting data through several transparency requests. Particularly, my research is one of the first to study disappearances quantitatively (Osorio et al., 2018), building upon qualitative studies and journalist reports.

1.1. Key concepts

As stated before, my thesis contributes to the literature on the determinants of human rights abuse, and to the literature on criminal violence, and it improves the knowledge of the repertoire of violence, deeply analysing disappearances and state violence in this context. Consequently, there are some recurrent concepts in my thesis. Five of them are particularly important. The first two, criminal violence and the state, are the basic elements of the environment that hurt people in Mexico. Then, I introduce repression and disappearances as the two types of violence studied in my thesis. Finally, I present voter turnout, a democratic mechanism affected by the criminal context.

1.1.1. Criminal violence

Scholars have found that armed conflicts are the main drivers on human rights abuse, because the state is under threat and reacts accordingly (Hill and Jones, 2014; Poe and Tate, 1994). Most of studies have focused on traditional wars, conflicts where at least one sovereignty holder is in combat, such as civil and international wars. Criminal violence is related to civil wars mostly to the presence of a Violent Non-State Actor (NSA) – defined by their ability to use violence separated from the state (Aydinli, 2015) –,with differences in terms of

goals and means: while other Violent NSA try to achieve political goals using resources in the process, such as guerrillas or terrorists, criminals look for profitability (Berti, 2018), using political power to that goal.

Although criminal violence is not synonymous of traditional wars because these Violent NSA have different objectives, and criminals do not want to seize formal power or deny sovereignty holders (Kalyvas, 2015; Lessing, 2015), the magnitude of criminal violence could be compared with armed conflicts because of the massive harm to the population due to their firepower and tactical capabilities (Kalyvas, 2015; Schedler, 2015). Furthermore, criminals use similar tactics and techniques than Violent NSA in irregular warfare, hiding and hitting security agents in an armed conflict without clear battlefronts, as rebels used to do elsewhere (Balcells, 2010; Kalyvas, 2005).

Two concepts are necessary to define criminal violence. *Organised crime* names groups of people that break the law to profit from it (Finckenauer, 2005; Shortland and Varese, 2016). Although any criminal organisation represents a challenge to the state's monopoly of violence (Weber, 2008), some barely exercise violence to avoid the state's retaliation, trying to operate under the state's radar as much as possible (Gambetta, 1992; Varese, 2010). Lessing (2015) claims that violence is not an intrinsic outcome of criminal activities because some can reach stable agreements to define and respect their territories.

This thesis is interested in the violence of territorial criminals. They are openly violent for controlling and conquering territories from each other while constraining the state agents (Lessing, 2015). This situation occurs because neither state can directly engage in criminal activities and extract resources from it, such as drug or human trafficking, nor do criminals seek to seize formal power. However, it is worth noting that organised crime cannot operate without some informal state protection, at least.

Analysing the Mexican context, Trejo and Ley (2020) challenge the assumption that state and criminal organisations always fight against other in a zero-sum game between them. According to Trejo and Ley, there is a grey zone, where some state agents are active members of criminality, and others are permissive to criminals, in a situation known as acquiescence. Consequently, I understand criminal violence as the set of crimes linked with criminal operations, considering that violence is an intrinsic part of their business of conquering and retaining territories to extract resources and control routes.

1.1.2. State

I understood state as an organisation whose primary function is to protect society from external menaces, receiving resources and the monopoly of legitimate violence in exchange (Hobbes, 2014; Olson, 1993; Weber, 2008). Although most studies on human rights have focused on the relationship between political regimes and human rights abuses (Poe and Tate, 1994; Hill and Jones, 2014), recent approaches have pointed out the centrality of state capacities to protect society (Englehart, 2009; Hendrix, 2010; Hendrix and Young, 2014; Sullivan, 2019). State capacities is an umbrella term, which names the different functions of the State (Englehart, 2009; Mann, 2006; Tilly, 2007), such as tax collection to implement the state's policies and maintain its bureaucracies (Englehart, 2009; Hendrix, 2010; Hutchison and Johnson, 2011; Tilly, 2007); legitimising compliance (Tilly, 2007), or maintaining political and economic stability (Kugler and Arbetman, 1989; Soifer, 2012).

Another element that I consider is political distribution. This feature is common in literature. For instance, Clapham (2016) points to the fragmentation of the power to increase abuses by NSA, while Cruz and Durán Martínez (2016) argue that criminals consider the state's political configuration in the territory. Finally, Trejo and Ley (2020) found a negative relationship between criminal

violence and vertical partisan alignment, because it increases coordination at different government levels within the federalist systems and introduces partisan incentives to governance. My thesis uses vertical partisan alignment, understood as governments from the same political party or coalition at different levels (Benton, 2019).

The state's strength depends on the combination of state capacities and authorities' willingness. Concretely, I argue that state capacities and political distribution are complementary, and they shape each other, because state capacities determine the possibilities of the state, while political distribution plays a role in determining the willingness of the authorities to exercise the state power.

1.1.3. Repression

The concept of repression refers to abusive or unfair violence from state agents to force citizens to obey the rulers (Young, 2013). Usually, the concept is associated with political processes (Carey, 2009). Repression has two different dimensions. First, the violations to physical integrity (Richards & Gelleny, 2007) refer to physical suffering through mutilation, torture, disappearances and extrajudicial killings, among other actions. Second, the civil rights restrictions limit the people's options through prohibitions, curfews, and limitations on freedoms of expression, association, assembly and beliefs. In reality, both dimensions are related and could happen simultaneously.

1.1.4. Disappearances

State and Violent NSA could perpetrate violence against civilians (VAC). In general, VAC is used to shape civilians' behaviour, to obtain collaboration and resources from society or make it harder to get to the enemy (Kalyvas, 2005;

Fjelde and Hultman, 2014), or provoke fear through them (Asal et al., 2018)[1]. I consider that disappearances differ from other types of VAC in their primary purposes: perpetrators use disappearances to cover and deny previous aggressions (Ansolabehere, 2021). Frey (2021) pointed out three elements as a core of the disappearances definition: deprivation of liberty, the support or acquiescence of the state, and the unknown of the victim's situation. According to Frey (2021), the international law framework is vague because the States are interested in not being accountable for private-sphere crimes.

Disappearances could be classified according to the perpetrator. Disappearances could be classified according to the perpetrator, ranging from those perpetrated by state agents, known as *enforced disappearances*, to those inflicted by Violent NSA with a grey zone between them. *Enforced disappearances* name those crimes committed by State agents, usually to repress opposition (Mitchell, 2004; Beger and Hill, 2019) or prevent collaboration with challengers during civil wars (Kalyvas, 2005).[2] However, disappearances are not exclusive to State agents, with several NSA using them to avoid punishment. Consequently, disappearances are complicated to measure or establish clear responsibility for. This situation is more evident when the State and profit-oriented VNSA share a grey zone of activities to rule criminal activities (Trejo and Ley, 2020).[3]

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[1] Although perpetrators apply violence against civilians for rational purposes, agents in charge could use it for different reasons. As Mitchell (2004) established, while the leaders obtain their goals, perpetrators could have private gains, just as happened during massive rapes (Mitchell, 2004).

[2] According to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance of United Nations, 'enforced disappearance is considered to be the arrest, detention, abduction or any other form of deprivation of liberty by agents of the state or by persons or groups of persons acting with the authorisation, support or acquiescence of the State' (OHCHR | Convention CED, 2006). For instance, all the political imprisoners that never appeared during South American dictatorships of the last century could be classified as enforced disappeared, with the cruelest cases during Argentina's Junta Militar in the 70s and 80s.

[3] For instance, according to the National Centre for Historical Memory of Colombia [CNMH, acronym in Spanish], Violent NSA were responsible for almost 92% of the cases that CNMH could establish a perpetrator −49% of the 60,000 cases (CNMH, 2016). It is worth noting that there is a *grey zone* between disappearances perpetrated by state agents and Violent NSA. As example, Colombian paramilitaries were the main perpetrator in the Colombian conflict, which

1.1.5. Voter turnout

Elections are crucial for political regimes because they provide legitimacy to the system (Lijphart, 2012), shape power distribution and influence policies and public services implemented by authorities (Soto Zazueta & Cortez, 2014). Consequently, voting is the easiest and more efficient way to influence citizens' politics in democratic contexts. Therefore, voter turnout, understood as the percentage of the electorate attending the polls, serves as a measure of popular legitimacy and the quality of democracy (Lijphart, 2012; Nohlen, 2004; Bekoe & Burchard, 2017)[4]. Voter turnout usually depends on sociodemographic conditions, the institutional framework, and electoral competitiveness (Blais, 2006; Fornos et al., 2004). However, scholars have proven that violence is another reason for determining people's participation (Fischer, 2001; Alacevich & Zejcirovic, 2020; Ponce, 2019; Daniele & Dipoppa, 2017), especially when it is intentionally used to shape electoral outcomes (Condra et al., 2019; Höglund, 2009; Bekoe & Burchard, 2017).

1.2. Theoretical argument

The main argument of my thesis is that the environment of criminal violence and state weakness provokes systematic physical abuse. This situation could resemble a parasitising environment, where criminals extract resources from society. This situation is highly favourable for criminals because they are profit-oriented NSA, that use different means to gain more resources. In that order of ideas, they are not interested in challenging political power at the highest level, although they are interested in controlling local governance to gain access and control of more resources. In this environment, the state is incapable of

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is important because many of them were allies of the Colombian government, showing us that Violent NSA could commit disappearances with permission, or acquiescence, of the state agents.
[4] Although voter turnout is essential for non-democracies too, in terms of the measure of regime's mobilisation.

protecting society and it has to be permissive towards criminal behaviour, in a situation known as acquiescence, failing in its primary function of providing security to the society (Weber, 2008).. Furthermore, the state could be part of the abusers whenever their agents respond brutally to the challenges, in the form of physical abuses by state agents, or even working for the criminal side (Aguayo et al., 2017; Pereyra, 2012).

As a result, this environment provokes systematic human rights abuses to society due to the regular aggressions by both state agents and criminals. Additionally, this environment limits political rights, such as voting to elect popular representatives. Consequently, this environment harms the state, although its survival is not at imminent risk. In one sense, this context affects the physical integrity of state agents and encourages human rights abuses, putting them in vulnerability against criminals, and providing incentives for their cooptation. In another sense, the context provokes the distrust of citizens in governments, because society is aware of the violent context, even if it has become usual nowadays, creating conditions for the losing of legitimacy by the state.

1.3. Mexican case

Mexican case illustrates how criminal violence and state weakness affect human rights. This research would be helpful for other contexts because the combination of profit-oriented Violent NSA with a weak state, the cornerstone of my thesis, exists elsewhere. In that sense, many conflicts worldwide could combine these two elements in a certain degree. In short, Mexican case illustrates the different elements of an environment of criminal violence: state weakness and a criminal conflict.

First, the Mexican state power was diminished after a combined electoral democratisation and decentralisation process that started in the 80s (Selee, 2011; Schedler, 2003; Hernández, 2008). In short, the democratisation focused on the electoral side (Schedler, 2003), without creating enough accountability mechanisms and even provoking local authoritarianism in some Mexican states (Gibson, 2005; Giraudy, 2009). At the same time, the national government transferred responsibilities to local authorities without strengthening them or making them accountable (Hernández, 2008).

Second, criminal organisations have passed from confederations of local traffickers supervised by the Mexican secret police – the Federal Security Directorate [DFS, acronym in Spanish] – to transnational corporations (Astorga, 2016), with portfolios of activities that still include drug trafficking but that have been widening to human trafficking and legal activities such as tomato and advocado comercialisation or minings (Herrera and Martínez Álvarez, 2022). There are many factors behind the strengthening of Mexican criminal organisations, such as the massive border with the United States, the mountainous Mexican territory and the weakness of the Mexican state, alongside the closeness of the Caribbean route of drugs trafficking from South America to North America and the collapse of Colombian cartels in the 90s. Furthermore, Trejo and Ley (2020) found that dismantling national security forces in charge of drug policies destroyed the government's control over criminal organisations and the state's agents specialised in violence, creating conditions for strengthening the criminal organisations.[5]

Expectedly, the firepower and tactical training has hugely increased and even professionalised with recruiting former elite soldiers of Mexico and Central

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[5] The biggest shock occurred with the dismantling of the Federal Security Board [DFS, acronym in Spanish], after the homicide of DEA's agent Enrique' Kiki' Camarena in 1985.

America in the beginning of this century (Dudley, 2011; Sánchez Valdés and Pérez Aguirre, 2018). The trigger for this explosive situation was the Presidential election of 2006. After his controversial victory, Felipe Calderón launched the Mexican' war on drugs'. Although Calderon barely spoke about the topic during his presidential campaign, his operation's main slogan was 'We want the drug does not reach your children'. Some scholars and former Calderon officers (Astorga, 2015; Valdés Castellanos, 2013) have argued that the criminal situation forced Calderon to take the initiative because criminals had been cumulating influence and power under the state's radar. Others have pointed out Calderon's need for legitimacy as a crucial factor in starting the campaign against criminals (Meyer, 2015), considering his very controversial election (Crespo, 2008). These claims were supported when he decided to start the military operation in Michoacan, a Western Mexican state where he was born, ruled by the leftist opposition (Trejo and Ley, 2016), to signalise opposition corruption and incompetence to face criminals. Whatever the reason, the number of criminal organisations rose. There is no agreement on the total number of criminal organisations nowadays, but Mexico has passed from a handful number of criminal organisations in the 90s to dozens of them at the moment, with temporary alliances and ever-changing wars between them.

As a result, the military operations of Calderon introduced Mexico into a peculiar armed conflict dynamic, because criminal organisations have confronted both the state's authority and rival organisations to control territories (Lessing, 2015). This dynamic has had rising effects on violence and people's suffering, surpassing most armed conflicts in the world, but without clear political motivations, considering that criminals have not tried to overthrow the state[6]. Furthermore, criminal organisations do not limit their activities to drugs. On

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[6] It does not imply that criminals do not consider political features and state distribution. However, I consider that criminals objectives are profitability oriented (Berti, 2018), and they consider and intervene in politics as a mean for goals.

the contrary, they have a wide portfolio of illegal activities -such as human trafficking, kidnappings, extortion, local crime control and illicit taxes-complemented with legal ones, in the range of mining (Herrera and Martínez-Álvarez, 2022), hydrocarbon extraction, and even parasitising from public resources (Aguayo and Dayán, 2018).

Third, the criminal conflicts have multiplied violence across the country, further weakening the Mexican State. My thesis is interested in how this environment has harmed Mexican society. I should say that this is a personal issue for me. As a Mexican, I have seen the worsening of my country in a few years. My generation was the last that played on the streets without concern. Suddenly, criminal violence was not some story that happened in a border town to unknown people and started to be something tangible that had occurred close to all of us, near to our neighbourhoods. Our news and social media profiles are full of news of violence on a daily basis. Sadly, it is hard to find institutional mechanisms to revert the situation because criminals have coopted authorities at every level, the Mexican State has not been strengthened, and citizens have reasons to distrust the electoral mechanisms tailored before the rising of criminal violence.

1.4. Research design

Summarising, the Mexican case combines three different elements. First, it is a large and federalist country that experienced a simultaneous process of democratisation and decentralisation that weakened the Mexican state. Second, Mexico entered the dynamic of criminal violence, a non-traditional armed conflict where the state's survival is not at risk, but society experienced brutal levels of violence because criminals pursue profitability as an end Berti, 2018), and violence is an intrinsic part of their business. Third, these two premises provokes an environment where society suffers systematic physical abuse. As I

stated above, this situation could resemble a parasitising environment, where criminals extract resources from society through violence, while the state is incapable of protecting people, although its survival is not at risk, and it is another perpetrator of physical abuse against society.

This thesis is interested in the hidden violence of this environment, taking advantage of the heterogeneity of a federalist and large country like Mexico. However, these novels attempt to study less visible violence, and their effects on society systematically create a potential endogeneity situation. Two main factors are behind it. In the first place, the main variables of this thesis are theoretically related or even overlapped. For instance, organised crime, and its violence, could not exist without a certain degree of state weakness, understood as a lack or poor shape of state capacity. However, data scarcity is the main problem in addressing this potential endogeneity. The Mexican state does not produce good indicators for state capacity and criminal violence, making it difficult to establish clear indicators to avoid endogeneity.

I believe that authorities have incentives to not produce good data for the public, such as trying not to be accountable on difficult matters such as criminal violence and state weaknesses. However, beyond those incentives, the federalist system plays a role, provoking that every state produce their own data, varying in quality and quantity amongst them. For instance, Mexican federal elections are organised by a professional and well-funded institution, the National Electoral Institute [INE, acronym in Spanish], that produces and makes public high-grained data, even at the neighbourhood level. In contrast, some local institutions, the Public Agencies for Local Elections [OPLE's, acronym in Spanish], upload scanned documents or a few tables about the matter. The following lines in this section describe the operationalisation of the central variables of this thesis.

1.4.1. Violations to physical integrity

The nature of the ombudsperson system in Mexico creates double underrepresentation due to its voluntary nature and because the system does not process almost any complaint. Unfortunately, there is no other proxy to approach the phenomenon, as I explained in Chapter 2. The text follows the work of Beer and Mitchell (2004). They used the total number of complaints for human rights abuse by state agents. However, this research is only interested in physical abuse. Therefore, I collected data from the National Council for Human Rights [CNDH, acronym in Spanish] through requests to the National Transparency System [PNT, acronym in Spanish]. The process consisted of three steps: first, I requested information from the CNDH (2019);[7] then, I eliminated non-physical abuse from authorities;[8] finally, I created a database with the information collected. Consequently, the dataset classifies the registers into five groups, as follows: *disappearance* includes complaints of 'forced disappearance' and 'uncommunication'; *against freedom* are the data collected with 'arbitrary detention' and 'illegal retention' complaints; the *torture and abuse* group includes 'arbitrary use of public force', 'harm by the arbitrary use of public force', 'disproportionate violence', 'undue punishment of prisoners', 'cruel and degrading treatment' and 'torture'; *against life* are complaints about 'violations to life' and 'summary execution'; *sexual* includes 'sexual abuse', 'forced contraception', 'life deprivation of the product of conception', 'sexual harassment' and 'rape'.

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[7] The request asked for the number of human rights complaints by type of abuse and responsible authority from 2000 to 2018, disaggregated by state. However, this manuscript uses 2006 to 2016 observations due to the availability of information of criminal organisations.

[8] For example, the Public Health System is usually saturated, generating tensions between users and staff. Many family members of patients complain about verbal abuse by doctors and nurses. But it could not be considered physical abuse.

1.4.2. Disappearances

I use the number of disappeared people by year in Chapter 3 and 4. Registering the disappeared is a voluntary measure by a third person with the public attorneys, known as 'Ministerios Públicos' in Spanish. I use data from the National Register of Missing and Disappeared Persons [RNPED, acronym in Spanish] in its latest version (May 2018). In the RNPED, the denouncer, usually a relative of the disappeared, needs to go to the Ministerios Públicos after 72 hours of the disappearance and start an enquiry. This informal practice happens although the law does not say anything about it.[9] After this, the local attorney system should start searching for the person and report the total number of cases monthly to update the register. However, in practice, this is not an automatic process. Local governments usually control the local attorney system, and governors have political incentives to delay the reports of the disappearance for months or even years (IMDHD,2019).

1.4.3. Voter turnout

I used voter turnout in local elections to analyse the people's response to disappearances in Chapter 4. The common ground is that mayoral authorities are elected every three years in Mexican municipalities, where each citizen has one vote to choose all the members of 'Cabildo', a council that rules the municipality. The size of Cabildo is related to the number of inhabitants in the municipality. The head of the list is already assigned in the electoral ticket and becomes mayor if the list wins the majority of votes, becoming the ruler of the municipality. I used the *percentage of voter turnout* in mayoral elections. To do that, I calculated the measure from the total number of votes divided into registered voters, known as 'Lista Nominal de Electores', in a given

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[9] The procedure changed recently. Nowadays, the denouncer should pre-register the disappearance on a website and introduce the photograph, personal number [CURP, acronym in Spanish] and personal data such as age, height, weight and blood type, among other things. Afterwards, the denouncer has to attend the offices of public attorneys, to present the documents of the disappeared to 'sustain the denouncement'.

municipality. I collected data from Local Electoral Public Agencies [OPLE, acronym in Spanish] for mayoral elections in every Mexican state, through transparency requests.

1.4.4. Criminal conflicts

I used criminal conflicts to measure *criminal competition* for a given state in Chapter 2 and 3. The measure was created using Phillips' data (2015) from 2006 to 2012 and complementing it with data shared by 'Animal Político', a Mexican digital newspaper, from 2013 to 2016. The journalists obtained this information from the National Attorney through transparency requests and processed and organised it. I used the number of criminal organisations using the same sources as an alternative measure. The difference between both measures is that two or more organisations could be allied, controlling a territory without fighting against each other, counting as two criminal organisations within a Mexican state, but without conflicts between them, counting as zero in criminal competition.

North-eastern Mexican states are good examples of the former. They have had the presence of Los Zetas and the Cártel del Golfo (CDG) in the last two decades. These organisations were former allies who shared territories until 2010, with reduced levels of violence in their 'plazas'. The rising violence occurred after Osiel Cárdenas Guillén, former leader of CDG and creator of Los Zetas, obtained a reduced sentence in his trial in the United States in 2010, due to his collaboration with US authorities. According to diplomatic sources (Corchado and Krause, 2016; Sánchez Valdés and Pérez Aguirre, 2018), the criminal leader provided key information to capture Los Zetas leaders. They responded by breaking the alliance and started a brutal retaliation in the shared territories, especially in the north-eastern states of Coahuila, Nuevo León and

Tamaulipas.[10] Consequently, depending on the context, I coded these states with at least two organisations from 2006 to 2016. However, I did not count criminal conflicts inside them from 2006 to 2009 because Los Zetas and CDG were allies,but coded as a conflict when their alliance collapsed. If other organisations, like the Cartel de Sinaloa, tried to take advantage and invaded the territory, I counted it as another conflict.

1.4.5. State

I operationalised state capacities in Chapter 2. I use 'security budget' to measure *security capacity*, with the INEGI's data. The variable refers to the local government's budget for public safety in a Mexican state, including wage expenditure and federal transfers for security. The sum of both is weighted into regional GDP. The indicator for *administrative capacity* is 'local taxes', which refers to the amount of taxes collected by local governments per capita, with INEGI's data.[11]

Additionally, I used copartisan governors to test whether the *vertical partisan alignment* modifies disappearances in Chapter 3. It is a dummy variable created with data from the National Electoral Institute [INE, acronym in Spanish] with values of 1 when the state governor belongs to the same party or coalition as the president and 0 when they are from different ones.

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[10] Some of the paradigmatic events during the criminal war between CDG and Los Zetas included massacres of migrants, known as SanFernando I, decapitated bodies with messages in Cadereyta (FJEDD, 2020) and massive disappearances in some municipalities in Coahuila (Aguayo and Dayán, 2018).

[11] As an alternative measure for security capacity, the text used the local police rate for every 100,000 inhabitants, with data collected from INEGI. As an alternative measure for administrative capacity, the analysis uses the Education budget, weighted by local GDP. Both variables are used from 2006 to 2016. Descriptive stats and alternative estimations are in the Appendix A.

1.5. Main findings

My thesis shows how the environment of criminal violence and state weakness provokes systematic physical abuses in three chapters, which I describe as follows. In Chapter 2, I analyse the effects of criminal conflicts and state capacities over violations to physical integrity by State agents. Concretely, it asks under what conditions the criminal violence increases state's physical abuses. I argue that state violence is related to territorial's criminal organisations and that State capacities are crucial to shaping whether criminal violence increases human rights violations. The state's capacities have many dimensions with differentiated functions and effects on society. The manuscript disaggregates it, theorising that the security capacity could increase human rights abuses. Conversely, higher administrative capacity should decrease violations by state actors. The chapter founds that criminal violence and the security dimension of state capacities increase violations of physical integrity. In contrast, administrative capacity does not affect abuses.

The Chapter 3 is an analysis of the determinants of people's disappearances. Studies on violence against civilians by NSA have focused on more visible crimes, like killings or massacres. However, the logic behind disappearances remains unclear. Qualitative evidence has shown that perpetrators mostly use disappearances to hide previous crimes, but the environment that allows them to do it has been less studied. This chapter focuses on a profit-oriented Violent NSA. Specifically, it asks *under what conditions do criminals disappear people?* This manuscript analyses the role of political and criminal competitions as determinants of people's disappearances. It shows that political competition is more critical to disappearances than the criminal competition.

Finally, the Chapter 4 studies how the people react to the environment of criminal violence and state weakness while using the democratic framework. Scholars have found that violence could determine voter turnout. However, most of them have focused on the effects of violence when it is intentionally implemented to shape elections, while unintended consequences have been less studied. The chapter analyses the impact of disappearances, a type of crime, with a different logic than others: do disappearances affect voter turnout? The manuscript argues that disappearances are associated with lower voter turnout because they do not mobilise relatives and victims in electoral politics while pointing out the inefficiency of authorities on the rest of society due to the particular nature of the crime. This chapter shows that disappearances decrease voter turnout.

2. Under what conditions does criminal violence increase the state's physical abuse? Evidence from the Mexican 'war on drugs'.

"Close the eyes, dude! I don't like to be seen," said the local policemen while suffocating an alleged hitman with a transparent plastic bag. "I want weapons, weapons! Where are they?" said the policeman in a video broadcasted on Mexican News (Imagen Noticias, 2018). Despite the national coverage of torture and abuse, the officers only received a short suspension for their acts. This episode seems to be a common practice in countries with high levels of criminal violence –understood as a situation where criminal organisations are openly violent for territories and routes, and try to control and gain territories from each other while constraining state policies (Lessing, 2015). The topic is relevant because the presence of organised crime does not necessarily produce repression, understood as abusive violence from state agents, as perpetrators, toward members of society, as victims (Young, 2013). Paradigmatic organised crime cases show that some criminal organisations could seek to remain under the authorities' radar to avoid the state's response (Gambetta, 1996; Varese, 2001).

Under what conditions does criminal violence increase the state's physical abuse? I argue that state capacities shape the effects of criminal violence on violations to physical integrity by state agents.[12] However, state capacities have many dimensions, with differentiated functions and effects on society. This chapter disaggregates the concept, theorising that security capacity –understood as the use of force to deter or repel challenges to state authority (Hendrix, 2010)–

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[12] This chapter use violation to physical integrity and physical abuse as synonyms.

increases physical abuse. In contrast, higher administrative capacity – understood as the state's ability to monitor its territory and citizenship (Hendrix and Young, 2014)– should decrease state agents' violations of physical integrity.

This chapter contributes to the literature in two aspects. Firstly, this manuscript adds to studies on the effects of violence on repression. Several studies have shown that civil and interstate wars erode respect for human rights because state survival is threatened, and the state security forces could use any technique to guarantee their survival (Cohen, 2013; Hill and Jones, 2014; Huntington, 1996; Poe and Tate, 1994). Thus, this manuscript contributes to that body of literature studying criminal violence, a type of conflict that differs from traditional conflict because criminal organisations do not seek formal power while challenging the state's authority, although their effects can reach very high levels of violence. Secondly, this article contributes to studying the effects of state capacity on physical repression. Scholars have previously focused on the type of political regime as an explanatory factor of human rights abuse (Carey, 2009; Davenport, 1999; Davenport, 2007; Fein, 1995), but this text includes state capacities as the determinant (Englehart, 2009; Hendrix, 2010; Hendrix and Young, 2014). Moreover, this chapter disaggregates the concept and tests the role of administrative and security capacity in modifying the physical abuse of the state.

The chapter has four sections. First, it presents a literature review of state agents' violations of physical integrity, the explanatory framework on repression and the structural causes that trigger it. The second part presents the manuscript's theory, arguing that security capacity and administrative capacity have different effects on the violations of physical integrity by state agents in criminal violence environments. The third part shows Mexico as an interesting case in making a subnational study on human rights abuse. Finally, the fourth part presents the statistical analysis results based on an original panel dataset

using Mexican states from 2006 to 2016 as units of analysis. The results show that both criminal violence and security capacity increase violations to physical integrity, while administrative capacity does not affect abuse. However, the results also indicate a way to reduce the abuse of physical integrity by state agents by improving the security dimension.

2.1. Structural determinants of violations to physical integrity

The concept of repression refers to abusive or unfair violence from state agents, as perpetrators, to force the citizens to obey the rulers (Young, 2013). Usually, the concept is associated with political processes, related to protests (Carey, 2009) and the elimination of political opposition. According to Davenport (2007), there are two different dimensions to repression: *violations to physical integrity* (Richards and Gelleny, 2007) harming human bodies through mutilation, torture, disappearances and extrajudicial killings, among other actions; and *civil rights restrictions* limiting people's options through prohibitions, curfews, and limitations on freedoms of expression, association, assembly and beliefs.[13] In reality, both dimensions are related and could happen simultaneously.

This chapter is interested in violations to physical integrity. The perpetrators are the state agents whenever they torture, disappear, beat, kidnap or any physical harm to members of society, the victims of this type of violence. Given the nature of their functions, security agents are the common perpetrators,

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[13] The Chinese government's behaviour is a good example. It exercises civil rights restrictions towards its opponents, through control mechanisms to prevent them from organising autonomously from the state. However, it has also exercised physical integrity violations against its inhabitants when it considers it necessary, with cases ranging from the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989 to the dissolution of the Hong Kong protests in 2019.

although any member of the state could be.[14] The same principle applies to the victims, although the more vulnerable members of the society –such as poor, non-heterosexual, young people– could receive harm and customary abuse (Rivera, 2010).

The dominant explanatory framework considers that the authorities seek to minimise costs and maximise the benefits of physical abuse (Hill and Jones, 2014).[15] According to Hill and Jones (2014), economic factors – such as GDP per capita and oil revenues – modify people's grievances and can lead to arbitrary responses of governments to suppress them, while demographic conditions –such as population size, demographic density and the relative number of young people– modify the opportunities to repress. I propose that armed conflict and state capacity are necessary to explain physical abuse by state agents in the context of criminal violence.

2.1.1. Armed conflict

According to the literature, armed conflicts increase physical abuse because governments see their survival threatened by other armed actors (Hill and Jones, 2014; Poe and Tate, 1994), and authorities could obtain support from their societal base if cleavages are triggered. This context allows events such as genocides or ethnic cleansing by groups in dispute (Cohen, 2013). Civil wars have become more important than international wars in explaining the state's physical abuse because the latter is increasingly rare (Kalyvas and Kenny,

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[14] For instance, President Alberto Fujimori ordered the forced sterilisation of almost 200 thousand indigenous women in Peru (Puertas, 2002). Perpetrators in this case would be the President, Ministers, high bureaucrats and doctors involved in this crime.

[15] Mauricio Rivera (2010) challenges the maximising approach, or centralised repression, saying that the decision to exercise violence against society also depends on the situation and even bureaucratic inertia of the force agents, or *decentralised repression*.

2010). These authors define a civil war as combat inside a sovereign entity when at least one challenger defies the 'current holder' of sovereign authority.[16]

Criminal violence as a determinant of physical abuse by state agents has been less explained. The concept of *organised crime* has been used to indicate any human group that breaks the law and obtains revenue from it (Finckenauer, 2005; Shortland and Varese, 2016). Organised crime is not a synonym for violence, although its existence defies the state's monopoly on violence (Weber, 2008). Emblematic criminal organisations, such as the Mafia, do not involve systematic violence because their business model is related to the sale of protection or goods and uses a limited amount of violence to avoid the state's radar as much as possible (Gambetta, 1996; Varese, 2010). However, other criminal groups use violence as part of their business (Lessing, 2015). This type of criminal organisation has a territorial nature, which implies a direct challenge to the state by breaking the law, extracting resources illegally or leeching the government's resources (Aguayo and Dayán, 2018; Trejo and Ley, 2020).

The violence of territorial criminal organisations has a twofold logic (Lessing, 2015). On the one hand, criminal organisations compete for territory control using the logic of conquest, extract resources from it, gain rents and exploit routes.[17] On the other hand, criminals try to constrain state policies and activities (Lessing, 2015: 1489). This occurs because the state cannot directly engage in criminal activities and extract resources from it, such as drug or

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[16] According to Kalyvas (2005), there are three different types of civil wars. *Conventional warfare* involves confrontations between regular armies in a balanced power situation with clear frontlines, usually when two or more members of the state clash each other. *Irregular warfare* is the name for unbalanced wars without clear frontlines, with clashes in the periphery, and combatants using guerrillas' tactics, with counterinsurgency response from the government. The last type is *non-conventional symmetric wars*, in which a sovereignty holder and a challenger cannot be recognised, but rather they are primitive or criminal sides, with irregular armies.
[17] Lessing says that violence is not intrinsic to criminal activities, as they can reach stable agreements between themselves.

human trafficking, nor do criminals seek to seize formal power. However, sometimes they try to influence the state's response against them and their competitors. It is worth noting that organised crime cannot operate without some informal state protection. Trejo and Ley (2020) challenge the assumption that state and criminal organisations are unrelated and play a zero-sum game together. They propose a 'grey zone of criminality', where criminals and state agents regulate the criminal underworld through information exchange, bribes and protection. According to them, some organisations and individuals simultaneously play a role as members of the state and criminal groups.

Consequently, criminal violence has been linked to civil wars (Grillo, 2011; Schedler, 2015; Sullivan and Elkus, 2008) because it harms the population due to criminals' extensive firepower and tactical coordination (Kalyvas, 2015). However, the main difference from traditional conflicts is that criminals do not try to overthrow governments, seize formal power or deny sovereignty holders (Kalyvas, 2015; Lessing, 2015), although criminals can establish a 'criminal governance' at the subnational level, where they control political, economic and social spheres (Trejo and Ley, 2020).

2.1.2. State capacities

State configuration is another relevant factor in explaining the state's physical abuse. Most studies have focused on the relationship between regimes and human rights abuses (Hill and Jones, 2014; Poe and Tate, 1994). Scholars have found a negative effect of democratic regimes on human rights violations, known as the *democratic proposition* (Davenport, 1999), due to the democratic mechanisms making authorities accountable (O'Donnell, 2004) and the peaceful resolution of conflicts, unlike undemocratic regimes that regularly coerce their population.

Recent approaches have pointed out that state capacities are more relevant than the type of political regime in explaining physical abuse committed by state agents (Englehart, 2009; Hendrix, 2010; Hendrix and Young, 2014; Sullivan, 2019). However, it is worth noting that there is no clear definition of state capacity. For example, Tilly understands it as the result of negotiation between citizens and the state (2007) in a bargaining process that varies from context to context. Consequently, state capacities could be used as an umbrella term for the wide range of differentiated functions that comprises it (Englehart, 2009; Mann, 2006; Tilly, 2007), such as tax collection to implement state's policies and maintain its bureaucracies (Englehart, 2009; Hendrix, 2010; Hutchison and Johnson, 2011; Tilly, 2007), legitimising compliance (Tilly, 2007) or maintaining political and economic stability (Kugler and Arbetman, 1989; Soifer, 2012).

2.2. A theory on violations to physical integrity by state agents in contexts of criminal violence

In summary, scholars have found an effect of traditional armed conflict and political regimes as determinants of physical abuse by state agents (Davenport, 1999; Hill and Jones, 2014; Poe and Tate, 1994). However, the determinants of violations to physical integrity in criminal violence contexts have been less studied. *Under what conditions does criminal violence increase the state's physical abuse?* I posit that state capacity can shape the effects of criminal violence on abuse. This manuscript analyses the role of the administrative and security capacity, testing which one determines the state's physical abuse to what extent.

As stated before, territorial criminal organisations compete against other organisations for territories and resources (Lessing, 2015; Trejo and Ley, 2020), with clashes similar to those used in irregular wars (Kalyvas, 2005). Although

the aim of criminals is not to overthrow authorities or hold formal power at the central level – although criminals try to establish informal governance at the subnational level to gain protection, protect their territories, control illegal markets and extract resources from society (Trejo and Ley, 2020), criminal conflict can have similar or even more significant effects than civil war in terms of human cost because criminals tend to have resources, tactical capabilities and extensive firepower (Kalyvas, 2015).

I argue that criminal conflict produces greater physical abuse by state agents because they engage in an armed conflict without clear battlefronts but rather with porous borders and where episodes of violence can appear anywhere (Balcells, 2010; Kalyvas, 2005). Furthermore, while the state's survival is not at risk in these contexts, because it has enough resources and criminals do not seek to overthrow it, its security agents do fight for their individual survival, even adopting criminal-like tactics to increase their chances of success against organised crime (Pereyra, 2012).

H1: More criminal violence increases violations to physical integrity by state agents.

The state's response will depend on the resources and ability to exercise them, grouped in the *state capacities* literature (Englehart, 2009; Hendrix, 2010; Hendrix and Young, 2014; Sullivan, 2019). This chapter argues that greater security capacity, understood as the use of force to deter or repel challenges to the state's authority (Hendrix, 2010: 274),[18] positively affects violations to physical integrity in contexts where criminals are competing. There are three reasons for this. First, state agents are continuously attacked or threatened by organised crime. Consequently, state agents respond with more brutality

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[18] Hendrix (2010) called it military capacity, but I refer to it as security capacity in this text.

wherever they are under attack. Second, the state focuses its security capacity on places where criminals challenge it, increasing the effects of violence in those places (Phillips, 2015; Trejo and Ley, 2016). Finally, the state would use the force power paid for, in the form of bureaucratic inertia (Davenport, 2007; Rivera, 2014).

H2: More security capacity increase violations to physical integrity by state agents.

Given that both security capacity and criminal violence increase physical abuses on their own, which are the previous hypotheses of this chapter, I posit that the interaction of criminal violence and security capacity has an amplifying effect on physical abuses. Table 2.1 illustrates the interaction. The movement from the bottom to the top indicates the change from the absence of criminal fighting for a given territory to the massive violence between criminal organisations that compete for the 'plaza'. The movement from left to right points out the pass from the weakest security capacity to the strongest. Consequently, the extreme cases of this interaction are the bottom left-hand box –which shows places where the state has lesser security capacity but does not face extreme criminal violence, resulting in few citizen abuse cases– and the upper right-hand box –which shows the worst scenario for physical abuse by state agents, where they have a strong security capacity and behave like another criminal competitor.

Table 2. 1. Interaction between criminal violence and security capacity

	– security capacity +	
+ **criminal** **violence** **–**	+/–	The worst scenario for society (more abuses)
	The best scenario for society (fewer abuses)	+/–

H3: Higher levels of security capacity amplify the effects of criminal violence on violations to physical integrity by state agents.

This manuscript argues that administrative capacity negatively affects violations to physical integrity. As shown before, administrative capacity implies that the state can better monitor its territory and citizenship (Hendrix and Young, 2014), provides legitimacy to the state (Sullivan, 2019) and allows it to implement its policies to the citizenship without using force (Hutchison and Johnson, 2011). Hendrix and Young (2014) stress that the central point of this capacity is not the ability to gain resources but to have a professional bureaucracy able to monitor the territory and control the population without using force. Furthermore, the state could use its resources to provide goods and services to society, reducing society's grievances (Soifer, 2012).

H4: More administrative capacity reduces violations to physical integrity by state agents.

As I stated above, I argue that criminal violence would have an increasing effect on physical abuse. However, conversely to security capacity, I posit that administrative capacity diminishes state agents' violations of physical integrity. Consequently, the combination of administrative capacity and criminal violence will have a mitigating effect on physical abuse. Table 2.2 illustrates the relationship. As I argue in Table 2.1, the movement from the bottom –where a criminal organisation has control over a given territory– to the top –where criminals compete for space– exacerbates the physical abuses over society. The movement from left to right points out the pass from the weakest administrative capacity to the strongest. As a result, the bottom right-hand box shows the best scenario for society, with fewer abuses from state agents: a state able to monitor its territory, provide goods and services to the population, and be legitimate enough to implement its policies without using force. In opposition, the upper

left-hand box shows the worst scenario, where the state is inefficient, lacks resources and faces a significant challenge in its monopoly of violence.

Table 2. 2. The relationship between criminal violence and administrative capacity

	– administrative capacity +	
+ criminal violence	The worst scenario for society (more abuses)	+/–
–	+/–	The best scenario for society (fewer abuses)

H5: Higher administrative capacity mitigates the effects of criminal violence on violations to physical integrity by state agents.

2.3. Research design

Mexico is an interesting case to analyse violence from state agents. First, Mexico allows subnational research, in contrast to most studies on violations to physical integrity, which use countries as the unit of analysis. Mexico is a federal state with 32 members and thousands of municipalities. Furthermore, it is a very populated country, ranked 10th in the world (World Bank. 2020), with a vast territory (13th) and a large economy (15th). Still, it is far from homogeneous in its composition, with severe inequality problems and territorial distribution of wealth.

Second, Mexico started a simultaneous process of democratisation and decentralisation (Selee, 2011). As a result, state power was weakened (Cejudo, Sánchez and Zabaleta, 2010), transferring resources and responsibilities to the local authorities without strengthening them (Hernández, 2008). Also, the democratisation was focused on the electoral side (Schedler, 2003), and it was

not complete, provoking local authoritarianism in some Mexican states (Gibson, 2005; Giraudy, 2009).

Finally, criminal violence has increased in the country during the 21st century because the so-called 'war on drugs' started by President Calderón in 2006 worked as a catalyst for state weakness and exposed the state to an armed conflict. Like the processes described above, the strengthening of criminal organisations is long-termed too. In around 40 years, criminal organisations passed from confederations of local traffickers supervised by the secret police of Mexican state to transnational organisations (Astorga, 2016), with portfolios of activities that still include drug trafficking but that have been widening to different crimes, like extortion or human trafficking, and legal activities such as tomato and avocado commercialisation or minings (Herrera and Martínez Álvarez, 2022).

Expectedly, the firepower and tactical training has hugely increased and even professionalised with the recruitment of former elite soldiers of Mexico and Central America (Dudley, 2011; Sánchez Valdés and Pérez Aguirre, 2018), in order to compete against an ever-increasing number of criminal organisations with paramilitaries skills (Atuesta and Pérez Dávila, 2021). Consequently, criminal organisations confronted the state's authority and rival organisations to control the space (Lessing, 2015), creating a self-reinforcing process between state weakness and violence.

2.3.1. The analysis of violations of physical integrity in Mexico

In consequence, Mexico allows subnational research on state violence. Several studies on violence have taken advantage of the Mexican subnational dynamic, mainly using data on homicides (Osorio, 2015; Ríos, 2013; Trejo and Ley, 2016).

To my knowledge, there is no specific data to analyse violations to physical integrity at the Mexican subnational level.[19] Civil society organisations have focused their efforts on political prisoners or reports involving human rights violations in a violent environment, as Open Society has done with its studies about missing persons (Open Society, 2016). Mexican academia has focused on lethal violence in confrontations between security forces and criminal organisations (Atuesta, 2017) and prison torture (Magaloni et al., 2018). For this research, those investigations do not separate state agents' violence from others, such as NSA violence or studies from specific regions.

Accordingly, there is no clear source of information for this research. The human rights system in Mexico is voluntary. A citizen can denounce an authority if he considers his human rights violated. Consequently, most people do not make a complaint. It is normal in a country where most crimes are not reported. Then, the ombudsperson then evaluates the complaint and morally sanctions the authority if they consider it pertinent. Ideally, it should damage the prestige of the agency or the person in question. The problem is that this rarely happens. Approximately 1% of the complaints presented became on recommendation (Magaloni and Elizondo, 2014).

Summarising, the nature of the system creates double underrepresentation due to its voluntary nature and because the system does not process almost any complaint. Unfortunately, there is no other proxy to approach the phenomenon. The main disadvantage of this measure is that CNDH can attract only some of the cases previously dealt by local agencies, having access to fewer cases than local agencies. The advantage of the National Agency lies in its resources

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[19] The primary sources of information, such as CIRI (Cingranelli and Richards, 2010) or the Political Terror Scale (Gibney et al., 2019), use countries as units of analysis.

compared with its local counterparts. From my perspective, their records are more consistent due to the technical capabilities of the CNDH. For this manuscript, I collected data from local agencies of human rights. Still, that information was not used because, from my point of view, the quality of the information was distrusted in three ways: a) some states did not respond to several transparency requests and did not have annual reports to turn to analyse instead; b) there are no standardised definitions of abuse, resulting in certain states labelling abuses in such way that is impossible to determine what they refer to; c) there are notable differences in the registers, not only with some states with very large outliers but often with gaps or changes in definition due to a change in the ombudsperson. Therefore, the CNDH information was chosen as its staff are professionalised, and its resources are constant. More discussion on the mechanisms of protection of human rights in federated countries seems pertinent.

This manuscript follows the work of Beer and Mitchell (2004). They used the total number of complaints for human rights abuse. However, this manuscript is only interested in physical abuse. Therefore, I collected data from the National Council for Human Rights [CNDH, acronym in Spanish] through requests to the National Transparency System [PNT, acronym in Spanish]. The process consisted of three steps: first, I requested information from the CNDH (2019);[20] then, I eliminated non-physical abuse from authorities;[21] finally, I created a database with the information collected. Consequently, the dataset classifies the registers into five groups, as follows: *disappearance* includes complaints of 'forced disappearance' and 'uncommunication'; *against freedom* are the data

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[20] The request asked for the number of human rights complaints by type of abuse and responsible authority from 2000 to 2018, disaggregated by state. However, this manuscript uses 2006 to 2016 observations due to the availability of information of criminal organisations.

[21] For example, the Public Health System is usually saturated, generating tensions between users and staff. Many family members of patients complain about verbal abuse by doctors and nurses. But it could not be considered physical abuse.

collected with 'arbitrary detention' and 'illegal retention' complaints; the *torture and abuse* group includes 'arbitrary use of public force', 'harm by the arbitrary use of public force', 'disproportionate violence', 'undue punishment of prisoners', 'cruel and degrading treatment' and 'torture'; *against life* are complaints about 'violations to life' and 'summary execution'; *sexual* includes 'sexual abuse', 'forced contraception', 'life deprivation of the product of conception', 'sexual harassment' and 'rape'. Figure 2.1 shows the distribution of physical abuse from 2006 to 2016.

Figure 2. 1. Time-series of violations to physical integrity in Mexican states by group of abuse.
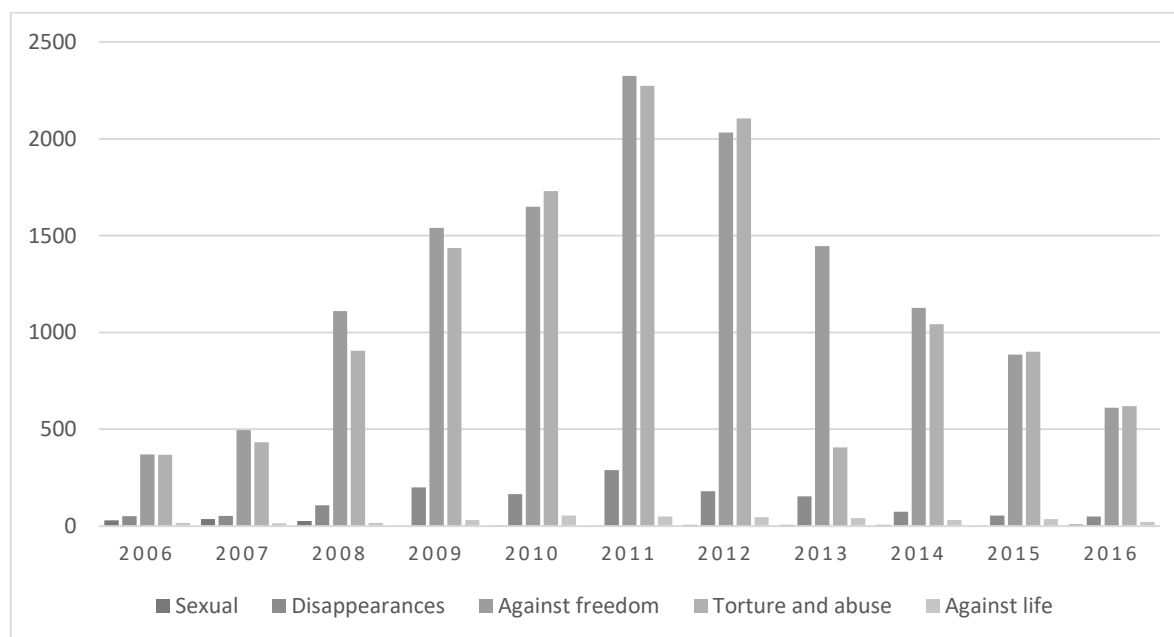
Source: National Council for Human Rights (CNDH)

Table 2.3 summarises the observations from 2006 to 2016.[22] All groups have a minimum of zero, but each maximum varies from 13 complaints against life to 378 registers against freedom, followed by torture with 271. On average, the 'against freedom' group has more registered abuse, followed by torture, disappearance and sexual abuse. Overall, violations to physical integrity in

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[22] CNDH sent registers of all the requests from 2000 to 2018. I chose the period 2006 to 2016 in the function of the availability of independent variables.

Mexico ranged from 0 to 661 complaints per year, with 54.4 annual violations on average. Controlled by population, physical abuse ranged from 0 to 19.5, with an average of 1.8 offences to physical integrity annually per 100,000 inhabitants.

Table 2. 3. Descriptive statistics for violations to physical integrity

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Sexual	352	0.36	1.6	0	19
Disappearances	352	3.92	7.82	0	67
Against freedom	352	38.61	51.22	0	378
Torture and abuse	352	34.72	44.73	0	271
Against life	352	1.03	1.86	0	13
Violations to physical integrity	352	78.64	100.61	0	661

'Criminal conflict' is an indicator of *criminal violence*. The measure was created using Phillips' data (2015) from 2006 to 2012 and complementing it with data shared by *Animal Político* from 2013 to 2016.[23] The chapter uses 'security budget' to measure *security capacity*, with the INEGI's data. The variable refers to the local government's budget for public safety in a Mexican state, including wage expenditure and federal transfers for security. The sum of both is weighted into regional GDP. The indicator for *administrative capacity* is 'local taxes', which refers to the amount of taxes collected by local governments per capita, with INEGI's data.[24] Table 2.4 illustrates their descriptive statistics.

Table 2. 4. Descriptive statistics of variables

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Physical abuse	352	78.64	100.61	0	661

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[23] They obtained this information from the National Attorney through a transparency request. Some of it is available on NarcoData website (Animal Político, 2020), https://narcodata.animalpolitico.com/que-es-narco-data/. As an alternative measure, the manuscript uses the 'rate of homicides per 100,000 habitants', with data from the National Institute of Statistics and Geography [INEGI, acronym in Spanish]. from 2006 to 2016.

[24] As an alternative measure for security capacity, the text used the local police rate for every 100,000 inhabitants, with data collected from INEGI. As an alternative measure for administrative capacity, the analysis uses the Education budget, weighted by local GDP. Both variables are used from 2006 to 2016. Descriptive stats and alternative estimations are in the Appendix A.

Physical abuse t-1	352	76.89	100.5	1	661
Criminal conflicts	352	0.83	0.85	0	5
Security budget	352	0.15	0.14	0	0.73
Local taxes	352	0.39	0.24	0.04	1.72
GDP per capita	352	149.87	150.35	53.84	1289.46
Years since first government alternation	352	7.76	7.41	0	27
Northern border state	352	0.19	0.39	0	1

The manuscript uses the violations to physical integrity lagged one year as the control variable to test whether state agents follow repressive inertia (Davenport, 1995; Rivera, 2010). I use GDP per capita to test whether wealth negatively relates to my dependent variable (Hill and Jones, 2014), using INEGI's information. This manuscript uses the years since the first government alternation with data from the National Electoral Institute [INE, acronym in Spanish] as a proxy for democratisation. It considers that PRI exercised authoritarian control for decades. It has been maintained since the presidential alternation of 2000 in some states (Gibson, 2005; Giraudy, 2009), blocking democratisation through the electoral route at the local level (Schedler, 2003). Finally, I created *northern border state* as a dummy variable to indicate whether a state has a terrestrial border with the United States.[25]

Table 2.5 shows the expected relationship of the variables on the dependent variable. As stated in this manuscript's theoretical section, *criminal conflicts* and *security budget* would positively affect violations to physical integrity. In contrast, *local taxes* would have a negative one. I expect a negative relationship between *GDP per capita* and *years since the first alternation* with violations to physical integrity. Meanwhile *northern border state* and *DV lagged -1* would have a positive relationship with the dependent variable.

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[25] The descriptive stats and Pearson's correlations between variables are in the Appendix A.

Table 2. 5. Expected relationship of variables on violations to physical integrity

Variable	Operationalisation	Relation
Criminal violence	Criminal conflicts	+
Security capacity	Security budget	+
Administrative capacity	Local taxes	-
	GDP per capita	-
Control variables	Years since first government alternation	-
	Northern border state	+
	Violations to physical integrity lagged -1	+

Given their theoretical closeness, this set of variables could raise concerns about potential endogeneity. However, the Mexican state does not produce good indicators for state capacities, criminal violence, and human rights abuse, making it difficult to establish clear indicators to avoid potential endogeneity. From my perspective, Mexican authorities have incentives to produce bad information, such as denying reality and trying to be less accountable to academia and civil society, but it shows the heterogeneity in the skills in a federalist country. That is a challenge for future research.

2.4. Discussion of results

This chapter considers that its dependent variable is a sum of voluntary processes, which implies that it is a counted indicator. Figure 2.2 shows the distribution of physical abuse by state agents from 2006 to 2016 in the Mexican states. Consequently, the analysis includes different models to fit this type of distribution.

Figure 2. 2. Distribution of violation s to physical integrity registered in Mexico
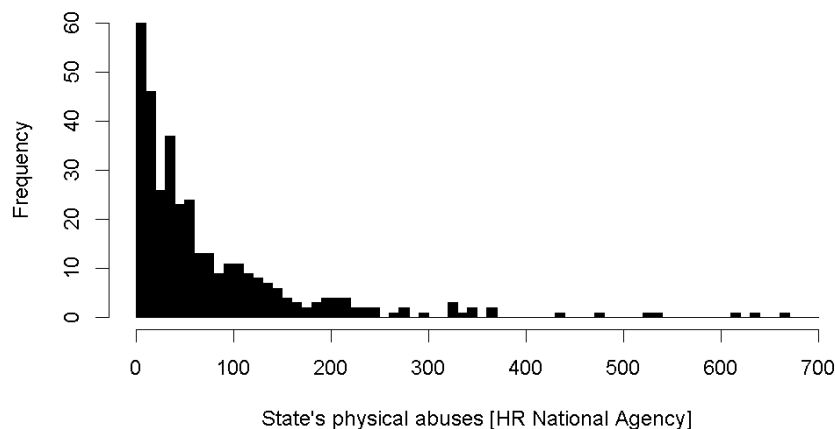
Source: National Council for Human Rights (CNDH)

Table 2.6 shows the exponentiated results of selected negative binomial models because they have better goodness of fit than other Poisson models, included in the Appendix A.[26] Taking Model 6 as the point of reference, increasing one criminal conflict in a given state raised the violations to physical integrity by 35%. This supports H1: criminal violence increases physical abuse by state agents. The result holds using different measures and specifications, included in the Appendix A.

Table 2. 6. Negative binomial models on the state's physical abuse in Mexico

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Criminal conflicts	1.73 ***			1.84 ***	1.78 ***	1.35 ***	1.39 ***	1.37 ***

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[26] I used AIC to determine the best goodness of fit between models. Furthermore, I used rootogram, a practical tool to assess the goodness of fit in counted data regression models (Kleiber and Zeileis, 2016), to visualise them. The graphs in the Appendix A show that the Poisson model has under dispersion problems, especially in values lower than 20 complaints for violations to physical integrity, and overdispersion in the higher values. Finally, there are alternative models using homicides rate to measure criminal violence in the Appendix A, holding data from 2006 to 2016 to comparison.

	(0.05)			(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Security budget	1.1			1.11 *		1.19 ***	1.19 ***	1.20 ***
		(0.06)		(0.05)		(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Local taxes			1.11		1.09	0.99	0.98	0.95
			(0.06)		(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Criminal conflicts: security budget				0.81 ***			0.90 **	
				(0.05)			(0.04)	
Criminal conflicts: local taxes					0.90 *			0.92
					(0.05)			(0.04)
Physical abuse t-1						1.77 ***	1.74 ***	1.75 ***
						(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
GDP per capita						0.85 ***	0.85 ***	0.85 ***
						(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Years since first government alternation						0.83 ***	0.83 ***	0.83 ***
						(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Northern border state						1.97 ***	1.91 ***	1.96 ***
						(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.11)
(Intercept)	68.60 ***	78.28 ***	78.21 ***	68.29 ***	67.73 ***	49.16 ***	49.74 ***	49.14 ***
	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
N	352	352	352	352	352	352	352	352
AIC	3691.49	3779.9	3779.32	3674.39	3683.44	3512.65	3508.72	3510.64
BIC	3703.08	3791.49	3790.91	3693.71	3702.75	3547.42	3547.35	3549.28

All continuous predictors are mean-centred and scaled by 1 standard deviation. Standard errors are heteroskedasticity robust. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Security capacity also has a significant and positive relationship with the dependent variable. For example, in Model 6, the increase of 1% of GDP in the security budget increased by 19% the complaints for violations to physical integrity, if the rest of the variables held constant. This finding match with

theoretical expectations of H2: higher levels of security capacity increase violations to physical integrity by state agents.

According to the models included in Table 2.6, administrative capacity does not have a relationship with the dependent variable. Both indicators used on statistical analysis were not significant in explaining the physical abuse, with all the other variables held constant. In other words, this finding does not coincide with the theoretical expectation of H4, and there is no support to say that increase in administrative capacity reduces violations to physical integrity.

The control variables' results matched with expectations. The increase of 1,000 Mexican pesos on GDP per capita reduces 15% to 16% of physical abuse on the models where it was included. Government alternation also has a negative and significant impact on the dependent variable. Every extra year since the first change in the ruling party reduced 13% of the violations to physical integrity when included. The proximity to the United States has a significant and positive relationship with the dependent variable. According to the models presented, complaints rise by almost 50% if the Mexican state shares a terrestrial border with the US.[27] The indicator is significant in all the estimated models, although the coefficients could vary. Finally, there is abusive inertia on physical abuse (Davenport, 1995; Rivera, 2010): violations to physical integrity lagged 1-year rise by 57% of the current abuse. This finding is significant in all the estimated models.

What effects does the combination of criminal violence with security capacity produce? According to H3, more security capacity would amplify the positive effects of criminal violence on physical abuse by state agents. Figure 2.3 shows

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[27] The statistical analysis finds that southern border states do not have statistical significance related to physical integrity violations.

the predicted effects of the interaction between criminal conflicts and the security budget of Model 2. The minimum, mean and maximum of the security budget follow different patterns: the lowest amount of security budget without criminal conflict provokes the lowest number of violations to physical integrity in the analysis, but it produces the biggest number of complaints when combined with the maximum number of criminal conflicts; conversely, the biggest amount of security budget in the analysis increases physical abuse without the presence of criminal conflict, but it reduces whenever the criminal conflict increase; the mean has a similar behaviour to the minimum, which is natural because they are close to each other, but it is observed that it is slightly higher when it does not face criminal conflict and less when it is at its maximum.[28]

Figure 2. 3. Predicted effects of violations to physical integrity on interaction between the min/mean/max of the security budget: criminal conflict

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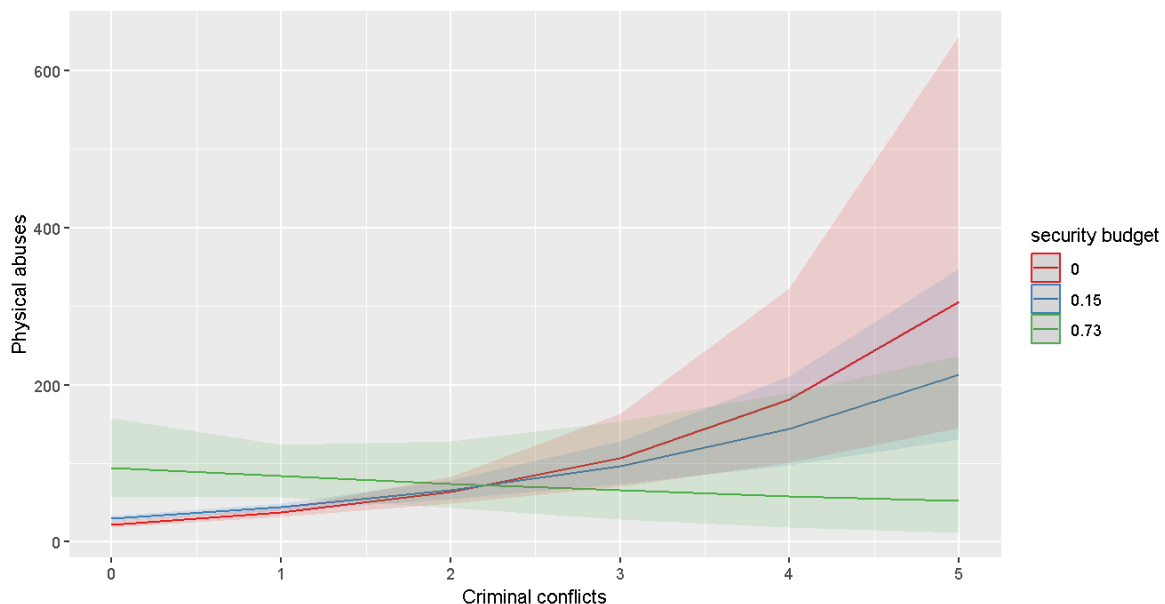
[28] The trends hold when they are combined with the homicides rate as an indicator of criminal violence. However, the differences between minimum, mean and maximum are very close in the minimums of criminal violence. The plots are available in the Appendix A.

What effects does the combination of criminal violence with administrative capacity produce? According to H5, more administrative capacity would mitigate the positive effects of criminal violence on state agents' physical abuse. Figure 2.4 illustrates the predicted effects of the interaction. The increasing administrative capacity provokes fewer violations to physical integrity without criminal conflicts, but much more when combined with multiple conflicts. In contrast, the maximum local taxes produces more abuse in the absence of conflict, but much less when this multiplies. The mean holds between both. However, this interaction shows little difference between minimum and maximum in the absence of criminal conflict, although the differences increase when criminal violence increases. Likewise, the results do not seem robust, due to the variation in the coefficients between models, and their significance is low and volatile.

Figure 2. 4. Predicted effects on violations to the physical integrity of interaction min/mean/max of local taxes: criminal conflict
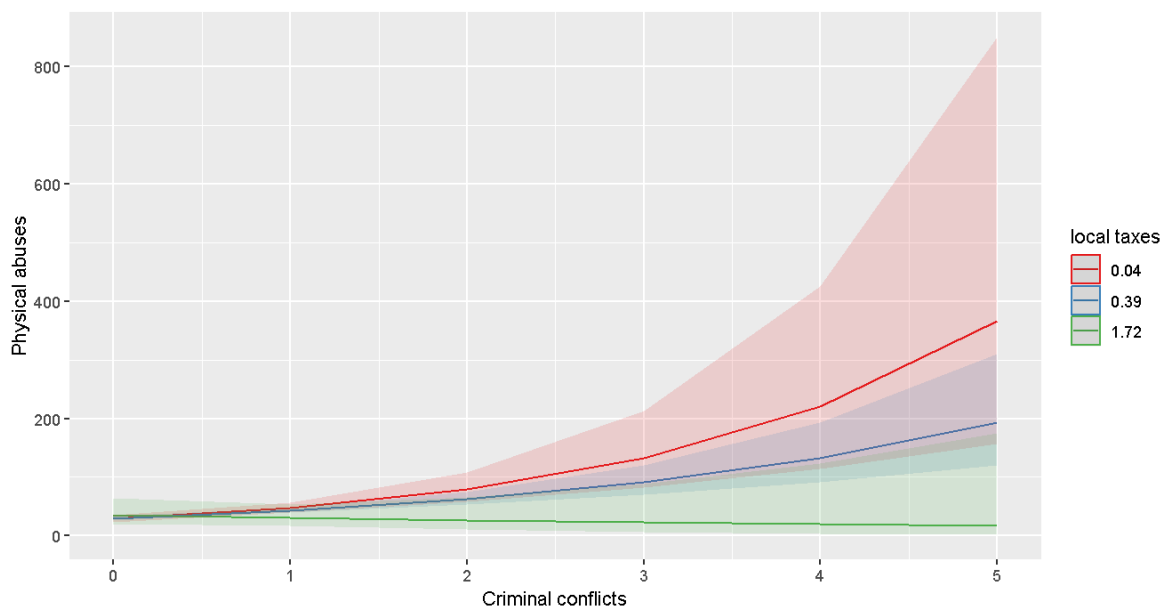
2.5. Conclusions

Under what conditions does criminal violence increase violations to physical integrity by state agents? This chapter provides evidence that criminal violence increases the violation of physical integrity by state agents. From my perspective, the state's response is related to its inclusion in a logic of armed conflict by the inherently violent type of organised crime (Lessing, 2015), facing events similar to irregular civil wars (Kalyvas, 2005). Although states do not see their survival threatened as a whole because criminals do not seek to overthrow them or seize formal power, state agents can be attacked at any time by usually better-armed and trained actors, so their individual survival is in constant danger. Consequently, they adopt arbitrary and even criminal measures to meet the challenge (Pereyra, 2012), if they have not been co-opted (Aguayo et al., 2017; Lessing, 2015). The Mexican case illustrated that the increase in violence derived from criminal violence increases the number of violations of citizens' physical integrity.

Security capacity, understood as the state's ability to deter or repel challenges against its authority using force (Hendrix, 2010), also positively affects physical abuse. The Mexican evidence shows that the increase in the local-level security budget caused a rise in state agents' violations to physical integrity. In Mexico, the context of criminal violence constantly puts the survival of security officers at risk, added to the traditional use of abusive violence against the citizenship.

However, the relationship is more complex when the interaction between criminal violence and security capacity is considered. This shows that force can increase physical abuse in the absence of criminal conflict, but decrease records when conflicts increase. In that sense, an answer could be that state agents at a minimum of security capacity act desperately (Mann, 2006), as if their survival

was in danger, while the increase in resources implies a more rational, trained and less abusive use of force (Hendrix, 2010). Another possible explanation would be that criminal violence reaches a point where it limits citizens' perception of the usefulness of complaints. More research in this regard seems relevant.

This research found that increasing administrative capacity, understood as the state's ability to monitor its territory and control its population without force (Hendrix & Young, 2014), does not reduce physical abuse. Instead, administrative capacity only matches expectations when interacting with criminal violence. But, again, the relation was not robust or supported under other specifications.

The possible policy implications of these findings carry into studying the relationship between administrative and security capacity. European history shows that constant conflicts were indispensable for building modern European states (Tilly, 1985). It should be considered that the expansion of administrative capacity may extend security resources, therefore indirectly limiting the effects of criminal violence on society's physical integrity. In other words, I would posit that expanding administrative capacity is an earlier step to improving security capacity, because it would increase resources available and improve the relationship with citizens.

2.6 Appendix A

Figure A. 1. Distribution of State's physical abuses per Mexican state

Physical abuses by state agents 2006-2016 [CNDH]
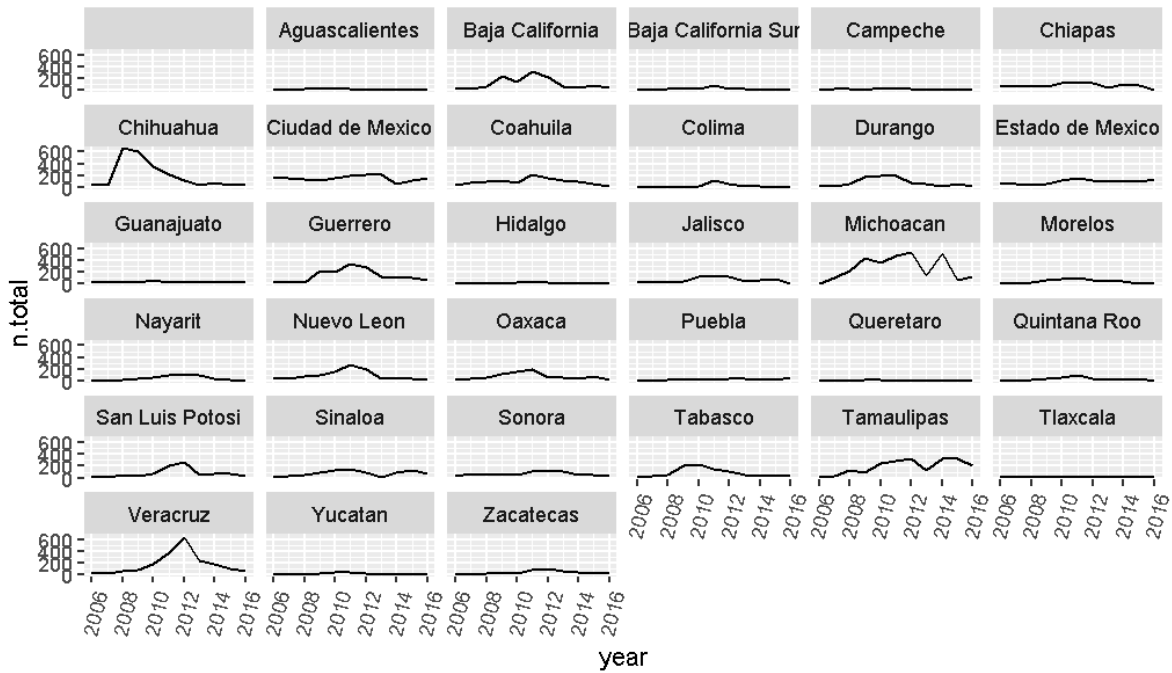
Figure A. 2. Distribution of criminal conflicts in Mexico
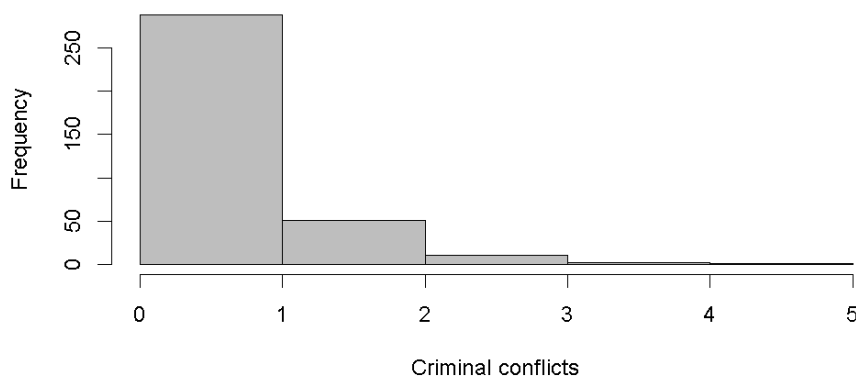
Figure A. 3. Distribution of security budget in Mexico
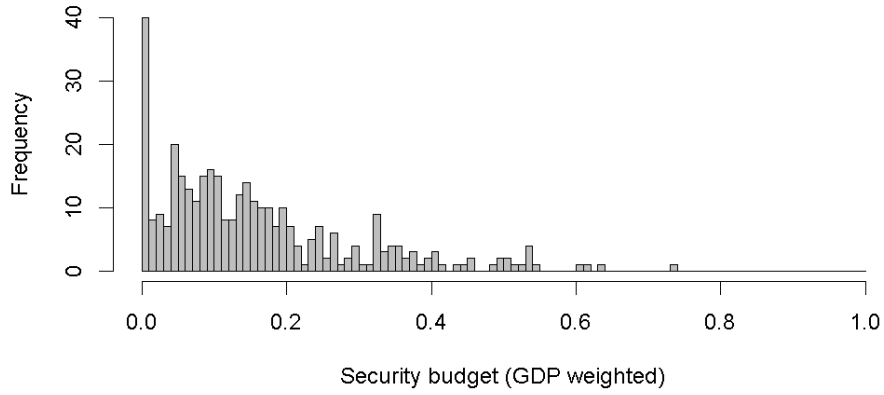
Figure A. 4. Distribution of local taxes in Mexico
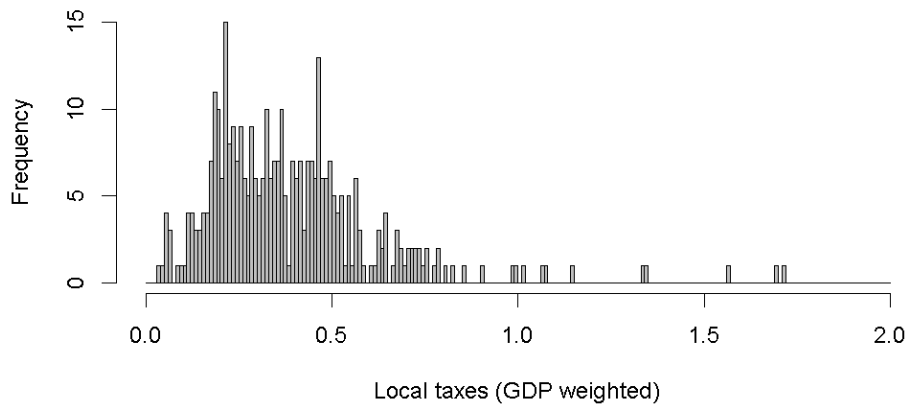
Table A. 1. Descriptive stats of variables

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Sexual	352	0.36	1.6	0	19
Disappearances	352	3.92	7.82	0	67
Against freedom	352	38.61	51.22	0	378
Torture and abuse	352	34.72	44.73	0	271
Against life	352	1.03	1.86	0	13
Physical abuses	352	78.64	100.61	0	661
Physical abuses t-1	353	76.89	100.5	1	661
Criminal conflicts	352	0.83	0.85	0	5
Homicides rate	352	17.93	19.55	1.72	185.48
Security Budget	352	0.15	0.14	0	0.73
Local police rate	352	319.27	162.88	122.99	1112.87
Local taxes	352	0.39	0.24	0.04	1.72
Education budget	352	0.04	0.02	0.0002	0.11
GDP per cápita	352	149.87	150.35	53.84	1289.46
Years since first government alternation	352	7.76	7.41	0	27
Northern border state	352	0.19	0.39	0	1

Table A. 2. Pearson's correlations

	Physical abuses	Physical abuses t-1	Sexual	Disappearances	Against freedom	Torture and abuse	Against life	Criminal conflict	Homicides rate	Security budget	Local police rate	Local taxes	Education budget	GDP per cápita	Years since first government alternation	Northern border state
Physical abuses	1															
Physical abuses t-1	0.7	1														
Sexual	0.06	0.04	1													
Disappearances	0.77	0.46	0.06	1												
Against freedom	0.98	0.7	0.04	0.78	1											
Torture and abuse	0.97	0.66	0.04	0.66	0.91	1										
Against life	0.5	0.53	-0	0.29	0.45	0.51	1									
Criminal conflicts	0.42	0.44	0.04	0.26	0.41	0.42	0.27	1								
Homicides rate	0.44	0.48	-0.1	0.29	0.44	0.42	0.37	0.34	1							
Security budget	0.08	0.14	0.07	0.05	0.09	0.06	0.04	0.11	0.12	1						
Local police rate	0.04	0.02	0.43	0.14	0.04	0.003	-0.1	0.08	-0.1	0.3	1					
Local taxes	0.09	0.16	0.12	0.12	0.1	0.05	0.03	0.03	0.09	0.43	0.45	1				
Education budget	-0.04	-0.02	-0.2	-0.12	-0.03	-0.03	0.06	0.05	0.21	0.29	-0.21	0.02	1			
GDP per cápita	-0.09	-0.08	0.07	-0.02	-0.09	-0.1	-0.1	-0.06	-0.1	-0.08	0.1	-0.1	-0.44	1		
Years since first government alternation	-0.06	-0.01	-0.1	-0.07	-0.04	-0.08	-0.1	0.05	0.17	0.01	-0.23	0.06	0.16	-0.19	1	
Northern border state	0.24	0.23	-0.1	0.24	0.23	0.22	0.24	0.13	0.27	-0.24	-0.22	-0.1	-0.26	0.05	0.12	1

Figure A. 5. Exponentiated coefficients of Table 2.6
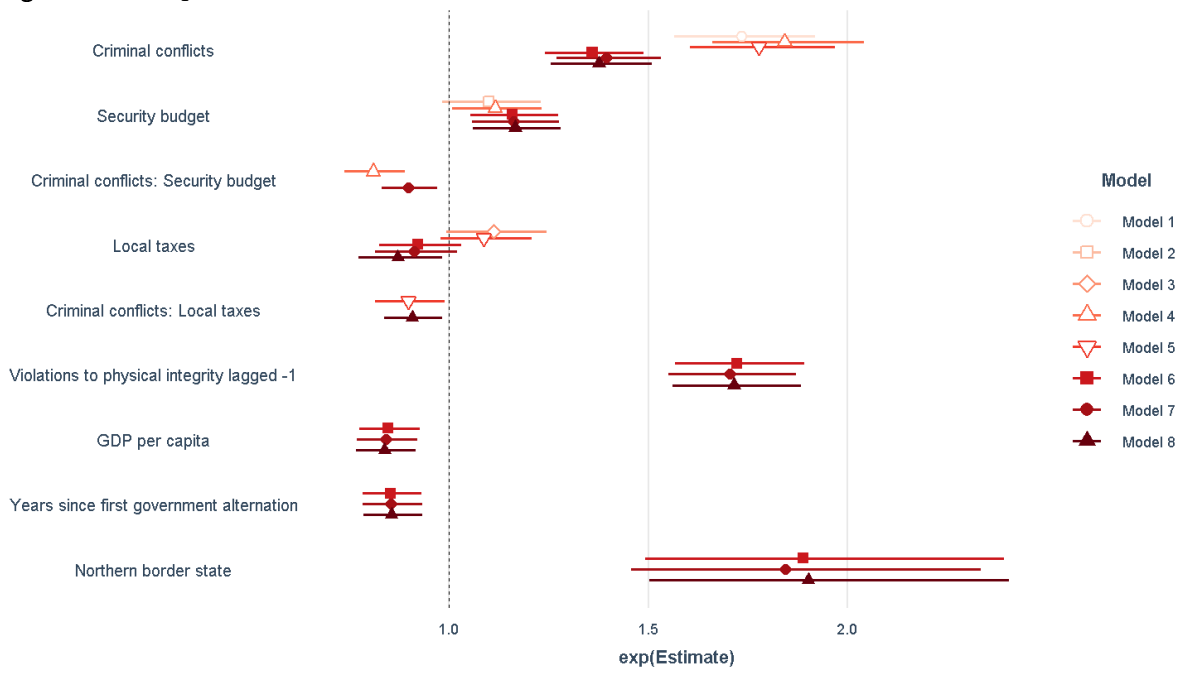
Figure A. 6. Goodness of fit for selected models of Table 2.6 (Rootograms)
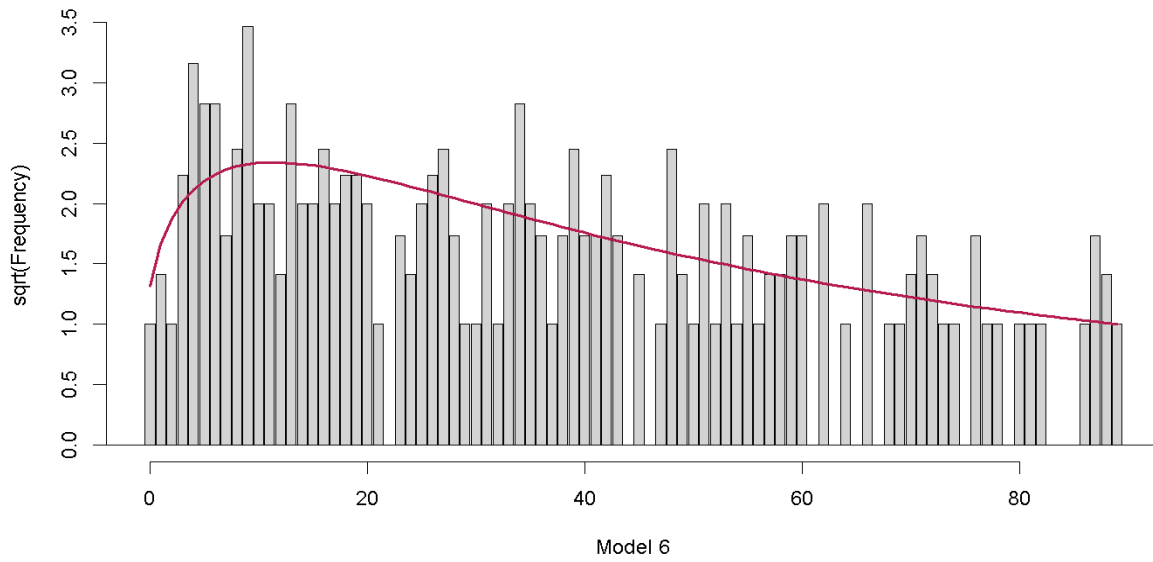
Table A. 3. Poisson Models on State's physical abuses in Mexico

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Criminal conflicts	1.52 ***			1.62 ***	1.57 ***	1.27 ***	1.32 ***	1.30 ***
	(0.00)			(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Security budget		1.10 ***		1.10 ***		1.08 ***	1.12 ***	1.09 ***
		(0.01)		(0.01)		(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Local taxes			1.10 ***		1.09 ***	1.04 ***	1.04 ***	1.03 ***
			(0.01)		(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Criminal conflicts : security budget				0.85 ***			0.93 ***	
				(0.00)			(0.00)	
Criminal conflicts: local taxes					0.89 ***			0.93 ***
					(0.00)			(0.01)
Physical abuses t-1						1.42 ***	1.40 ***	1.41 ***
						(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
GDP per capita						0.83 ***	0.84 ***	0.84 ***
						(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Years since first government alternation						0.85 ***	0.85 ***	0.85 ***
						(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Northern border state						1.69 ***	1.67 ***	1.67 ***
						(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
(Intercept)	70.93 ***	78.29 ***	78.24 ***	70.14 ***	69.83 ***	55.60 ***	55.71 ***	55.37 ***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
N	352	352	352	352	352	352	352	352
AIC	26967.97	33502.87	33453.83	25720.74	26135.47	17247.34	17006.05	16996.06
BIC	26975.7	33510.6	33461.56	25736.2	26150.92	17278.25	17040.82	17030.84

All continuous predictors are mean-centered and scaled by 1 standard deviation. Standard errors are heteroskedasticity robust. *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05.

Figure A. 7. Exponentiated coefficients of Table A3
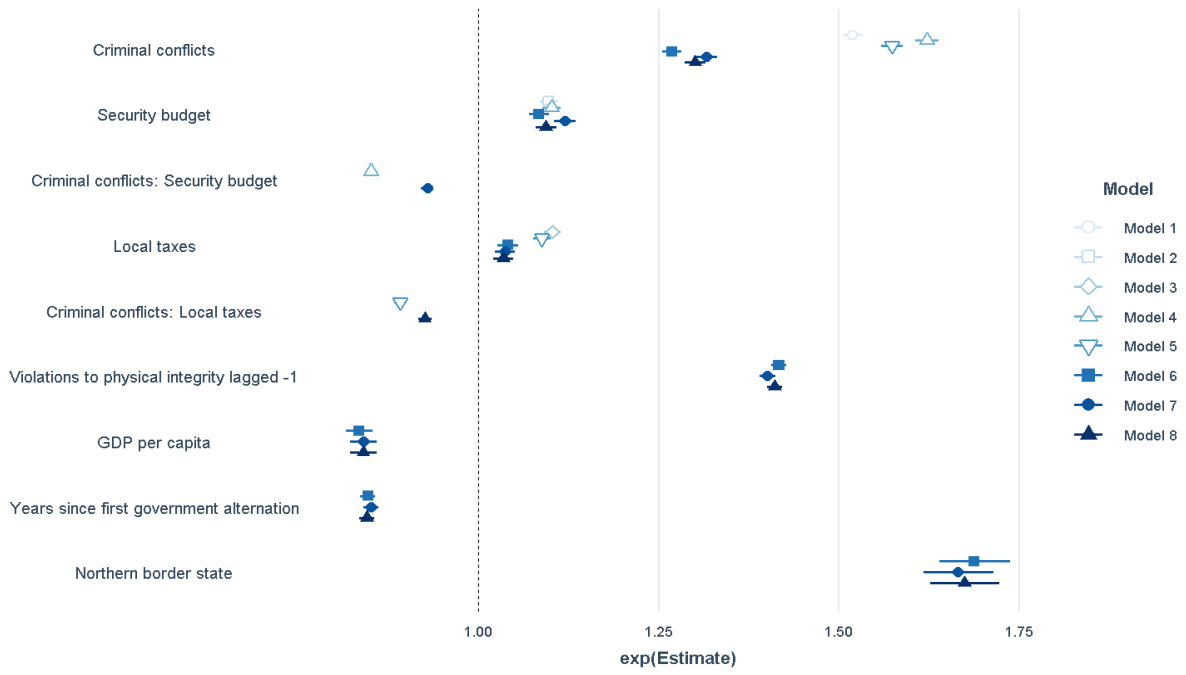
Figure A. 8. Goodness of fit for selected models of Table A3 (Rootograms)
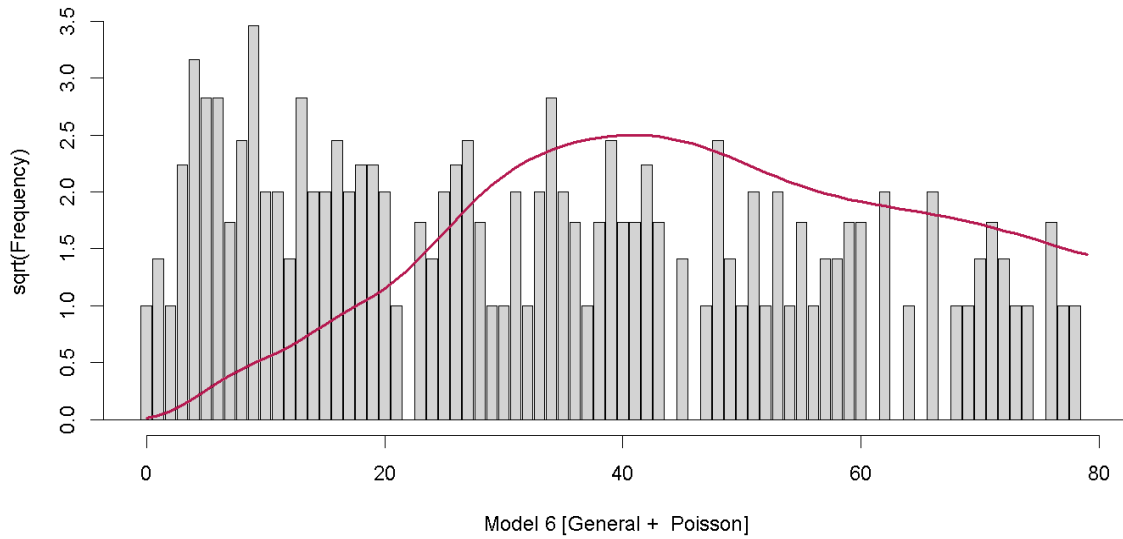
Table A. 4. Negative binomial models on state's physical abuses in Mexico (Alternative measures)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Homicides rate	1.63 ***			1.65 ***	1.79 ***	1.35 ***	1.37 ***	1.40 ***
	(0.05)			(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Local police rate		1.03		1.09		1.10 *	1.12 *	1.11 *
		(0.06)		(0.06)		(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Education budget			0.95		0.86 **	0.96	0.95	0.96
			(0.06)		(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.05)
Homicides rate: local police rate				0.92			1.04	
				(0.11)			(0.09)	
Homicides rate: education budget					0.93			0.94
					(0.06)			(0.05)
Physical abuses t-1						1.95 ***	1.94 ***	1.94 ***
						(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
GDP per capita						0.85 **	0.85 **	0.86 **
						(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Years since first government alternation						0.87 **	0.87 **	0.87 **
						(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)
Northern border state						1.48 **	1.49 **	1.43 **
						(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)
(Intercept)	70.83 ***	78.58 ***	78.54 ***	69.62 ***	70.87 ***	52.57 ***	52.74 ***	53.48 ***
	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
N	352	352	352	352	352	352	352	352
AIC	3714.37	3782.24	3781.89	3712.29	3707.28	3528.25	3530.04	3528.93
BIC	3725.96	3793.83	3793.48	3731.61	3726.6	3563.02	3568.67	3567.57

All continuous predictors are mean-centered and scaled by 1 standard deviation. Standard errors are heteroskedasticity robust. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Figure A. 9. Exponentiated coefficients of Table A4
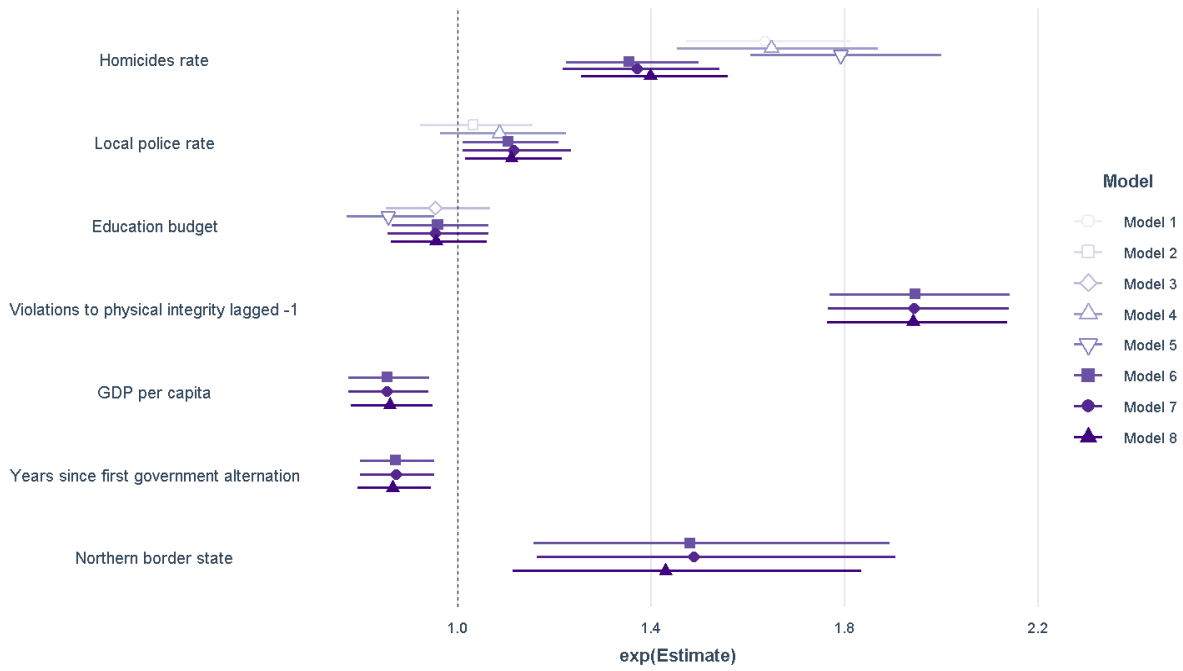
Figure A. 10. Goodness of fit for selected models of Table A4 (Rootograms)
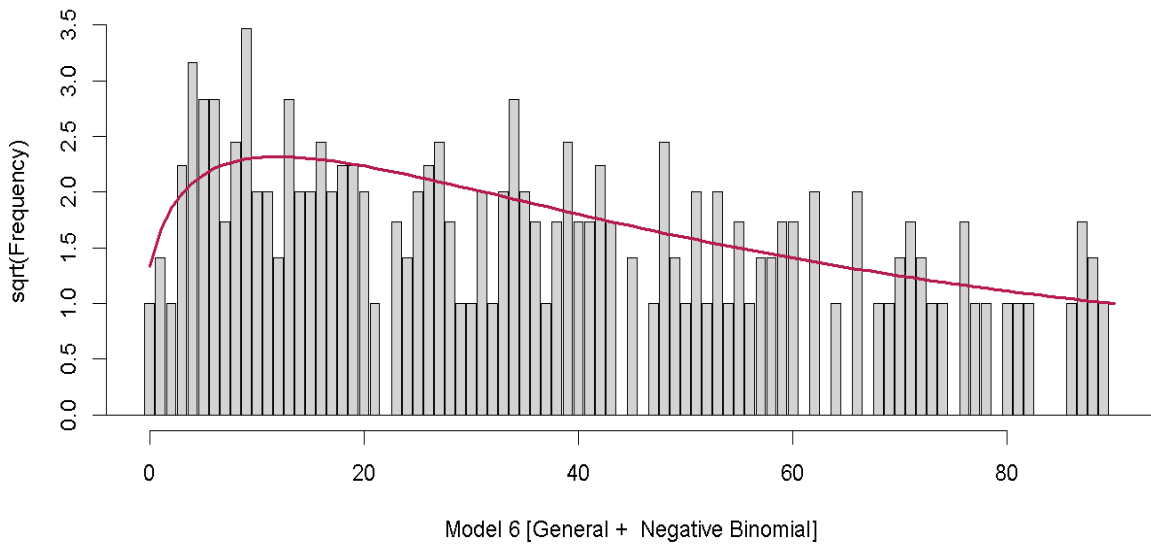
3. Under what conditions do criminals disappear people? An explanation from the Mexican 'war on drugs'

Studies on violence by Violent Non-State Actors have focused on visible crimes, like killings or massacres. Unfortunately, the logic behind disappearances remains unclear, even if they have been used widely worldwide, and almost every conflict has had disappearances. In practical terms, disappearances are a 'silent crime' (Aguilar and Kovras, 2019), which perpetrators can use to hide previous crimes, such as killings,[29] kidnappings,[30] torture,[31] and human trafficking,[32] among others.[33] The attractiveness to perpetrators is that authorities are less motivated to solve it: 'If there is no prisoner, no body, no victim, then presumably no one can be accused of having done anything' (Amnesty International, 1981: 91).

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[29] For example, Colombian paramilitary groups have exercised systematic disappearances to hide killings against opposition groups, union leaders, teachers, and peasant and indigenous community leaders, supported by the economic elite, drug traffickers and the Government (Prokosch, 1994).

[30] For instance, Central American migrants are often kidnapped by Mexican criminals when they try to migrate to the United States. Estes (2011) narrates the case of bus passengers in Tamaulipas, Mexico in 2011. Criminals ambushed buses on the highway and made the migrants inside them fight each other to the death with hammers. The survivors became forced recruiters of Los Zetas, a criminal organisation that terrorised vast regions in Mexico and Central America (Dudley, 2011; Sánchez Valdés and Pérez Aguirre, 2018).

[31] For example, ISIS abducted, tortured and disappeared civilians for their non-adherence to the ISIS interpretation of the Islamic dress code (OHCHR, 2013).

[32] For example, many Chinese babies were kidnapped and sold to new parents in the 80s (Sui, 2020). Another example of this situation is the abduction and sale of leftist militants' children by the Argentinian dictatorship during the 70s and 80s (Rebossio, 2015).

[33] It is worth noting that disappearances could cover several previous crimes. The same person could suffer many of the crimes listed above. From my perspective, it would be difficult to point out a single crime as an antecedent of disappearances.

Consequently, disappearances are a second-step crime that perpetrators use to hide previous ones (Aguilar and Kovras, 2019). The purpose of disappearances is to avoid the costs of previous violence against civilians (VAC) – understood as the physical attacks of armed actors against citizens to shape society's behaviour (Fjelde and Hutman, 2014) – but obtain its gains. Frey points out three elements as a core of the definition of disappearances (Ansolabehere et al., 2021): deprivation of liberty, the support or acquiescence of the state and the lack of knowledge of the victim's situation. Disappearances could be classified according to the perpetrator, ranging from those perpetrated by state agents, known as *enforced disappearances*,[34] to those inflicted by Violent NSA with a grey zone between them.[35]

Under what conditions do criminals disappear people? First, I test whether criminals use disappearances differently than other types of crimes, considering three reasons: the crime is qualitatively different from others, societal support is not required for criminals, and they use humans as resources to exploit. My first hypothesis posits that less criminal conflict would lead to more disappearances. Second, building upon previous findings on criminal violence (Cruz and Durán-Martínez, 2016; Trejo and Ley, 2020), I test the role of political distribution on disappearances, on the belief that vertical partisan alignment – understood as the situation of two governments from the same political party or

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[34] According to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance of United Nations, 'enforced disappearance is considered to be the arrest, detention, abduction or any other form of deprivation of liberty by agents of the state or by persons or groups of persons acting with the authorisation, support or acquiescence of the State' (OHCHR | Convention CED, 2006). For instance, all the political imprisoners that never appeared during South American dictatorships of the last century could be classified as enforced disappeared, with the cruellest cases during Argentina's Junta Militar in the 70s and 80s.

[35] For instance, according to the National Centre for Historical Memory of Colombia [CNMH, acronym in Spanish], Violent NSA were responsible for almost 92% of the cases that CNMH could establish a perpetrator –49% of the 60,000 cases (CNMH, 2016). It is worth noting that there is a *grey zone* between disappearances perpetrated by state agents and Violent NSA. As example, Colombian paramilitaries were the main perpetrator in the Colombian conflict, which is important because many of them were allies of the Colombian government, showing us that Violent NSA could commit disappearances with permission, or acquiescence, of the state agents.

coalition at different levels (Benton, 2019) – will decrease disappearances through better law enforcement if authorities are rightful, or through incentives to criminals to reduce violence if authorities are co-opted.

This research makes four main contributions to studies on violence. First, it adds to the study of Violent NSA, by focusing on those that pursue profitability as a goal, particularly when they treat human bodies as a resource, in opposition to political-oriented Violent NSA, such as rebels or terrorists (Berti, 2018). Second, it contributes to clarifying the logic of criminal violence, most focused on visible types of violence, such as homicides or massacres, studying this 'silent' crime as part of criminals' repertoire of violence. Third, it is one of the few studies on disappearances from a quantitative perspective (Osorio et al., 2018), aiming to find determinants to understand this crime beyond the state's rationality. Fourth, it considers the role of the political power distribution on disappearances when Violent NSA are involved.

The manuscript has four sections. First, it connects the literature on Violent NSA and violence against civilians to make a framework to explain disappearances by criminal actors. Second, the chapter theorises on the matter, seeking the logic behind criminals' disappearances and suggesting theoretical reasons that criminal and political competition determines the frequency of disappearances. Third, the manuscript shows Mexico as a relevant case to make a subnational study on disappearances, given the magnitude of the phenomenon since the start of the 'war on drugs' by President Felipe Calderón in 2006. The fourth part presents the statistical analysis results using official data with Mexican states as units of analysis from 2006 to 2016. The results show that the increase in criminal competition positively affects disappearances, while the political factor plays an essential role in disappearances by criminals, which is the main finding of the research.

3.1. Violent Non-State Actors

Autonomy from the state is the defining factor of Non-State Actors. NSA is a category that includes a broad spectrum of participants, with some involved in physical abuse against society, even if they do not directly exercise violence, such as mining companies provoking forced displacement (Owen and Kemp, 2015) and sexual rape by transnational NGOs (Specia, 2021). This chapter focuses on the Violent NSA, those whose motivation and means imply the use of violence. Violent NSA could be primarily defined by their ability to use violence separated from the state (Aydinli, 2015). The main difference seen across the Violent NSA stands in their goals: some try to achieve political goals while others look for profitability (Berti, 2018).

Table 3.1 summarises the classification used in this section. The first group of Violent NSA have political goals, with objectives ranging from control of territory, to political concessions or modifying government policies (Barnes, 2017). The relationship with the government is the main difference between the Violent NSA. Some politically oriented Violent NSA support governments, such as 'colectivos armados' in South America, while others fight against them (Berti, 2018). There are also differences between those who challenge governments. In general terms, rebels usually aim to govern and create statehood, providing goods and services (Arjona, 2016) via overthrown governments or separating a region from a current state, while terrorists want to provoke fear in the population, generally to influence others (Schmid and Jongman, 2017; Phillips, 2018).

Table 3. 1. Types of Violent NSA

Motivation	Relationship with government	Violent NSA
Politically oriented [resources used to pursue political goals]	Support	'Colectivos' Paramilitaries
	Oppose	Rebels

		Terrorists
Profit-oriented [political power used to pursue profitability goals]	Support	Mercenaries
	Supplement	Mafias
	Constrain	Criminals

The second group has profitability goals as their defining factor. Profit-oriented Violent NSA contain three different actors. First, mercenaries are hired to improve territorial control and to fight against armed enemies, but could be a menace to statehood development and pursue political goals (Leander, 2005). Second, Mafia groups are private security suppliers, autonomous from the state and organised in a network without a centralised command, which implies that they could collaborate or fight each other (Gambetta, 1996). Finally, organised crime indicates any human group that organises itself to break the law and obtain revenues from it (Finckenauer, 2005; Shortland and Varese, 2016). Although the activity could be lawful, such as diamond extraction or avocado farming, the operation would be illegal (Varese, 2010).

However, it is worth noting that differences are blurred because political and profitability gains could be understood as a means or a goal, depending on the type of actor. For example, politically oriented Violent NSA look for profitable activities to have resources to pursue their political goals. In contrast, profit-oriented Violent NSA aim to influence politics to maintain the state as far as possible or gain societal support by providing collective goods and public services (Barnes, 2017, Berti, 2018). Furthermore, both groups could adopt strategies or even make alliances to acquire capabilities and networks (Makarenko, 2004; Saab and Taylor, 2009).[36]

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[36] According to Kleinschmidt and Palma (2020) that situation has provoked academia to create hybrid terms, such as 'gangster warlords' or 'commercial, civil wars', 'narco insurgency', among others.

3.2. Violence against civilians

State and Violent NSA could perpetrate VAC. Scholars have explained VAC through the rationality of its perpetrators. Armed actors apply VAC for many reasons, such as forced recruitment (Balcells, 2010), to prohibit defection and secure collaboration from society (Schwartz and Strauss, 2018), to reduce the support of the controller (Balcells, 2010), to produce fear in the inhabitants and show that occupier is not able to protect them (Fjelde and Hutman, 2014), to catch the authority's attention or to send a message (Lessing, 2015; Phillips and Rios, 2020), and others.

In general, VAC is used to shape civilians' behaviour, to obtain collaboration and resources from society or make it harder to get to the enemy (Fjelde and Hultman, 2014; Kalyvas, 2005), or provoke fear through them (Asal et al., 2018).[37] The magnitude and intensity of VAC are in the function of the goals of the armed actors.

3.2.1. Disappearances

Disappearances are a type of violence that differs from others in their primary purposes: to cover and to deny previous aggressions (Ansolabehere, 2021). Perpetrators use disappearances to hide previous wrongdoing, attack disposable people – such as political opposition or social neglected – and generate social control (Ansolabehere et al., 2021). Barbara Frey pointed out three elements as a core of the definition of a disappearance: deprivation of liberty, the support or acquiescence of the state, and the lack of knowledge of the victim's situation (Ansolabehere et al., 2021). According to Barbara Frey, the international law

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[37] Although perpetrators apply violence against civilians for rational purposes, agents in charge could use it for different reasons. As Mitchell (2004) established, the principal-agent dynamic could work for both ends. While the leaders obtain their goals, agents could get their rewards, just as happened during massive rapes (Mitchell, 2004).

framework is vague because states are interested in not being accountable for private-sphere crimes.

Disappearances could be classified according to the perpetrator. A line could be drawn between those perpetrated by the state, known as *enforced disappearances*, from those inflicted by Violent NSA. In practice, enforced disappearances are a grey area. States have primarily used this crime to repress opposition (Beger and Hill, 2019; Mitchell, 2004) or prevent collaboration with challengers during civil wars (Kalyvas, 2005). It is a complicated phenomenon to measure or establish clear responsibility of the perpetrators because using paramilitaries or collectives is not rare, attempting to hide the state's responsibility.[38] Likewise, perpetrators of enforced disappearances often remain without judgement, inheriting institutions and rules likely to cover them (Garretón, 1995; Roosa, 2016).

As highlighted before, not all disappearances are enforced. Moreover, the crime is not exclusive to state agents: militias, rebels and other Violent NSA have disappeared people.[39] This is the case with criminal violence in Colombia (CMNH, 2016; Kleinschmidt and Palma, (2020), Mexico (Guillén et al., 2018; Osorio et al., 2018) and other countries. However, the state is always involved in this crime as an active perpetrator of enforced disappearances or through acquiescence due to its inability to provide security to the population. This situation is more evident when the state and profit-oriented Violent NSA share a grey zone of activities to rule criminal activities (Trejo and Ley, 2020).

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[38] For instance, Roosa (2016) shows how Suharto's dictatorship used civilians in Indonesia to perpetrate mass killing and massive disappearances in 1965 as a retaliation for the rebels' attacks against the army.

[39] It is worth noting that disappearances have had harmful effects on families and communities. In this sense, the crime does not just victimise the disappeared. The relatives also have to face many difficulties.

The Colombian case provides a good example of the differences in the types of disappearances. According to the Observatory of Memory and Conflict of the National Centre for Historical Memory of Colombia [CNMH, acronym in Spanish], there were around 61,000 disappearances in Colombia between 1970 and 2015. Although CNMH (2016) was able to identify the likely perpetrator in 29,477 cases (49% of the total). From that subgroup, just 8% of the cases were enforced disappearances because the state agents were the active perpetrators, while the rest were disappearances by Violent NSA, including guerrillas, paramilitaries, demobilised and unknown armed groups. It is worth noting that there is a *grey zone* between disappearances perpetrated by state agents and Violent NSA. For example, Colombian paramilitaries were the main perpetrator in the Colombian conflict, which is important because many of them were allies of the Colombian government, showing us that Violent NSA could commit disappearances with permission, or acquiescence, of the state agents.

3.3. A theory on disappearances by criminal NSA

Under what conditions do criminals disappear people? Criminals are particularly violent when the territory's resources are vital for their business model.[40] In those cases, they want to control the territories to exploit their lootable resources, to gain rents from society and local governments through informal taxation (Aguayo and Dayán, 2018; Trejo and Ley, 2020), or even to exploit human bodies as resources.

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[40] It is worth noting that criminals are not extremely violent by default, as paradigmatic cases have shown (Gambetta, 1996; Snyder and Durán-Martínez, 2009; Varese, 2010), although the presence of any autonomous armed group implies a challenge against the legitimate monopoly of violence by the state (Weber, 2008), brutality is an option.

According to Lessing (2015), the logic of criminal violence in this environment is twofold. On the one hand, they fight against the state in irregular warfare, hiding and hitting security agents in an armed conflict without clear battlefronts, as rebels used to do elsewhere (Balcells, 2010; Kalyvas, 2005). They aim to contain the state and influence its policies without overthrowing it or challenging formal power.[41] On the other hand, they fight for territory against other criminal organisations using conquest logic, resembling non-conventional symmetric warfare of civil wars, where bands dispute territories and resources in fragile statehood (Kalyvas and Kenny, 2010).

However, Trejo and Ley (2020) have found that states and criminals could share a 'grey zone of criminality' when certain individuals or even organisations belong to both sides. In fact, this is not a trade-off situation. The grey zone regulates the criminal underworld, making it hard to establish a clear line between criminals and state agents. From my perspective, this is a normal situation, given that the very concept of organised crime implies, at least, the tolerance of the state, *known as acquiescence*, with extreme cases of active participation in criminal activities (Aguayo and Dayán, 2018).

I argue that criminals could use disappearances differently than other crimes for three reasons. First, disappearances differ from other practices in the criminals' repertoire of violence. Disappearances require more organisation, technique and even expertise from perpetrators (Durán-Martínez, 2015; Guillén et al., 2018) than other types of violence, which are more related to direct clashes between combatants. This feature is related to their skills and purposes (Saab and Taylor, 2009): disappearances would be used to avoid visibility and avoid the costs of criminal VAC while ruling business and keeping things quiet.

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[41] Some scholars have argued that criminals' activities could be linked to civil wars (Grillo, 2011; Sullivan and Elkus, 2008; Schedler, 2015). The similarities lie in casualties, human suffering, firepower and tactical coordination, while the main difference is that criminals do not want to seize formal power (Kalyvas, 2015).

Second, criminals do not necessarily need societal support from the population to maintain the control that other armed NSA require.[42] In many cases, criminals have access to high profitability or easy-to-carry resources, such as chemical drugs. Also, they can collect money through informal taxation for allowances to run regular businesses. Consequently, they require less personnel involved in resource extraction, have more money to improve or maintain firepower capacity, and need less 'stationary' occupation (Beardsley and McQuinn, 2009). Furthermore, these resources allow them to outsource local gangs or co-opted state agents to protect their territories and monitor them through field experience without investing in permanent capacity (Aguayo and Dayán, 2018; Cruz and Durán-Martínez, 2016; Guerrero, 2010).

Third, criminals obtain resources from the more vulnerable members of society, such as poor, young or illegal migrants. Criminals find them valuable in many ways for illegal purposes because they are looking for resources that the state cannot exploit, such as forced labour or sex trafficking. I consider these activities easier for criminals when they control the territory, reducing the clashes or attention that other types of violence attract.

H1: less competition between criminal organisations increases disappearances.

Given that the purpose of disappearances is to avoid the cost of previous VAC, which is an intrinsic part of territorial criminals' business model, perpetrators must consider who is responsible for the protection of civilians and for law enforcement. Cruz and Durán-Martínez (2016) argue that criminals consider the state's political configuration in the territory. According to them, a cohesive state

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[42] For instance, rebels or terrorists rely on the support of civilians for ethnic, cultural and ideological reasons, but also for strategic reasons and for the gathering of information (Arjona, 2016; Asal et al., 2019; Bates, 2008; Polo and Gleditsch, 2016).

– with fewer political actors involved in the decision-making – will induce less violence by Violent NSA. In that sense, Clapham (2017) points to fragmentation of the power to increase abuse by NSA and reduce the state capacity to refrain from them.

Trejo and Ley (2020) found a negative relationship between violence and vertical partisan alignment – understood as governments from the same political party or coalition at different levels (Benton, 2019). The vertical partisan alignment could work in two different ways that are not mutually exclusive. First, if a cohesive state tries to enforce the law and combat criminals, these criminals would respond by reducing their irregular warfare casualties to avoid the authorities' radar and facing justice (Durán Martinez, 2015). The reason is that vertical partisan alignment increases coordination and introduces partisan incentives to governance (Benton, 2019; Trejo and Ley, 2016).

 Second, if the state is co-opted or has agreements with criminals, at local levels at least, the NSA is interested in establishing long-lasting cooperation (Snyder and Durán-Martínez, 2009). In this way, criminals have reasons to avoid media attention and intervention from other government levels and to not damage their partners' societal support,[43] because any major change in government could destabilise criminal governance and create opportunities for other criminal organisations to enter the territory (Trejo and Ley, 2020).

H2: vertical partisan alignment decreases disappearances.

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[43] For example, a video showed the bargain between a local criminal leader, probably a head of a locality or 'Plaza', a Mexican navy officer and an allegedly Mexican major. In the video posted on Twitter, the criminal claims that the navy officer would had been killed and hanged if the major, 'one of us', had not intervened in favour of the officer to not create a mess (Flores, 2022).

3.4. Research design

The Mexican case is propitious to study why do criminals disappear people. In around 40 years, criminal organisations passed from confederations of local traffickers supervised by the secret police of Mexican state to transnational organisations (Astorga, 2016). Nowadays, criminal organisations confront the state's authority and rival organisations to control space (Lessing, 2015). Complementary to drug production and trafficking, Mexican criminals extract resources from illegal activities such as human trafficking, kidnappings, extortion, local crime control and illicit taxes; from legal activities such as mining (Herrera and Martínez-Álvarez, 2022), hydrocarbon extraction and even from public resources of the penitentiary system (Aguayo and Dayán, 2018).

Expectedly, the firepower and tactical training has hugely increased and even professionalised with the recruitment of former elite soldiers of Mexico and Central America (Dudley, 2011; Sánchez Valdés and Pérez Aguirre, 2018), in order to compete against an ever-increasing number of criminal organisations with paramilitaries skills (Atuesta and Pérez Dávila, 2021). Criminals have exercised systematic violence in the territory for many years. The so-called 'war on drugs' started by President Felipe Calderón in 2006 has multiplied violence across the country and it has introduced Mexico into an armed conflict dynamic. For instance, the homicide count surged from 10 cases per 100,000 inhabitants in 2007 to 26 in 2021.

The history of disappearances in Mexico is long-lasting. Like other Latin American governments, Mexican authorities executed repressive policies against social movements, guerrillas and political opposition during the 60s and 70s, in a period known as the 'Dirty War' (Vicente, 2019). However, the magnitude of enforced disappearances in Mexico by authoritarian rulers was small and focalised in comparison to military dictatorships in South America,

especially in Chile or Argentina, where disappeared counts reached tens of thousands. The democratisation process made disappearances rare from the 80s to the early 2000s.

However, disappearances drastically increased with the 'war on drugs', as Figure 3.1 shows. From my perspective, it cannot be affirmed that the Mexican state has a systematic and centralised practice of people disappearing (Díaz Román and Jasso, 2018), conversely to disappearances during the 'Dirty War'. Although the active participation of state agents has been proven in multiple cases, the main perpetrators are criminal organisations that kidnap, torture, enslave, exploit, execute and even dismember human beings as part of their criminal businesses. For instance, there are paradigmatic cases such as the disappearance of 43 students in Ayotzinapa, Guerrero, in 2014 or the disappearance of a still undetermined number of people in Allende, Coahuila, in 2011. In both cases, local police officers were simultaneously members of criminal organisations, illustrating the grey zone for criminal governance shared by Mexican authorities and criminal organisations (Trejo and Ley, 2020), and showing the difficulty of classifying disappearances.

This chapter takes advantage of Mexico's subnational heterogeneity. The dependent variable is the number of disappeared people by state-year, with data from the last update of the National Registry of Missing and Disappeared Persons [RNPED, acronym in Spanish] in May 2018. The register of a disappeared person is a voluntary measure by a third person to public attorneys, known as 'Ministerios Públicos' in Spanish. The local attorney system should start searching for the person and report the total number of cases monthly to update the register. However, in practice, this is not an automatic process. Local governments usually control the local attorney system, and governors have political incentives to delay the reports of the disappearance for months or even years.

I used the data from the National Register of Missing and Disappeared Persons [RNPED, acronym in Spanish] from its last version in May 2018. The RNPED had data since the 1960s, but I analysed the period 2006–2016 because it frames most of the years of the 'war on drugs'. In the RNPED, the denouncer, usually a relative of the disappeared, should go to the Ministerios Públicos after 72 hours of the disappearance and start an enquiry.[44] Consequently, my dependent variable, the number of *disappearances* in Mexico, is a count one. Figure 3.1 shows how disappearances have risen since the 'war on drugs' started.

Figure 3. 1. The total number of disappeared persons in Mexico
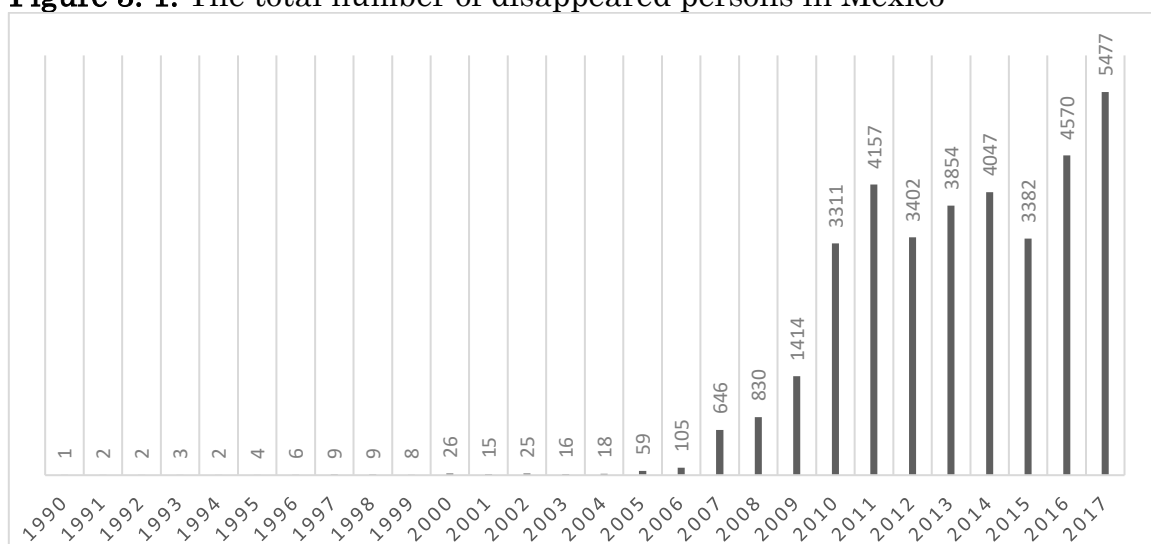
Source: National Registry of Missing and Disappeared Persons (RNPED, 2018).

I used criminal conflicts to measure *criminal competition* for a given state. The measure was created using Phillips' data (2015) from 2006 to 2012 and complementing it with data shared by 'Animal Político', a Mexican digital newspaper, from 2013 to 2016. The journalists obtained this information from

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[44] This informal practice happened although the law said nothing about it. Considering that, the procedure changed recently. Nowadays, the denouncer should preregister the disappearance on a website and include photograph, personal number [CURP, acronym in Spanish] and personal data such as age, height, weight, blood type, among others. After that, the denouncer has to attend the offices of public attorneys, to present the documents of the disappeared to 'sustain the denouncenment'.

the National Attorney through transparency requests and processed and organised it. I used the number of criminal organisations using the same sources as an alternative measure. The difference between both measures is that two or more organisations could be allied, controlling a territory without fighting against each other, counting as two criminal organisations within a Mexican state, but without conflicts between them, counting as zero in criminal competition.

North-eastern Mexican states are good examples of the former. They have had the presence of Los Zetas and the Cártel del Golfo (CDG) in the last two decades. These organisations were former allies who shared territories until 2010, with reduced levels of violence in their 'plazas'. The rising violence occurred after Osiel Cárdenas Guillén, former leader of CDG and creator of Los Zetas, obtained a reduced sentence in his trial in the United States in 2010, due to his collaboration with US authorities. According to diplomatic sources (Corchado and Krause, 2016; Sánchez Valdés and Pérez Aguirre, 2018), the criminal leader provided key information to capture Los Zetas leaders. They responded by breaking the alliance and started a brutal retaliation in the shared territories, especially in the north-eastern states of Coahuila, Nuevo León and Tamaulipas.[45] Consequently, depending on the context, I coded these states with at least two organisations from 2006 to 2016. However, I did not count criminal conflicts inside them from 2006 to 2009 because Los Zetas and CDG were allies,but coded as a conflict when their alliance collapsed. If other organisations, like the Cartel de Sinaloa, tried to take advantage and invaded the territory, I counted it as another conflict.

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[45] Some of the paradigmatic events during the criminal war between CDG and Los Zetas included massacres of migrants, known as SanFernando I, decapitated bodies with messages in Cadereyta (FJEDD, 2020) and massive disappearances in some municipalities in Coahuila (Aguayo and Dayán, 2018).

I used copartisan governors to test whether the *vertical partisan alignment* modifies disappearances. It is a dummy variable created with data from the National Electoral Institute [INE, acronym in Spanish] with values of 1 when the state governor belongs to the same party or coalition as the president and 0 when they are from different ones. I assumed that vertical partisan alignment increases coordination and introduces partisan incentives to governance (Benton, 2019), in the form of rightful law enforcement (Trejo and Ley, 2016) or to fulfil agreements when criminals are de facto rulers and have established subnational criminal governance.

Table 3.2 shows the expected relationship of my variables on disappearances. As control variables, I used *regional disappearances,* which count the states' total disappearances that surrounded my observation to test if there is a contagion effect on neighbours (Osorio, 2015).[46] In addition, I controlled by *homicides rate* per 100,000 habitants to test if disappearances are related to other types of violence used by criminals, with data from the National Institute of Statistics and Geography [INEGI, acronym in Spanish] from 2006 to 2016. Therefore, I expected a positive effect from them on my dependent variable.

Table 3. 2. Expected relationship of variables on disappearances

Group	Variable	Relation
Criminal competition	Criminal conflicts	-
Vertical partisan alignment	Copartisan governors	-
Control variables	Regional disappearances	+
	Homicides rate	+
	Young population	+
	Demographic density	+
	Years since first government alternation	-

According to many case studies, NGOs and reports from relatives' associations (Open Society, 2016), criminals target the most vulnerable population as victims

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[46] For instance, I calculated the combined disappearances of Nuevo León, Zacatecas and San Luis Potosí in 2008 to obtain the value of Coahuila-2008.

of disappearances. I used the *young population* to control whether criminals target that age group as victims of disappearances. It is the percentage of the total population of people under 29 years old, with data obtained from the National Council of Population [CONAPO, acronym in Spanish]. I expected a positive effect of the variable on disappearances.

The Institutional Revolutionary Party [PRI, acronym in Spanish] exercised authoritarian control for decades and maintained it after the presidential alternation of 2000 in some states (Gibson, 2005; Giraudy, 2009), blocking democratisation through the electoral route at the local level (Schedler, 2003). I used the number of years since the first government alternation as a proxy for *electoral democratisation* with INE data. I expected negative effects on disappearances. Table 3.3 shows the descriptive data of the set of variables with observations of Mexican states from 2006 to 2016.

Table 3. 3. Descriptive stats of variables

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Disappearances	352	84.22	163.12	0	1295
Criminal conflicts	352	0.83	0.85	0	5
Copartisan governors	352	0.39	0.49	0	1
Regional disappearances	352	383.34	394.38	0	2186
Homicides rate	352	17.93	19.55	1.72	185.48
Young population	352	26.9	0.84	24.19	29.83
Demographic density	352	294.39	1037.07	7.3	6045.38
Years since first government alternation	352	7.76	7.41	0	27

The potential endogeneity in this set of variables should be addressed. In that sense, the main problem is the Mexican state does not produce good indicators for state capacities, criminal violence, and disappearances, making it difficult to establish clear indicators to avoid potential endogeneity. From my perspective, Mexican authorities have incentives to produce bad information, such as denying

reality and trying to be less accountable to academia and civil society. That is a challenge for future research.

3.5. Discussion of results

Figure 3.2 shows the distribution of the dependent variable from 2006 to 2016 in Mexican states. As can be seen, *disappearances* do not follow a normal distribution but a skewed one, with a large presence of observations with few records and little presence when the number of cases is in the hundreds or more.

Figure 3. 2. Disappearances distribution [2006–2016]
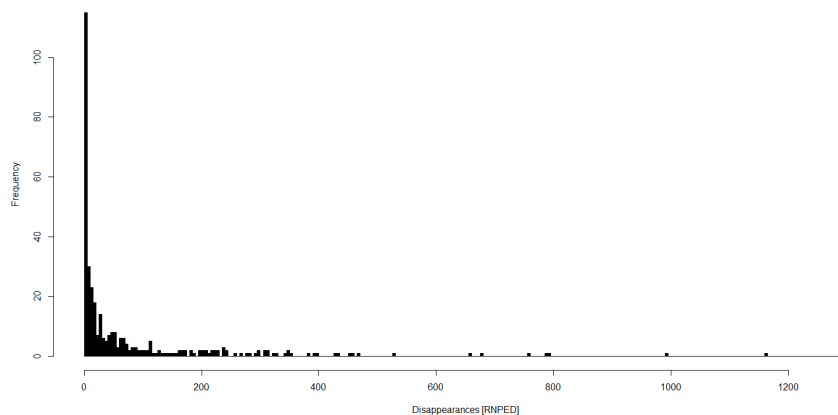
Source: National Registry of Missing and Disappeared Persons (RNPED, 2018).

Considering the former and also that my dependent variable is a counted one, I estimated Poisson and Negative Binomial models. Table 3.4 shows the exponentiated results of the selected models for their interpretation. This chapter uses fixed effects for state and year, given the differences among Mexican states. I used Negative Binomial models in my discussion of results because they have better goodness of fit than others.[47]

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[47] The Appendix B includes OLS models and alternative measures as robustness checks. It also includes graphical representation of the goodness of fit, through the use of rootograms.

Table 3. 4. Selected models on disappearances

	Poisson			Negative Binomial		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Criminal conflicts	0.15		0.22 *	0.21 **		0.19 *
	(0.11)		(0.09)	(0.07)		(0.08)
Copartisan governors		-0.63 ***	-0.37 **		-0.55 ***	-0.32 **
		(0.17)	(0.14)		(0.15)	(0.12)
Regional disappearances			0.00 ***			0.00 *
			(0.00)			(0.00)
Homicides rate			0			0.01
			(0.00)			(0.01)
Young population			-0.21			-0.81 *
			(0.60)			(0.34)
Demographic density			0.02 ***			0.01
			(0.01)			(0.01)
Electoral democratisation			0.1			0.12
			(0.09)			(0.07)
Theta				2.24 ***	2.37 ***	2.79 ***
				(0.40)		(0.54)
N	352	352	352	352	352	352
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
AIC	10883.08	9707.02	7610.14	2926.37	2910.65	2876
BIC	11049.22	9873.15	7799.45	3092.51	3076.79	3065.32
LogLik	-5398.54	-4810.51	-3756.07	-1420.19	-1412.33	-1389

All continuous predictors are mean-centred and scaled by 1 standard deviation. Standard errors are heteroskedasticity robust. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

As stated above, I believe that criminal conflicts are a better measure of *criminal competition* than the number of criminal organisations. Criminal conflicts have a significant and positive effect on the dependent variable. Taking Model 6 as a point of reference, the increase of one criminal conflict in a given state raises the disappearances by 19%, which is very relevant in a context where the mean is very close to one conflict. This finding does not provide support for H1. Conversely, criminal competition increases disappearances. Figure 3.3 shows

the predicted effects of criminal competition on disappearances, with a clear rise in crime when the criminal conflicts increase. That result would suggest that disappearances have similar logic to other types of violence. However, the relationship does not hold with different specifications.[48]

Figure 3. 3. Predicted effects of criminal competition on disappearances in Model 6
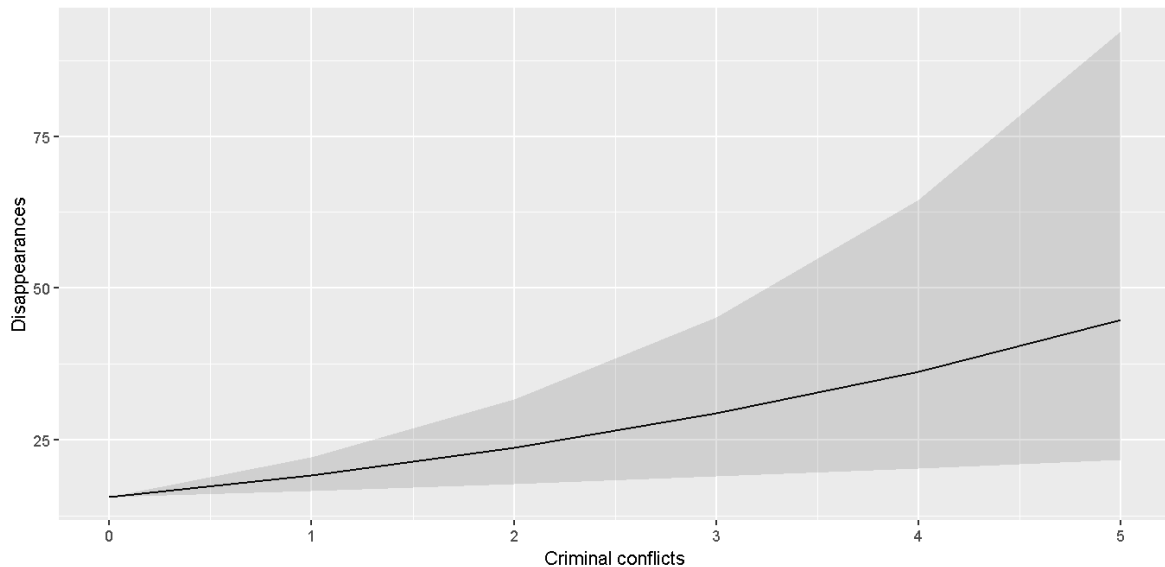
As stated before, I expected a negative effect of vertical partisan alignment on disappearances. Taking model 6 as a point of reference, a governor from the same party as the president decreases the disappearances by 32% in a given state. This result supports H2: *vertical partisan alignment* decreases disappearances. It is easier for criminals to target society when different political parties share political power because it complicates coordination and law enforcement from authorities. As an alternative explanation for this finding, I suggest that *vertical partisan alignment* makes it easier for co-opted authorities to fulfil arrangements with criminals. The result does hold with different

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[48] The Appendix B includes models using the number of criminal organisations.

specifications, included in the Appendix B. Figure 3.4 shows the predicted effects of the change from an opposition governor to a copartisan of the president.

Figure 3. 4. Predicted effects of vertical partisan alignment on disappearances in Model 6
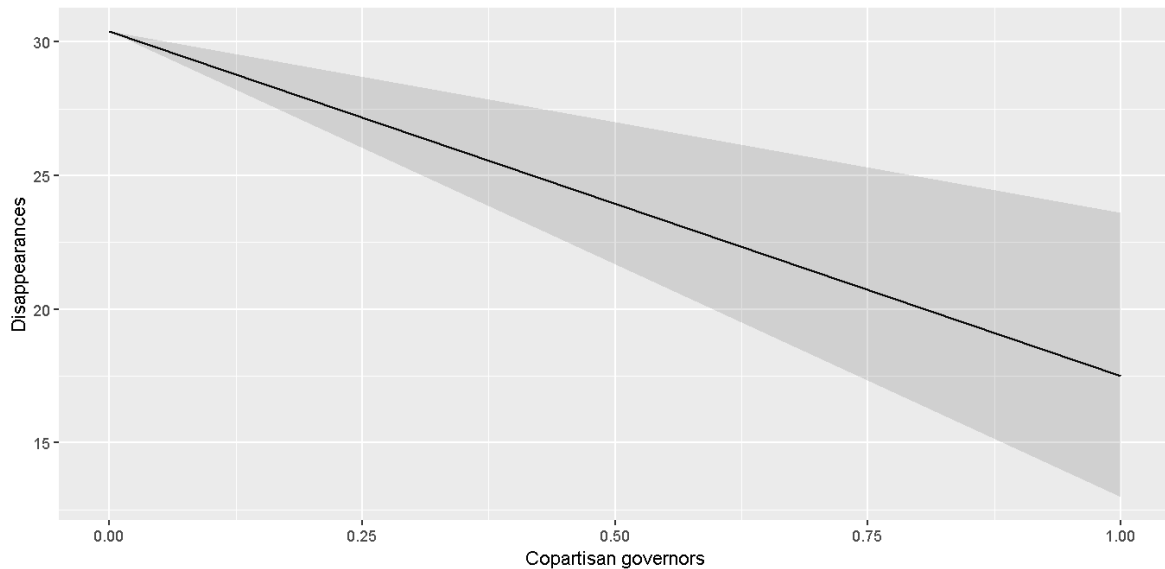
Some control variables are significant in explaining disappearances. However, *regional disappearances* do not clearly affect the dependent variable, even if the result is significant in some models. In other words, it is not possible to know if they decrease or increase disappearances. For its part, every increase of 1% in the *young population* decreases 81% of the disappearances in a given state. This result seems counterintuitive and could reveal that disappearances as forced recruitment would be more expensive or complicated than hiring young people. However, these findings do not look consistent and do not hold under different specifications.

Figure 3.5 summarises the significant results of Table 3.4. Other control variables do not have effects on disappearances in any model. That is the case of the *homicide rate*. This result is counterintuitive because qualitative evidence

has shown that homicides preceded disappearances in many cases.[49] From my perspective, the plausible explanation pointed out one of the flaws of RNPED (Tzuc, 2022): authorities erased the person in the register whenever they found them, dead or alive, making it impossible to follow the trace.[50] Moreover, *demographic density* also does not affect disappearances. Finally, e*lectoral democratisation* does not show significant effects on disappearances. Furthermore, the result is not related to the political orientation of the local government, as the models in the Appendix B show.

Figure 3. 5. Exponentiated coefficients on disappearances

3.6. Conclusions

Studies on VAC by Violent NSA have focused on more visible crimes, like killings or massacres. However, the logic behind disappearances remains unclear. Qualitative evidence has shown that perpetrators mostly use them to hide previous crimes, but the environment that allows them to do it has been less studied. This study focuses on a profit-oriented Violent NSA. Specifically, it asks *under what conditions do criminals disappear people?*

This manuscript tested whether criminals could use disappearances differently than other crimes due to three reasons: the crime is qualitatively different from others, societal support is not mandatory for criminals and they use humans as resources to exploit. My results do not support that *less competition between criminal organisations increases disappearances*, the first hypothesis of this manuscript. In fact, the results show that disappearances have a similar behaviour to other types of criminal violence. Criminal competition increases the frequency of disappearances, as it does with different types of crimes (Kleinschmidt and Palma, 2020; Osorio, 2015; Phillips, 2015; Trejo and Ley, 2016). However, the result does not hold when using an alternative measure, such as the *number of criminal organisations*, and its significance is little.

This paper's main finding is that political cohesion plays an important role in explaining disappearances by criminal NSA. The result supports that the *vertical partisan alignment decreases disappearances*, the second hypothesis of this chapter. The result suggests that criminals consider who is in charge of protecting civilians and enforcing the law, considering that disappearances are meant to avoid the cost of previous VAC. As I stated in the theoretical section, two mechanisms could explain this. More political actors involved in the decision-making will induce more disappearances because authorities would be less efficient in enforcing the law, if they are not co-opted, or fulfilling

arrangements with criminals if they are, as scholars and journalists have shown (Aguayo and Dayán, 2018; Guillén et al., 2018; Trejo and Ley, 2020). Furthermore, the silent nature of disappearances implies that victims and relatives do not have the same impact on public opinion as other types of crimes simply because there is no physical evidence to complain about (Sánz, 2022). The result holds with different specifications and matches previous research on other types of crimes (Cruz and Durán-Martínez, 2016; Trejo and Ley, 2016; Trejo and Ley, 2020),

From my perspective, these results imply that criminal competition is significantly related to political fragmentation. In other words, criminals take into account the configuration of power. Unfortunately, the results of control variables also show that the political parties are irrelevant to explaining disappearances and that electoral democratisation does not affect disappearances. Both are concerning findings. Democracy should create electoral incentives to improve people's safety, in normative terms. Further research seems relevant to identify the nature of Mexican subnational democracies and their inability to provide security to their citizens.

3.7. Appendix B

Figure B. 1. Disappeared by age group
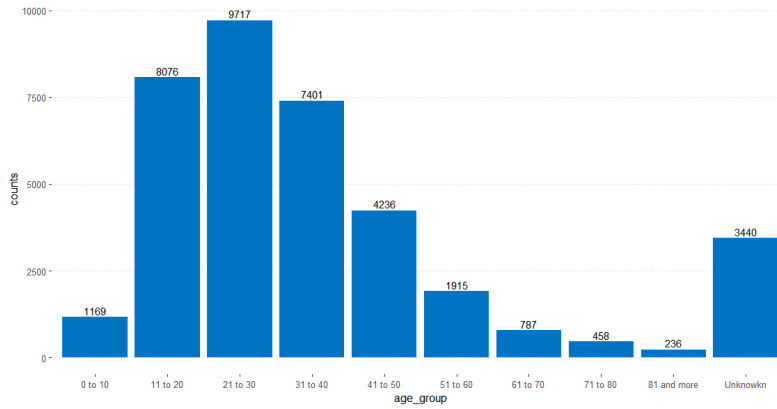
Figure B. 2. Disappeared by Nationality
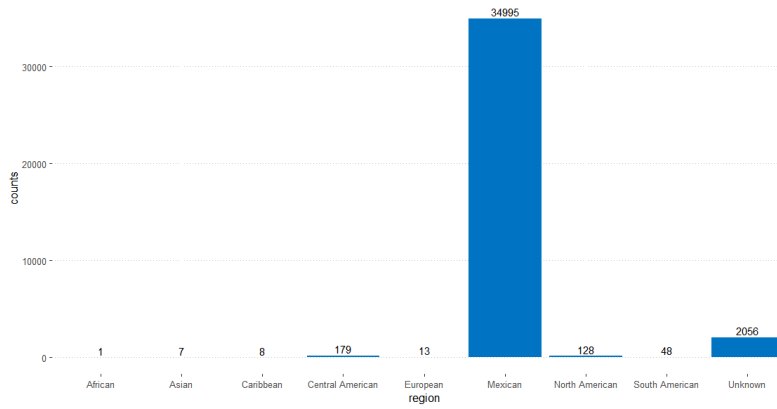
Figure B. 3. Disappeared by sex
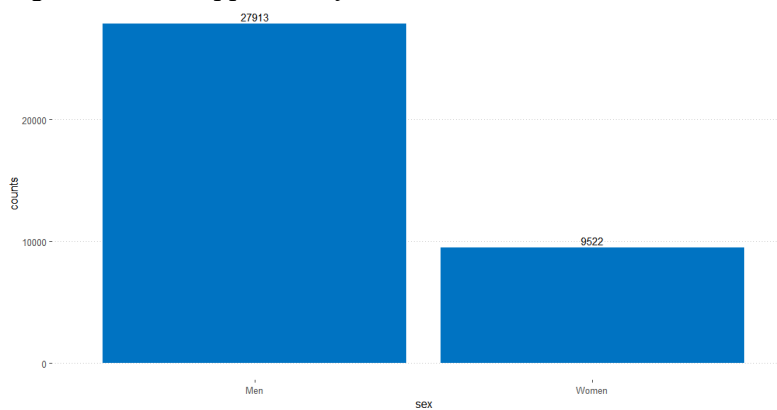
Figure B. 4. Distribution of regional disappearances
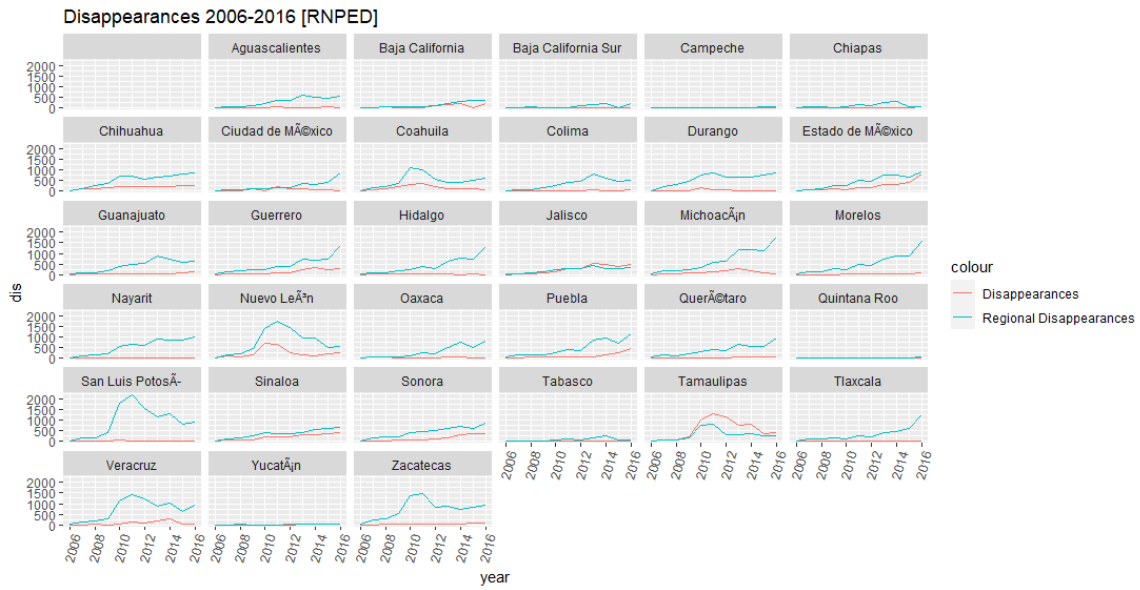
Figure B. 5. Map of disappearances rate by Mexican state in 2005 (RNPED, 2018)

Figure B. 6. Map of disappearances rate by Mexican state in 2017 (RNPED, 2018)
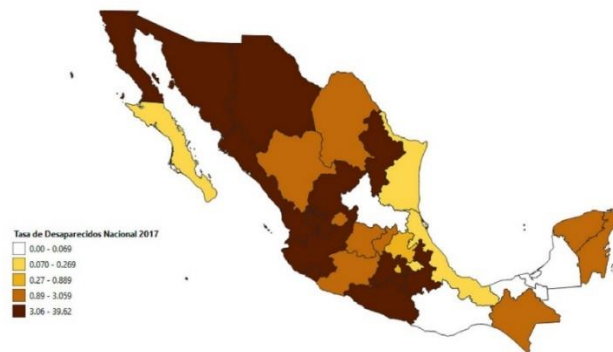
Table B. 1. Descriptive stats of variables

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Disappearances	352	84.22	163.12	0	1295
Men disappeared	352	64.54	127.96	0	1035
Women disappeared	352	19.68	42.91	0	432
Young disappeared	352	39.31	73.93	0	503
Adults disappeared	352	34.53	62.49	0	413
Criminal conflicts	352	0.83	0.85	0	5
Criminal organisations	352	2.12	1.65	0	9
Copartisan governors	352	0.39	0.49	0	1
Regional disappearances	352	383.34	394.38	0	2186
Homicides rate	352	17.93	19.55	1.72	185.48
Young population	352	26.9	0.84	24.19	29.83
Demographic density	352	294.39	1037.07	7.3	6045.38
Years since first government alternation	352	7.76	7.41	0	27
Indigenous speakers	352	5.89	7.72	0.06	30.85
Illegal immigrants detained rate	352	88.75	212.06	0	2025.81
Weapons seized rate	352	13.82	31.41	0	315
GDP per capita	352	149868	150346.4	53836.9	1289459
Right wing party government (PAN)	352	0.21	0.41	0	1
Former authoritarian party government (PRI)	352	0.58	0.49	0	1

Table B. 2. Pearson's correlation of variables

	Disappearances	Criminal competition	Criminal organisations	Copartisan governors	Regional disappearance	Homicides rate	Weapons seized rate	Young population	Electoral democratisatio	GDP per capita	Indigenous speakers	Illegal immigrants	Demographic density	Right wing party	Former authoritarian
Disappearances	1														
Criminal competition	0.25	1													
Criminal organisations	0.180	0.740	1.000												
Copartisan governors	0.009	-0.222	-0.208	1.000											
Regional disappearances	0.310	0.090	-0.070	0.058	1.000										
Homicides rate	0.300	0.340	0.200	-0.165	0.270	1.000									
Weapons seized rate	0.510	0.310	0.200	-0.163	0.120	0.430	1.000								
Young population	-0.300	-0.070	-0.010	-0.057	-0.430	-0.240	-0.150	1.000							
Electoral democratisation	-0.030	0.050	-0.040	0.239	0.190	0.170	-0.130	0.120	1.000						
GDP per capita	-0.040	-0.060	-0.050	-0.033	-0.180	-0.120	-0.080	0.110	-0.190	1.000					
Indigenous speakers	-0.220	-0.100	-0.090	-0.071	-0.170	-0.150	-0.170	0.210	-0.230	-0.020	1.000				
Illegal immigrants detained rate	-0.110	-0.050	-0.180	-0.040	-0.170	-0.130	-0.100	0.190	-0.090	-0.020	0.290	1.000			
Demographic density	-0.010	0.090	0.100	0.010	-0.050	-0.080	-0.100	-0.350	-0.190	0.140	-0.130	-0.060	1.000		
Right wing party government (PAN)	-0.090	-0.030	0.030	0.371	-0.150	-0.120	-0.100	0.170	0.350	-0.090	-0.190	-0.140	-0.080	1.000	
Former authoritarian party government (PRI)	0.130	-0.100	-0.050	-0.026	0.120	-0.020	0.040	-0.170	-0.360	0.210	0.030	-0.100	0.150	-0.610	1.000

Figure B. 7. Goodness of fit for selected models on Table 3.4
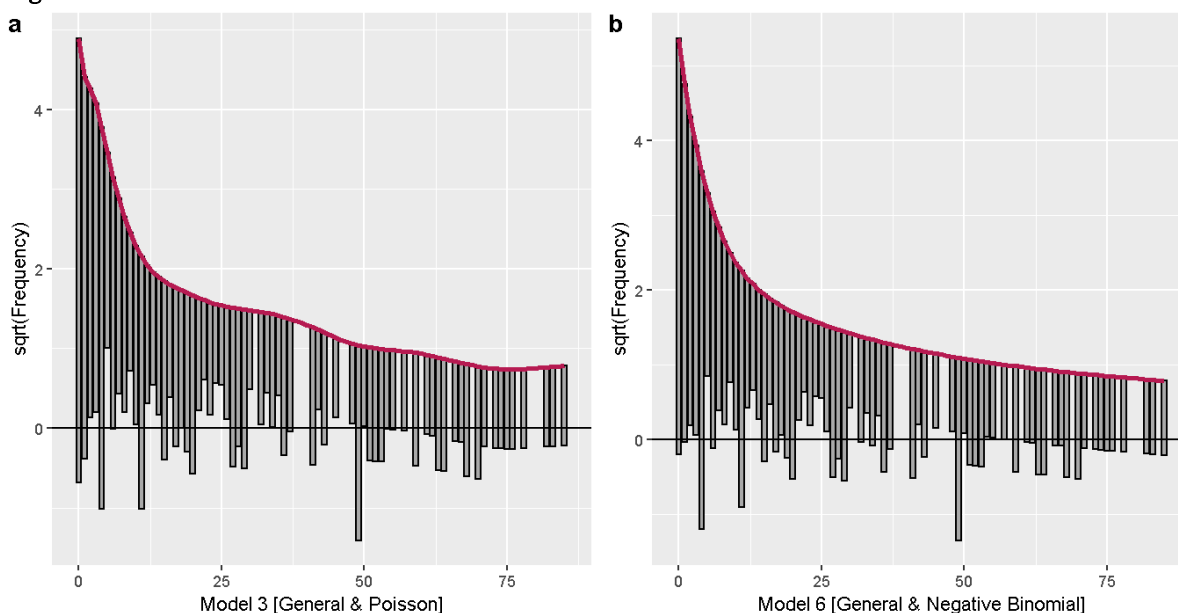
Table B. 3. OLS Models on disappearances (log n+1 DV)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Criminal conflicts	0.18**			0.16 *		0.15 *	
	(0.07)			(0.07)		(0.07)	
Number of criminal organisations		-0.02			0		0.02
		(0.04			(0.05)		(0.05)
Copartisan governors			-0.43***	-0.23	-0.26 *	-0.33 *	-0.37 **
			(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.14)	(0.13)
Regional disappearances				0.00 *	0.00 *	0.00 *	0.00 *
				(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Homicides rate				0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
				(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.01)
Young population				-0.36	-0.36	-0.33	-0.32
				(0.35)	(0.35)	(0.36)	(0.37)
Demographic density				0.01	0.01	0.01 *	0.01 *
				(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Years since first government alternation				0.05	0.05	0.06	0.06
				(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Indigenous speakers						-0.01	0
						(0.08)	(0.08)
Illegal immigrants detained rate						0.00 **	0.00 **
						(0.00)	(0.00)
Weapons seized rate						0.00 *	0.01 *

							(0.00)	(0.00)
GDP per capita							0	0
							(0.00)	(0.00)
Right-wing government (PAN)							0.31	0.37
							(0.34)	(0.35)
Former authoritarian party government (PRI)							0.12	0.14
							(0.31)	(0.32)
N	352	352	352	352	352	352	352	
State fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
r.squared	0.84	0.83	0.84	0.86	0.85	0.86	0.86	
adj.r.squared	0.81	0.81	0.82	0.83	0.83	0.84	0.84	
sigma	0.8	0.81	0.79	0.75	0.76	0.74	0.75	

All continuous predictors are mean-centered and scaled by 1 standard deviation. Standard errors are heteroskedasticity robust. *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05.

Figure B. 8. Exponentiated coefficients on disappearances in OLS Models (Table B.3)

Table B. 4. Poisson Models on disappearances

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Criminal conflicts	0.15***			0.22 *		0.21 **	
	(0.01)			(0.09)		(0.08)	
Number of criminal organisations		-0.03***			0.04		0.06
		(0.01)			(0.05)		(0.05)
Copartisan governors			-0.63***	-0.37 **	-0.43 **	-0.44 ***	-0.49 ***
			(0.02	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.13)	(0.13)
Regional disappearances				0.00 ***	0.00 ***	0.00 **	0.00 **
				(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Homicides rate				0	0	0	0
				(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Young population				-0.21	-0.19	-0.34	-0.27
				(0.60)	(0.67)	(0.51)	(0.58)
Demographic density				0.02 ***	0.02 **	0.02 ***	0.02 ***
				(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.01)
Years since first government alternation				0.1	0.08	0.12	0.11
				(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.07)	(0.08)
Indigenous speakers						0.02	0
						(0.09)	(0.09)
Illegal immigrants detained rate						0	0
						(0.00)	(0.00)
Weapons seized rate						0.00 ***	0.00 ***
						(0.00)	(0.00)
GDP per capita						0	-0.00 *
						(0.00)	(0.00)
Right-wing government (PAN)						0.16	0.2
						(0.22)	(0.25)
Former authoritarian party						0.29	0.36

government
(PRI)

						(0.22)	(0.25)
N	352	352	352	352	352	352	352
State fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
AIC	10883.08	11054.84	9707.02	7610.14	7972.82	6887.34	7136.97
BIC	11049.22	11220.97	9873.15	7799.45	8162.14	7099.84	7349.47
logLik	-5398.54	-5484.42	-4810.51	-3756.07	-3937.41	-3388.67	-3513.48

All continuous predictors are mean-centered and scaled by 1 standard deviation. Standard errors are heteroskedasticity robust. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Figure B. 9. Exponentiated coefficients on disappearances in Poisson Models (Table B.4)
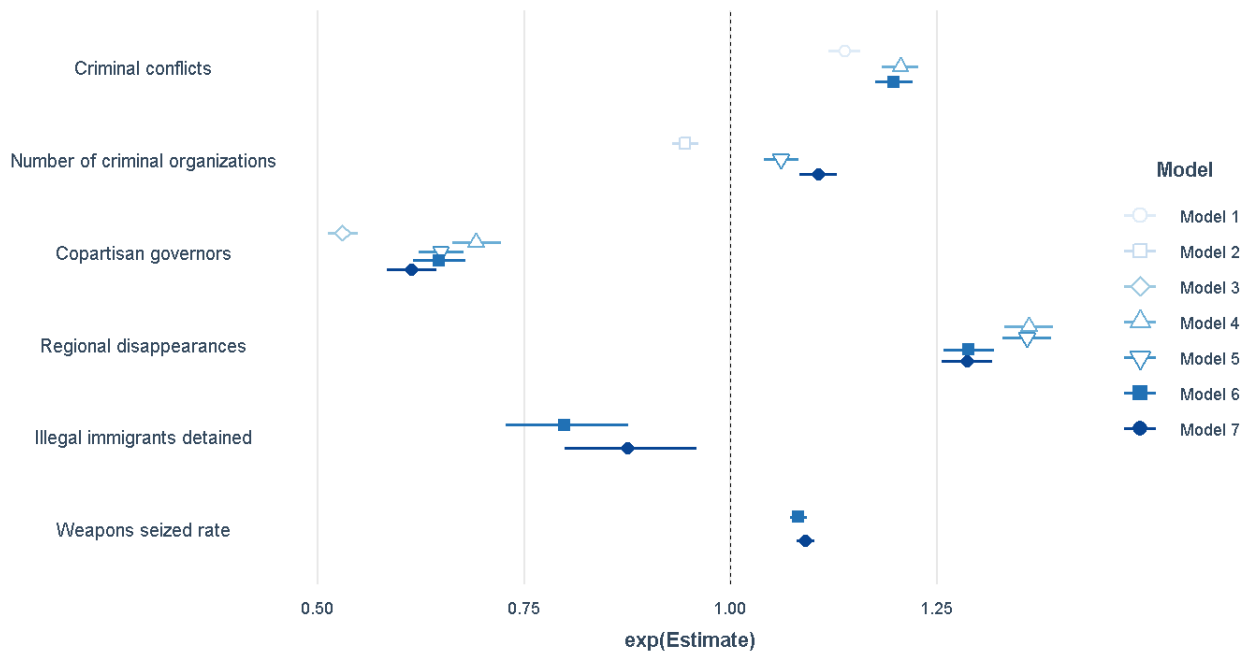
Figure B. 10. Goodness of fit of Poisson Models in Table B.4 (Rootograms)
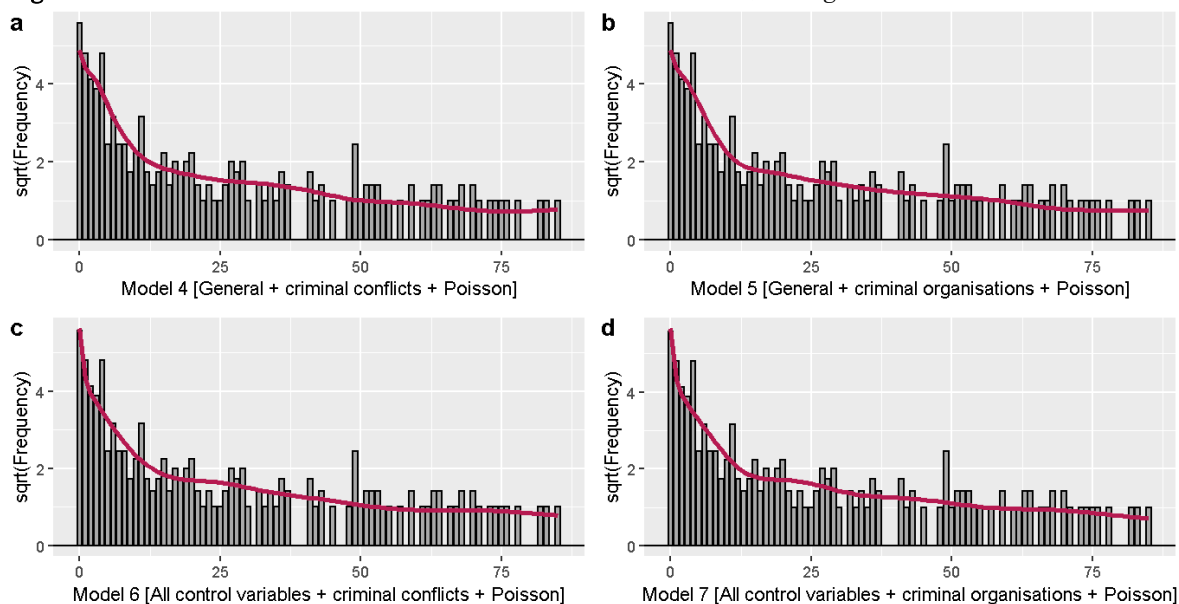
Table B. 5. Negative Binomial Models on disappearances

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Criminal conflicts	0.21 **			0.19 *		0.18 *	
	(0.07).			(0.08)		(0.08)	
Number of criminal organisations		0.00			0.01		0.03
		(0.06)			(0.06)		(0.06)
Copartisan governors			-0.55***	-0.32***	-0.37***	-0.39***	-0.45***
			(0.15)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Regional disappearances				0.00 *	0.00 *	0.00 *	0.00 *
				(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Homicides rate				0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00
				(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Young population				-0.81 *	-0.81 *	-0.77 *	-0.77 *
				(0.34)	(0.35)	(0.36)	(0.37)
Demographic density				0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
				(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Years since first government alternation				0.12	0.12	0.14 *	0.14 *
				(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.07)
Indigenous speakers						0.01	0.01

						(0.10)	(0.10)
Illegal immigrants detained rate						0.00 *	0.00 *
						(0.00)	(0.00)
Weapons seized rate						0.01 *	0.01 *
						(0.00)	(0.00)
GDP per capita						-0.00 ***	-0.00 ***
						(0.00)	(0.00)
Right wing government (PAN)						0.20	0.27
						(0.29)	(0.30)
Former authoritarian party government (PRI)						0.21	0.25
						(0.26)	(0.28)
.theta	2.24 ***	2.17 ***	2.37 ***	2.79 ***	2.69 ***	3.02 ***	2.93 ***
	(0.40)	(0.37)	(0.43)	(0.54)	(0.51)	(0.59)	(0.55)
N	352	352	352	352	352	352	352
State fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
AIC	2926.37	2935.99	2910.65	2876	2884.77	2865.88	2873.68
BIC	3092.51	3102.13	3076.79	3065.32	3074.09	3078.38	3086.18
logLik	-1420.19	-1425	-1412.33	-1389	-1393.39	-1377.94	-1381.84

All continuous predictors are mean-centered and scaled by 1 standard deviation. Standard errors are heteroskedasticity robust. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Figure B. 11. Goodness of fit of Negative Binomial Models in Table B.5 (Rootograms)

a — Model 4 [General + criminal conflicts + Negative Binomial]

b — Model 5 [General + criminal organisations + Negative Binomial]

c — Model 6 [All control variables + criminal conflicts + Negative Binomial]

d — Model 7 [All control variables + criminal organisations + Negative Binomial]
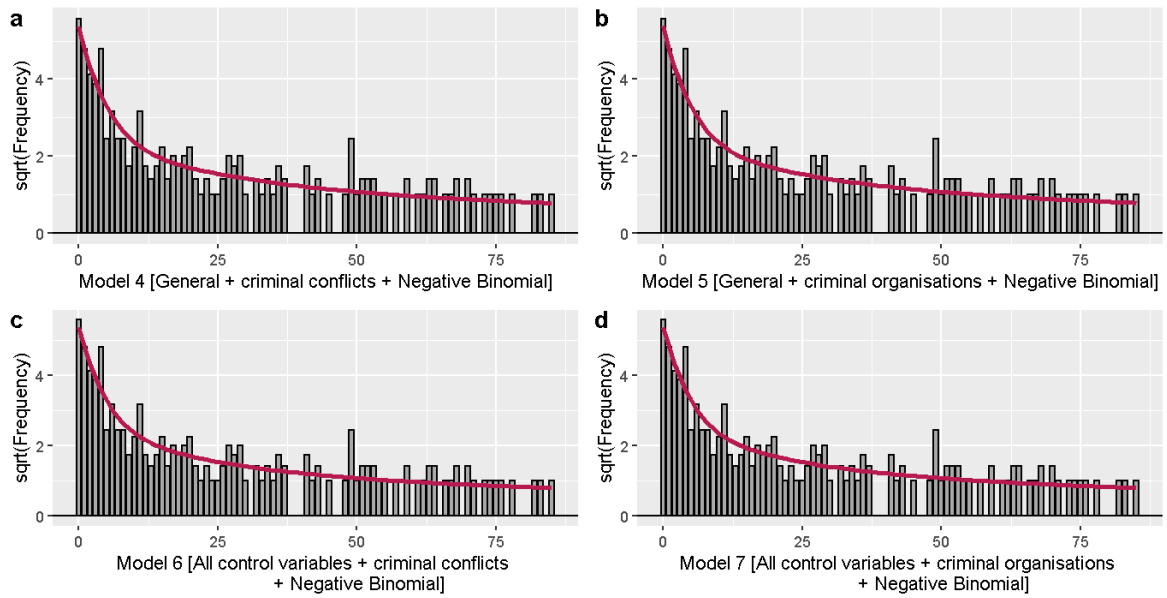
4. Do disappearances affect voter turnout? An analysis of Mexican mayoral elections during the 'war on drugs'

Elections are crucial for political regimes because they provide legitimacy (Lijphart, 2012), shape power distribution, and influence policies and public services implemented by authorities (SotoZazueta and Cortez, 2014). Therefore, voting is the easiest way to influence political power distribution because attending is practical, does not require much time, and directly affects people's living standards. Furthermore, voting advantages are more important at the local level because the candidates and seats are closer to the community, and citizens are incentivised to promote grass-roots participation to influence elections (Guillén et al., 2006; Rivero, 2006). Furthermore, local governments complement representative democracy with popular intervention in daily problems (Dahl, 1971). In sum, voter turnout is a measure of popular legitimacy and the quality of democracy (Lijphart, 2012; Nohlen, 2004). Consequently, low voter turnout indicates a reserved acceptance of democratic principles, poor election legitimacy and voters' disappointment in the political system (Bekoe and Burchard, 2017).[51]

Scholars have established a set of determinants of voter turnout. The sociodemographic conditions, the institutional framework and the electoral competitiveness usually explain most of the voter turnout (Blais, 2006; Fornos et al., 2004). Violence is another reason determining people's participation. There are studies on the effect of attacks against candidates and authorities on

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[51] Voter turnout is essential for non-democracies too. Kuenzi and Lambright (2007) argue that turnout indicates elections' centrality in citizens' lives.

turnout (Alacevich and Zejcirovic, 2020; Fischer, 2001; Ley, 2018), effects of victimisation on elections (Daniele and Dipoppa, 2017; Ponce, 2019) and effects of violence against civilians – understood as physical attacks of armed actors against citizens, to shape society's behaviour (Fjelde and Hutman, 2014) – when it is *intentionally* used to shape electoral outcomes (Bekoe and Burchard, 2017; Condra et al., 2019; Höglund, 2009).[52] However, the side effects of violence on election outcomes have received less attention.

This manuscript analyses the impact of disappearances on voter turnout in the context of criminal violence because disappearances are qualitatively different from other crimes, although they are closely related to them. Disappearances are crimes that perpetrators use to hide previous ones, such as killings, kidnappings, torture and human trafficking, amongst others.[53] The purpose of disappearances is to avoid the costs of previous violence – like retaliation from competitors or attracting mass media attention to the crimes – but still obtain the gains.

The classification of disappearances depends on the perpetrator, ranging from *enforced disappearances*, when state agents are the active perpetrators,[54] to

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[52] Violence against civilians is understood as the physical attacks of armed actors against citizens to shape society's behaviour (Fjelde and Hutman, 2014). Perpetrators could be state agents and Violent NSA, such as terrorists, rebels, paramilitaries, mercenaries and criminals (Berti, 2018).

[53] For example, ISIS abducted, tortured and disappeared civilians for their non-adherence to the ISIS interpretation of the Islamic dress code (OHCHR, 2013).

[54] According to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance of United Nations, 'enforced disappearance is considered to be the arrest, detention, abduction or any other form of deprivation of liberty by agents of the state or by persons or groups of persons acting with the authorisation, support or acquiescence of the State' (OHCHR | Convention CED, 2006). For instance, all the political imprisoners that never appeared during South American dictatorships of the last century could be classified as enforced disappeared, with the cruelest cases during Argentina's Junta Militar in the 70s and 80s.

those inflicted by Non-State Actors (NSA),[55] with a grey zone between them.[56] This manuscript focuses on disappearances within criminal violence contexts, where perpetrators are mostly territorial criminals – those whose territory is a vital element of their business, and who want to establish a parallel control over the territory to exploit its resources and gain rents from it – who use violence as an intrinsic part of their business model.

Do disappearances affect voter turnout? This chapter argues that disappearances decrease voter turnout, in opposition to other types of violence by NSA,[57] because the hidden nature of this crime does not generate the same response in society. It is a twofold situation. First, the relatives of victims of disappearance usually do not participate in electoral politics. They tend to isolate themselves and do not organise themselves (Luna and Rea, 2021; Luna de la Mora et al., 2021; Sanz, 2022), mainly because they lack the individual resources and the socio-economic background to persevere with the search (Espinosa, 2021). Those who organise themselves need to maintain a relationship with the government to search for their loved ones, so trying to favour one political party would put them at a disadvantage elsewhere (Carrillo

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[55] The Violent subgroup, different from other NSA for their ability to use violence (Aydinli, 2015), uses disappearances to make previous violence against civilians less visible (Balcells, 2010; Berti, 2018; Fjelde and Hutman, 2014; Schwartz and Strauss, 2018).

[56] For instance, according to the National Centre for Historical Memory of Colombia [CNMH, acronym in Spanish], Violent NSA were responsible for almost 92% of the cases that CNMH could establish a perpetrator –49% of the 60,000 cases (CNMH, 2016). It is worth noting that there is a *grey zone* between disappearances perpetrated by state agents and Violent NSA. As example, Colombian paramilitaries were the main perpetrator in the Colombian conflict, which is important because many of them were allies of the Colombian government, showing us that Violent NSA could commit disappearances with permission, or acquiescence, of the state agents.

[57] For instance, Robbins et al. (2013) found an increasing effect of terrorism on turnout because the attacks made governments accountable for security provision. In addition, direct victims of violence are more willing to engage in political participation through protests (Blattman, 2009). Finally, according to Blattman (2009), victims are involved more in other forms of direct involvement than voting because conflicts and violence have empowered them, and they are conscious of having nothing to lose.

et al., 2022).[58] In other words, relatives of the disappeared who constantly take action, organise themselves and seek justice for their relatives do not involve themselves in electoral politics. Second, disappearances provoke society's disenchantment with electoral politics due to the presence of crime points out the inefficiency of authorities (Coupe and Obrizan, 2016; López García and Maydom, 2019; Trelles and Carreras, 2012), although society does not necessarily support the agenda of the victims' relatives. I argue that it is the main reason behind the negative effect of disappearances on turnout.

This research makes three main contributions. First, it enhances the studies of elections and violence. Some scholars have already studied the effects of criminal violence over the electorate (Ley, 2018; Trejo and Ley, 2020), but this text adds to the field by looking at its side effects on voters. Second, it is one of the few studies on disappearances with a quantitative perspective (Osorio et al., 2018), because most systematic research has focused on other types of violence. Third, it contributes to clarifying the logic of criminal violence, which mostly focuses on visible types of violence, such as homicides or massacres, studying this 'silent' crime as part of criminals' repertoire of violence.

This chapter has four sections. First, it reviews the importance of voter turnout, the role of different types of violence on it, and the particularities of disappearances. Second, it builds upon qualitative evidence that has shown that victim's relatives avoid electoral politics to argue that the rest of society would be disenchanted with the authority's efficiency in protecting them. The third part of this chapter shows the research design of it. It introduces Mexico as a relevant case to study the effects of disappearances on voter turnout, given the magnitude of the phenomena since the start of the 'war on drugs' and the

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[58] The same principle applies in their relationship with criminals: they could know who the perpetrators are, but denouncing them could provoke further retaliation from criminals or co-opted authorities (Espinosa, 2021),

differences at municipal level across the country. The fourth part presents the statistical analysis results, using data of disappearances combined with mayoral elections in Mexico at municipality level, gathering data from local electoral agencies through transparency requests. It supports the theory that more disappearances decrease voter turnout.

4.1. The effects of violence on voter turnout

Scholars have established a baseline model to explain most of the variation in voter turnout, combining three main groups of variables (Blais, 2006; Fornos et al., 2004; Kostelka, 2017). The first is *sociodemographic conditions*, which include age, wealth and education (Blais and Dobrzynska, 1998). In short, this group expects older, wealthier and more educated citizens to vote more than younger, poorer and uneducated ones.[59] The second is the *institutional framework,* understood as the differences in electoral participation when elections are proportional or majoritarian (Blais and Dobrzynska, 1998), if the election is fair or not (Martínez i Coma and Trinh, 2017) or if the votes are well counted (Birch, 2010; Simpser, 2012). Finally, the third group is the *political competitiveness* of the election, related to the closeness between political parties, and the number and relevance of positions at stake[60] (Blais, 2006; Blais and Dobrzynska, 1998; Kostelka, 2017).[61]

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[59] This gap, known as unequal turnout, is related to access to more and better education for the upper classes, which increases civic commitment (Lipset, 1960; Verba et al., 1995), and they have more interests at stake to protect in the polls (Kostelka, 2017).

[60] Another feature to take into account is the novelty of elections. For instance, Northmore-Ball (2016) found that democratic founding elections in Eastern Europe significantly increased turnout, due to people's excitement for participating. However, turnout consistently falls when they get used to it.

[61] This group is related to the assumption of a rational voter who would find it more attractive to go to the polls if their vote is relevant (Katz and Levin, 2018). The size of the district matters, because a small district will increase turnout because the population would be more involved in the topic (Blais, 2006).

Violence could impact voter turnout beyond the baseline model. This chapter focuses on the role of disappearances, a particular type of violence, in modifying people's attendance at the polls. Valentino (2014) says that scholars used to explain large-scale violence through the irrationality, anger and rage of the armed actors,[62] especially for ethnic and religious cleavages. Nowadays, explanations are more instrumental, where armed actors are motivated by resources, societal support and other rational goals (Wood, 2015).[63] This framework explains that different armed actors use violence as a means to an end: some try to achieve political goals while others look for profitability (Berti, 2018).

Massive violence is useful to perpetrators to solve collective action problems for NSA (Wood, 2010): it compels cooperation from society, and it is cheaper to implement than selective violence. Often, violence is used to 'clean' or 'pacify' conquered territories to force the inhabitants to accept the occupation (Valentino, 2014). However, low-intensity violence is also used when armed actors target humans as resources, like the forced recruitment of children, sex or organ trafficking, and slavery. Anderton and Ryan (2016) show that society develops a 'habituation to atrocity' in the long term in this kind of context.

4.1.1. Intentional effects of violence on elections

Armed actors are interested in elections. They usually use violence to mobilise voters and intimidate political opponents (Collier and Vicente, 2012). In short,

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[62] I use the armed actors' label to englobe both State and Violent NSA as perpetrators. Violent NSA could be primarily defined for their ability to use violence separated from the state (Aydinli 2015). There are several differences across the Violent NSA category, such as the scope of their operations, which could range from transnational to subnational. However, the main difference stands in their goals: some try to achieve political goals while others look for profitability (Berti, 2018).

[63] This feature does not exclude irrationality by agents. It just points out that leaders use irrationality for instrumental goals. For instance, leaders aim to achieve political goals by motivating armed men through ethnic speech. That is the case of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), where a small number of combatants can control the population and bargain with the government using systematic violence to terrorise people (Vinci, 2005).

electoral violence is intentionally implemented to influence electoral processes (Fischer, 2002). It is intentionally implemented to provoke fear to modify electoral outcomes (Höglund, 2009; Ley, 2018) or to reduce the options at the polls after eliminating or intimidating some candidates (Daniele and Dipoppa, 2017; Ponce, 2019). Fear is used to reduce the electoral participation of a specific group (Höglund, 2009) or to mobilise voters through force (Collier and Vicente, 2012).

Usually, electoral violence is selective, in the form of visible attacks against candidates and authorities (Alacevich and Zejcirovic, 2020), trying to attract media coverage and to propagate the state's inability to protect the elite (Ley, 2018). These attacks work as a reminder of common people's vulnerability: what could ordinary people expect if this happens to the elite? Electoral violence can be extensive, with armed groups shaping election results by harming society. For example, extensive violence can determine voter turnout before elections through intimidation, harassment and assassinations (Bekoe and Burchard, 2017; Höglund, 2009).[64]

However, non-electoral violence can create side effects on elections. For instance, Jones, Troesken and Walsh (2017) showed the effects of racist violence on elections in the South of the United States, by analysing how lynchings against Afro-American individuals due to racism increased political and community participation.[65] From my perspective, the side effects of violence on turnout have not received enough attention. It is more evident in the emerging literature on the relationship between politics and criminal violence, considering that this profit-oriented Violent NSA (Berti, 2018) uses violence against civilians as a regular activity, even using humans as a critical resource (Anderton and Ryan,

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[64] Daxecker (2020) pointed out that incumbents are more prone to generate violence because they have the logistic means to create it, and they have more to lose if the opposition wins.
[65] Other studies provide support to the matter (Bellows & Miguel, 2009).

2016). Therefore, I introduce disappearances as a type of crime suitable for analysing these side effects.

4.1.2. Disappearances

Disappearances are a form of violence against civilians that differs from others in its primary purpose. In practical terms, perpetrators use this 'silent crime' (Aguilar and Kovras, 2019) to hide previous ones. The purpose of disappearance is to avoid the costs of previous violence. Consequently, disappearances are more complex than other crimes. This violence requires more organisation, technique and expertise than other crimes, needing not just gunmen but also networks and technical skills.

Disappearances can be classified according to the perpetrator. *Forced disappearances* are those actively perpetrated by the authorities. States have primarily used this crime to repress opposition (Beger and Hill, 2019; Mitchell, 2004;) or prevent collaboration with challengers during civil wars (Kalyvas, 2005). In practice, forced disappearances are a grey area, hard because the use of paramilitaries or urban gangs attached to authorities is not rare, in a state's attempt to hide its responsibility, making it difficult to establish any clear responsibility by perpetrators.

As stated above, the crime is not exclusive to state agents: militias, rebels and other Violent NSA have disappeared people.[66] This is the case with criminal violence in Colombia (Blair, 2018; Kleinschmidt and Palma, 2020), Mexico (Guillén et al., 2018; Osorio et al., 2018) and other countries. While different types of violence by Violent NSA can be related to direct clashes between

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[66] It is worth noting that disappearances have had harmful effects on families and communities. In this sense, the crime does not just victimise the disappeared. The relatives also have to face many difficulties. Also, the female role is interesting in leading the search for their beloved and the leadership of collectives Teuba et al., 2005).

combatants, disappearances require more organisation, technique and even expertise.

The Colombian case provides a good example of the differences in the types of disappearances. According to the Observatory of Memory and Conflict of the National Centre for Historical Memory of Colombia [CNMH, acronym in Spanish], there were around 61,000 disappearances in Colombia between 1970 and 2015. Although CNMH (2016) identified the likely perpetrator in 29,477 cases (49% of the total). From that subgroup, just 8% of the cases were enforced disappearances, because the state agents were the active perpetrators, while the rest were disappearances by V-NSA, including guerrillas, paramilitaries, demobilised and unknown armed groups. It is worth noting that there is a *grey zone* between disappearances perpetrated by state agents and V-NSA. For example, Colombian paramilitaries were the main perpetrator in the Colombian conflict, which is important because many of them were allies of the Colombian government, showing us that V-NSA could commit disappearances with permission, or acquiescence, of the state agents.

4.2. A theory on the effect of disappearances on voter turnout

In summary, scholars have found an effect of violence on turnout when perpetrators use it intentionally to shape policies or electoral outcomes (Ley, 2018; Nwankwo et al., 2017; Trelles and Carreras, 2012). But the side effects of violence on elections have been less studied. This chapter focuses on the role of disappearances to modify election attendance, considering that disappearances are a complex crime, both in terms of expertise and resources, that perpetrators

use to hide previous crimes, with the clear purpose of remaining unnoticed. Therefore, *do disappearances affect voter turnout?*

The violence of territorial criminal organisations has a twofold logic (Lessing, 2015). On the one hand, criminal organisations compete for control of territory with a logic of conquest, extracting resources and gaining rents from the territory and exploiting routes. On the other hand, criminals try to constrain state policies and activities. Furthermore, given the profitability-oriented goals of criminals (Berti, 2018) and the illicit nature of some of their businesses, criminals have constant interactions with state agents and resources to co-opt these agents (Durán-Martínez, 2015).

The effects of criminal violence are severe because their battles for territory produce lethal violence (Kleinschmidt and Palma, 2020; Moore, 2012; Osorio, 2015; Trejo and Ley, 2016). Similarities between criminal conflicts and civil war can explain their effects on society (Balcells, 2010; Kalyvas, 2005). First, clashes are frequent and can appear anywhere because there are no defined territories or borderlines between armed rivals. Second, criminals have plenty of access to resources, tactical capabilities and extensive firepower (Kalyvas, 2005).

The consequences of criminal violence on elections are mostly side effects, because violence is an intrinsic part of criminal businesses. As stated above, criminals sometimes use electoral violence to shape electoral outcomes (Ley, 2018), like other armed actors – such as the state, rebels, terrorists and paramilitaries. In other words, when criminals want to intervene in elections, they usually target elites and candidates using visible crimes to spread fear in the population and to communicate their preferred electoral results.[67] However,

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[67]A prominent example of this is the assassination of Luis Carlos Galán, killed by the Cartel de Medellín in August 1989. Galán was the Presidential Candidate of the New Liberal Party, and there is consensus that he would have won the election. Galán was one of the most prominent critics of Pablo Escobar's organisation, and his programme was focused on the prosecution of

the use of electoral violence does not stop other activities. For instance, criminals do not stop their human trafficking operations to kill a candidate, because they have the skills and resources to do both simultaneously. Their territorial dynamic and profit-oriented nature imply using violence to control and exploit resources, routes and people (Lessing, 2015). This wide range of activities includes illegal and dreadful ones, beyond drug trafficking[68], and legal ones that even appear harmless,[69] with many others in a grey zone.[70]

I posit that disappearances are the best way to analyse the side effects of criminal violence because they are related to other crimes –because perpetrators use them to hide previous violence– although they are qualitatively different, due to the perpetrators' intention to go unnoticed and not receive any consequences for their crimes. Although disappearances imply extra expenditure, considering the cost of prior crimes plus the skills and logistics to disappear a person, the perpetrators are looking for the benefits of avoiding visibility (Aguayo et al., 2017).

This manuscript argues that disappearances under criminal violence decrease voter turnout due to a twofold response by society to the hidden nature of disappearances. First, relatives of the disappeared do not participate in electoral politics to protect themselves and maintain a neutral position with the

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that organisation. Consequently, the Cartel of Medellín had attempted to kill him previously until they succeeded in a campaign meeting in Soacha. According to the Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2020), the organisation involved state agents, paramilitaries and criminal members in preparing for the shooting that killed Galán. Furthermore, it was not an isolated case: four presidential candidates were killed in that decade, among the dozens of less prominent Colombian politicians (Osorio, 2022).

[68] Such as human trafficking (Matos et al., 2018) or the sale of organs (Francis and Francis, 2010).

[69] For instance, tomato and avocado farming has become an issue in Mexico, considering the high profitability of those products in the Western market, given the increasing demand for them (Dehghan, 2019).

[70] For example, there is evidence of the effects of legal mining in forced displacement in Latin America (Correa-Cabrera, 2017) or money laundering in regular businesses, that include football clubs.

government. Second, disappearances are noticed in the community, although they do not attract the mass media, provoking disenchantment of the electorate in the authorities' capacity to protect them. I develop this argument in the following paragraphs.

I argue that relatives of the disappeared do not participate in electoral politics for three reasons. First, they tend towards isolation and do not organise themselves for several motives: authorities have nothing to work on because there are no bodies (Aguilar and Kovras, 2019), and a disappearance is not even a crime in some legal frameworks. Additionally, the organisational capacities of relatives are mediated by social capital, previous regional organisations (Luna and Rea, 2021) and personal resources (Sanz, 2022), leading to people of lower socio-economic status quitting or avoiding the search at the early stages.

Second, the relatives can be harassed or intimidated by criminals to abandon the search or not mention them in judicial cases (Carrillo et al., 2022; Espinosa, 2021; Luna de la Mora et al., 2021). In this sense, there is postulation that Violent NSA and the state are differentiated actors competing for resources and popular support (Wood, 2010; Wood, 2015). From my perspective, this framework cannot stand when the Violent NSA pursue profitable goals. That is the case of criminals, Violent NSA with enough power to infiltrate the state and co-opt its agents, especially at the lower level,[71] and who do not want to overthrow the rulers (Lessing, 2015; Kalyvas, 2015).

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[71] However, they have the resources to infiltrate at any level. For instance, some former Mexican governors have been prosecuted for links with organised crime, like Tomás Yarrington. He was Governor of Tamaulipas, a Mexican state with thousands of homicides and disappearances in the previous 15 years. Yarrington had a successful political career in Mexican politics. In fact, he even tried to become President of Mexico in 2006 but could not win the PRI internal election. After finishing his term as governor, he remained a fugitive for five years, and then he pleaded guilty to money laundering (Camhají, 2021). Yarrington's case is not an exception, with other governors linked to organised crime and money laundering in the United States in the form of real estate, businesses and even racehorses (UTSL-HR Clinic, 2017).

Finally, the few relatives that organise themselves must maintain a neutral relationship with the authorities to keep searching for their loved ones. It is worth noting that the relatives of the disappeared commonly face silence or 'ghosting' from authorities (Luna and Rea, 2021; Sanz, 2022). Consequently, favouring one political party would put the relatives of the disappeared at a disadvantage.

In summary, the relatives of the disappeared usually do not involve themselves in electoral politics and concentrate their efforts on searching for their loved ones,[72] constantly taking action and organising themselves. They have reasons to avoid the electoral route because they tend to isolation, have no trust in the authorities, have reasons to believe that the criminals might co-opt state agents, and have an incentive to maintain a neutral stance towards all the political parties. Relative's work is vital because they communicate that crimes are happening in society –through stickers on the streets, social media posts,

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[72] The case of Roberto Carlos Castro Castro serves as an example of the former. He was the owner of a sports store. An armed command kidnapped him in December 2011, on a road in Veracruz, Mexico (Idheas, 2020). His mother, Rosalía Castro Coss, started her son's search by herself, presenting a denouncement in front of the public attorney, or Ministerio Público, following the standard procedure. Her search was a lonely one, facing the lack of capacity of judicial authorities. She is still complaining about the lack of willingness of some judicial agents. Still, she understands that they cannot process all the denouncements that Mexican criminal violence has generated, even less provide justice. According to her, the first three years of her search were on her own, facing the silence and excuses of Mexican justice. She persevered, given that her above-average socio-economic status allowed her to continue the search for her son. Most victims' relatives do not have that possibility and quit the search because it means regular expenditure on buses, lawyers, among other things (Carrillo, Ortega and Pérez, 2022). Rosalía joined tthe 'Colectivo Solecito' in 2014. Solecito is an association of relatives of the disappeared searching for their loved ones, like others in Mexico.

In the beginning, Solecito just tried to press authorities to hurry up on the search for their relatives, until they started to carry out autonomous searches. According to Rosalía, Ayotzinapa was a game-changer for all the organisations for the relatives of the disappeared, mainly because they learned how to search on their own. Solecito has found dozens of clandestine graves (IMDHD, 2019). As a member of Solecito, Rosalía has received threats from criminals, asking not to be involved in judicial files or even mentioned on media, and from authorities too, asking to not receive any criticism about their failure to provide security and justice. Furthermore, some Solecito's cases are for people who arguably disappeared by co-opted police officers, as examples of the grey zone of forced and criminal disappearances in Mexico.

protests, memorials, and many others– because disappearances do not appear frequently in the media in contexts of the normalisation of criminal violence.

Consequently, I argue that the presence of disappearances provokes disenchantment in society due to authorities' inefficiency, which reduces voter turnout. Condra et al. (2018) show that citizens' perceptions of the state can have ambivalent effects on voter turnout: citizens participate more if they believe the incumbent is responsible for the situation, but abstain if they think the problem is beyond any political party. In other words, authorities' inefficiency can trigger disenchantment with them that diminishes turnout (Coupe and Obrizan, 2016; Trelles and Carreras, 2012). The *demobilising mechanism* (Kostelka, 2017) appears when citizens are disenchanted with reality but cannot find an alternative across the opposition parties,[73] promoting voting abstention through the electorate (Berens and Dallendorfer, 2019; Kouba et al., 2021).

Assuming that voting is a rational activity, I posit that attendance at the polls is not valuable enough when the security situation is awful. When disappearance numbers are low, the electorate has other priorities – such as the economic situation, health system or partisan politics (Blais, 2006) – to determine their presence at the polls. When disappearance numbers are high, I believe that people in the community are aware that violence against them is constantly happening and that the government cannot protect them.[74] Consequently, they become disengaged from choosing leadership.

H1: more disappearances decrease voter turnout.

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[73] Kostelka (2017) said that voters could choose from across the opposition parties and punish the incumbent if they are just disenchanted with the government, increasing the voter turnout in the process; however, they will abstain if they are disenchanted with the whole party system, because the benefits of a vote do not exceed the costs (Dassonneville et al., 2015).

[74] In other words, high levels of disappearances will show that the state lacks security capacity, and authorities cannot deter or repel challenges to their authority and protect their citizens (Hendrix, 2010), which is the primary function of the state (Weber, 2008).

4.3. Research design

Mexico is a relevant case to study the effects of disappearances on voter turnout, because it is a large and heterogeneous country with high levels of violence in recent years. In around 40 years, criminal organisations passed from confederations of local traffickers supervised by the secret police of Mexican state to transnational organisations (Astorga, 2016).

The triggering point of the Mexican armed conflict was the so-called 'war on drugs' started by President Felipe Calderón in 2007. This conflict has increased violence across the country. The firepower and tactical training of criminals are massive, bigger than the rebels or terrorists in other countries. Furthermore, criminals have access to very skilful professionals on violence due to the recruitment of former elite soldiers of Mexico and Central America (Dudley, 2011; Sánchez Valdés and Pérez Aguirre, 2018), to compete against an ever-increasing number of criminal organisations with paramilitaries skills (Atuesta and Pérez Dávila, 2021).

Consequently, criminal organisations have confronted both the state's authority and rival organisations for the control of space (Lessing, 2015). Complementary to drug production and trafficking, Violent NSA extract resources from illegal activities such as human trafficking, kidnapping, extortion, local crime control and illicit taxes; from legal activities such as mining (Herrera and Martínez-Álvarez, 2022) and hydrocarbon extraction; and even from public resources of the penitentiary system (Aguayo and Dayán, 2018).

Mexico is a federalist country that experienced a long democratisation process. It focused on the electoral side of democratic transition (Merino, 2003). In short, Mexican opposition generated democratisation through the electoral route

(Schedler, 2003), a virtuous cycle of increasing electoral competitiveness following the gradual dismantling of authoritarian electoral framework, further increasing electoral competitiveness as a result (Woldenberg et al., 2000). Mexican local dynamics were crucial in modifying political rule across the Mexican states in two opposite directions. On the one hand, the opposition started the democratisation process from the periphery to the centre (Flamand and Somuano, 2010), by winning elections and modifying electoral institutions at the local level, resulting in increasing their power to bargain for better conditions at national level (Ortega and Somuano, 2011). On the other hand, some local authoritarian rulers protect themselves wherever they can, preventing their removal by adapting the national authoritarian regime to the local level to protect themselves, in a process known as 'feuderalismo' or 'authoritarian enclaves' (Gibson, 2005; Giraudy, 2009).

This chapter studies the role of disappearances on voter turnout in mayoral elections from 2005 to 2017. Ideally, local governments complement representative democracy with popular inclusion in daily problems (Dahl, 1971). In this sense, mayoral elections are closer to the community than local and national governments are (Guillén et al., 2006; Rivero, 2006), and include more societal demands on government decisions. This characteristic theoretically enhances electoral accountability (O'Donnell, 2004), allowing mayoral governments to respond more to criminal violence in the municipality.

 The common ground is that mayoral authorities are elected every three years in Mexican municipalities, where each citizen has one vote to choose all the members of 'Cabildo', a council that rules the municipality. The size of Cabildo is related to the number of inhabitants in the municipality. The head of the list is already assigned in the electoral ticket and becomes mayor if the list wins the majority of votes, becoming the ruler of the municipality. I used the *percentage of voter turnout* in mayoral elections as the dependent variable. I calculated the

measure from the total number of votes divided into registered voters, known as 'Lista Nominal de Electores', in a given municipality. I collected data from Local Electoral Public Agencies [OPLE, acronym in Spanish] for mayoral elections in every Mexican state, through transparency requests.

This manuscript uses the *number of disappearances* in the National Register in a municipality as the independent variable.[75] Registering the disappeared is a voluntary measure by a third person with the public attorneys, known as 'Ministerios Públicos' in Spanish. I use data from the National Register of Missing and Disappeared Persons [RNPED, acronym in Spanish] in its latest version (May 2018). I analyse the period 2005–2017 because this frames most of the years of the 'war on drugs'. In the RNPED, the denouncer, usually a relative of the disappeared, needs to go to the Ministerios Públicos after 72 hours of the disappearance and start an enquiry. This informal practice happens although the law does not say anything about it.[76] After this, the local attorney system should start searching for the person and report the total number of cases monthly to update the register. However, in practice, this is not an automatic process. Local governments usually control the local attorney system, and governors have political incentives to delay the reports of the disappearance for months or even years (IMDHD,2019). Figure 4.1 shows how disappearances rose since the 'war on drugs' started.

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[75] As an alternative measure, I calculate the disappearances rate per every 100 thousand inhabitants and the percentile change in disappearances from year 0 to year 1, with data from the RNPED and CONAPO, available in the Appendix C.

[76] The procedure changed recently. Nowadays, the denouncer should pre-register the disappearance on a website and introduce the photograph, personal number [CURP, acronym in Spanish] and personal data such as age, height, weight and blood type, among other things. Afterwards, the denouncer has to attend the offices of public attorneys, to present the documents of the disappeared to 'sustain the denouncement'.

Figure 4. 1. Time-series of disappeared persons in Mexico
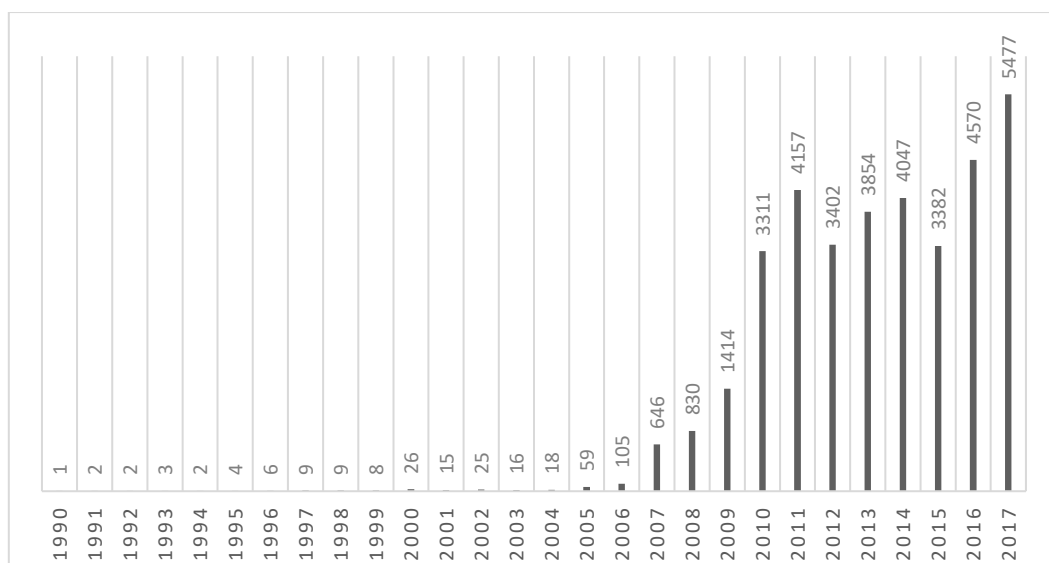
Source: National Registry of Missing and Disappeared Persons, 2018

This research uses the *social deprivation index* as a control variable for sociodemographic conditions (Blais, 2006; Blais and Dobrzynska, 1998), with data from the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy [CONEVAL, acronym in Spanish]. The measure considers the levels of education, health access, essential public services and quality of housing.[77] Higher values indicate worse conditions, while values below 0 indicate a lack of deprivation. The index uses information derived from National Census and Population Surveys prepared by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography [INEGI, acronym in Spanish] every five years.[78] I expected a negative relationship with voter turnout, following the literature.

In addition, the manuscript uses the *concurrence of the election* to control the political relevance of the election (Blais, 2006; Blais and Dobrzynska, 1998; Kostelka, 2017). Considering the number and relevance of positions at stake, I

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[77] I use the margination index (2000, 2005, 2010 and 2015) as an alternative measure, with data from the National Council of Population in the Appendix C. It measures years of schooling, sewer system, electricity, potable water, number of inhabitants per house and income.
[78] The values in between years are imputed.

used information from OPLE. I assigned values of 0 when the election is just for the mayor, 1 if the citizens can vote for the Mexican state governor also, 2 if they can vote for the president, and 3 if they can vote for mayor, governor and president. I expected a positive relationship with the dependent variable.

I created *municipality size* to measure the population as a control variable, using registered voters in the municipality. Next, I codified rural municipalities with a population equal or fewer than 4,000 voters as 0; semi-rural municipalities with 4,000–15,999 registered voters coded as 1; semi-urban places with 16,000–39,999 voters coded as 2; finally, I coded urban municipalities with 40,000 voters or more as 3. Table 4.1 shows the descriptive data of the set of variables. Finally, I controlled the number of *homicides* to test whether voter turnout is related to other forms of criminal violence, with data from the National Institute of Statistics and Geography [INEGI, acronym in Spanish]. I expected a negative relationship of both variables with the electorate's attendance at the polls. Table 4.1 shows the descriptive stats of the variables used in this research.

Table 4. 1. Descriptive stats of variable

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Turnout	8785	57.86	14.43	0	100
Disappearances	8785	0.98	7.97	0	411
Disappearances t-1	8785	0.86	6.79	0	246
Disappearances rate	8785	1.06	8.87	0	650.99
Percentile change on disappearances	8785	15.37	210.28	-100	14700
Social deprivation index	8785	0.03	1.02	-1.97	5.47
Margination index	8785	0.03	1.01	-2.36	4.84

Concurrence of the election	8785	1.04	1.06	0	3
Municipality size	8785	1.21	1.16	0	4
Homicides	8785	8.58	56.52	0	3766

4.4. Discussion of results

I estimated linear regression models due to the normal distribution of voter turnout. Figure 4.2 shows the distribution of voter turnout from 2005 to 2017 in Mexican municipalities. The models include fixed effects per Mexican state to address the heterogeneity across Mexican territory.

Figure 4. 2. Voter turnout distribution for Mexican mayoral elections
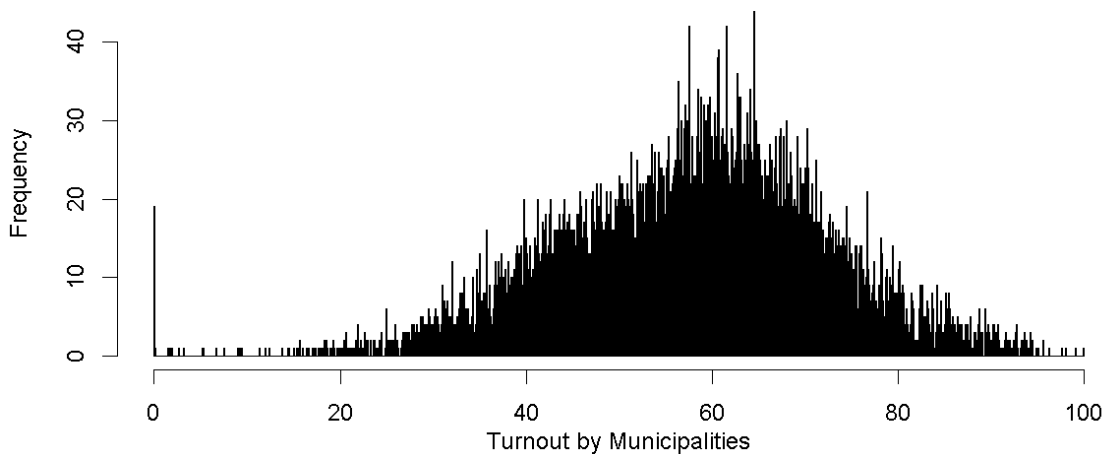
Source: Local Electoral Public Agencies

The results of Table 4.2 support the manuscript's hypothesis: *more disappearances decrease voter turnout.* The result holds using different measures for the independent variable, such as rates and percentile change, included in the Appendix C. Taking Model 2 as the point of reference, the increase of one disappearance in a given municipality decreases the voter

turnout by almost 0.10%. This result would not be a significant problem for most Mexican localities, given that the mean is 0.98 disappearances per place, and considering the distribution of this crime across the territory. However, this finding is a big issue for those places where the phenomenon is more challenging, considering that some municipalities have dozens or hundreds of disappeared persons every year. In addition, this finding is a big issue in zones where crime is spreading through a contagious effect.[79] The coefficients of disappearances in Models 3 and 4 of Table 4.2 are stronger than in Models 1 and 2, showing that the effect of disappearances is more visible with a delay. The result holds using other specifications, available in the Appendix C.

Table 4. 2. Selected models on voter turnout in Mexican mayoral elections

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Disappearances	-0.21***	-0.09 ***		
	(0.04)	(0.01)		
Disappearances t-1			-0.24***	-0.10 ***
			(0.03)	(0.02)
Social deprivation index		0.55		0.55
		(0.81)		(0.81)
Concurrence		3.58		3.57
		(2.55)		(2.55)
Municipality size		-3.37 ***		-3.38 ***
		(0.59)		(0.59)
Homicides		-0.00 *		-0.00 *
		(0.00)		(0.00)
N	8785	8785	8785	8785
State fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
r.squared	0.46	0.51	0.46	0.51
adj.r.squared	0.46	0.51	0.46	0.51
AIC	66640.05	65710.21	66643.65	65716.14

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[79] The Appendix C includes maps with the geographical distribution of disappearances.

| BIC | 66944.58 | 66043.04 | 66948.18 | 66048.97 |

All continuous predictors are mean-centered and scaled by 1 standard deviation. Standard errors are heteroskedasticity robust. *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05.

Figure 4.3 provides further evidence to support the claim. Taking Model 2 of Table 4.2 as the point of reference, it shows that disappearances above the mean decrease turnout substantially and significantly if the rest of the variables are held constant. Thus, expected voter turnout drops from 45% when disappearances are 0 cases per municipality per year to 36% when they reach 100 cases per municipality. The relevance of this effect is more noticeable when compared with the predicted effect of homicides: the change from 0 to 100 homicides barely made a difference of 1% in voter turnout. This result is substantial and holds in different specifications, available in Appendix C. In summary, disappearances have a negative effect on voter turnout, as the hypothesis claimed.

Why do disappearances have a bigger effect on voter turnout than homicides? From my perspective, there are three reasons to note. First, disappearances involve more crimes and illegal activities than homicides. In consequence, it is more related to the whole criminal underworld. In practice, the nature of disappearances makes them a very underreported crime –which is the obvious intention of the perpetrators whenever they disappear someone. Second, although the relatives of the disappeared usually do not involve themselves in electoral politics, they still communicate that crimes are happening in society through stickers on the streets, social media posts, and other forms of protest. Finally, disappearances last for longer in the social memory than homicides. Some of the relatives of the disappeared could keep the search and the memorial of their beloved ones for years. Consequently, it is something that the community could remind for longer than homicides.

Figure 4. 3. Predicted effect of disappearances and homicides on electoral turnout
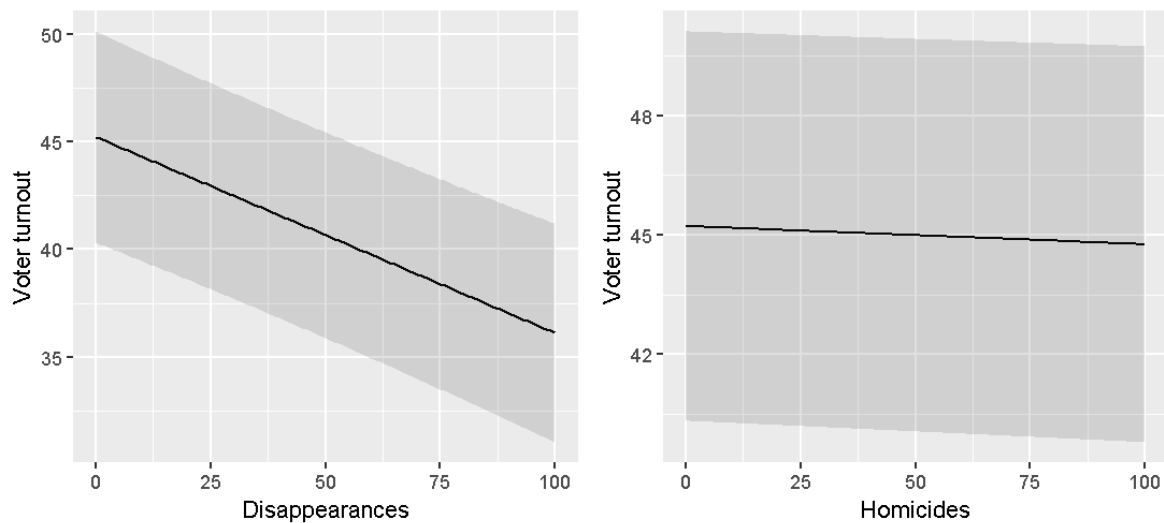
Figure 4.4 summarises the significant results of Table 4.2. The models have similar behaviours among them. Contrary to expectations, the results do not support the variables related to the baseline model when applying fixed effects by time and space. Table 4.2 does not support the claim that better sociodemographic conditions and more electoral competitiveness increase turnout. Also, as Table 4.2 has highlighted, the coefficient of homicides is an interesting finding because it shows that they are not more relevant to voter turnout than disappearances. It is important to highlight that municipality size does affect voter turnout.[80] Further research is required on the matter.

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[80] However, as Table C.4 in the Appendix C shows, it depends on whether fixed effects are applied at state level or municipality level.

Figure 4. 4. Coefficients on voter turnout
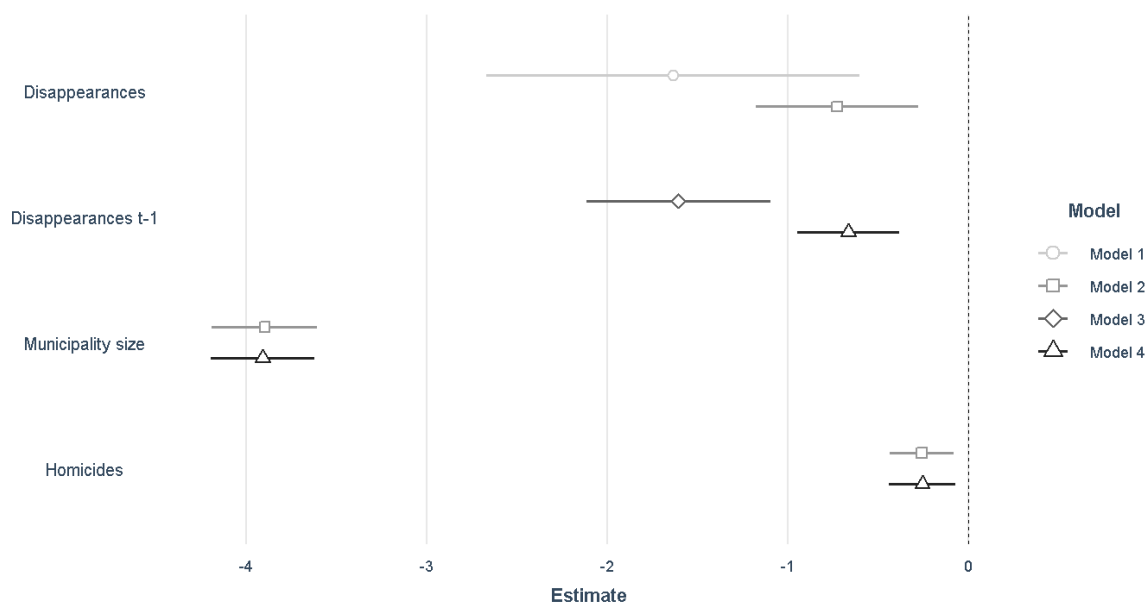
4.5. Conclusions

Voter turnout is crucial for political regimes because it influences political power distribution. Elections provide legitimacy (Lijphart, 2012), shape power distribution, and influence policies and public services implemented by authorities (Soto Zazueta and Cortez, 2014). Studies on voter turnout have paid attention to electoral violence – the situation where perpetrators intentionally try to shape electoral outcomes – as a determinant. However, the side effects of violence on elections have received less attention. The manuscript analyses the impact of disappearances, a type of crime with a different logic than others because perpetrators try to hide previous violence. Although the usual perpetrators are state agents through forced disappearances, this chapter is focused on disappearances under criminal violence contexts, where perpetrators are mostly territorial criminals. Consequently, *do disappearances affect voter turnout?*

The manuscript argues that *disappearances decrease voter turnout* because the crime does not mobilise relatives and victims in electoral politics pointing out the inefficiency of authorities to the rest of society due to the particular nature of the disappearances. The manuscript supports the hypothesis by using original data with information on disappearances and elections at the municipality level during the Mexican' war on drugs'. The result holds using different measures and specifications. Moreover, disappearances substantially decrease voter turnout when their number reaches dozens in a municipality, much higher than visible crimes, like homicides.

This result should be a wake-up call for politicians. While disappearances look like a good option for criminals – because they obtain rewards for their previous violence while avoiding public attention – they do not look very suitable for politicians. They do not evade the cost of their incapacity to protect the electorate, even if they are less urged to solve it or if they find it more acceptable than visible crimes because the media cannot focus on them (Amnesty International, 1981; Sanz, 2022). The policy implication of this chapter points out that authorities can lose legitimacy and damage the political system if they play criminals' games and avoid the topic. Disappearances are corrosive to the whole system, even if these authorities do not want to see this.

4.6. Appendix C

Table C. 1. Descriptive stats of variables

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Turnout	8785	57.86	14.43	0	100
Disappearances	8785	0.98	7.97	0	411
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Social deprivation index	8785	0.03	1.02	-1.97	5.47
Margination index	8785	0.03	1.01	-2.36	4.84
Concurrence of the election	8785	1.04	1.06	0	3
Municipality size	8785	1.21	1.16	0	4
Homicides	8785	8.58	56.52	0	3766

Figure C. 1. Distribution of regional disappearances (RNPED, 2018)
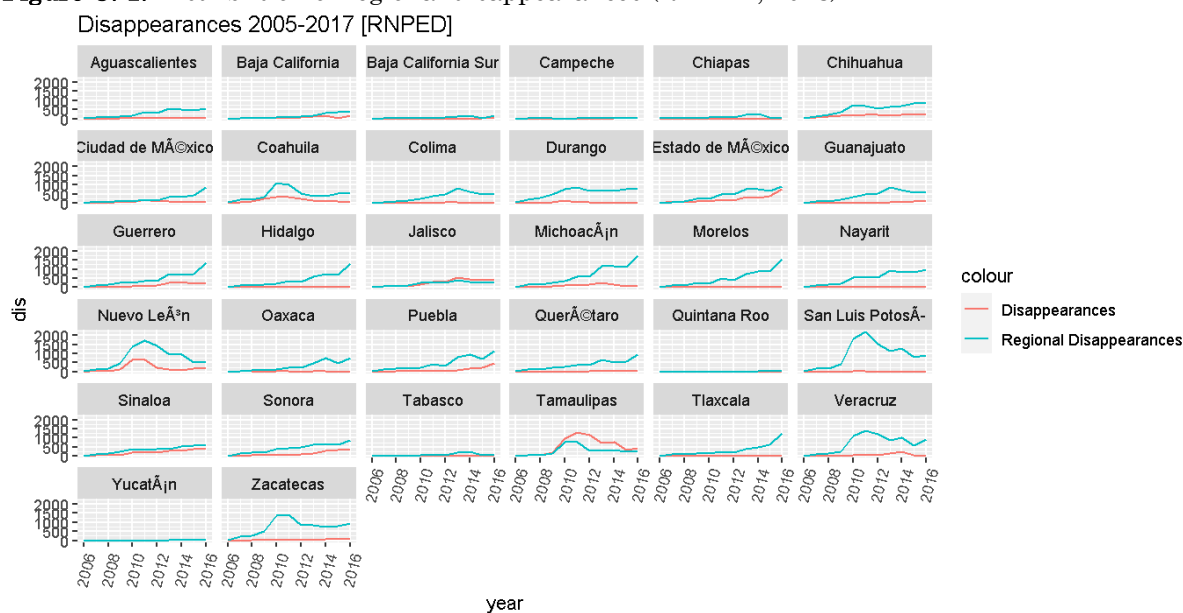
Figure C. 2. Map of disappearances rate by Mexican state in 2005 (RNPED, 2018)

Figure C. 3. Map of disappearances rate by Mexican state in 2017 (RNPED, 2018)
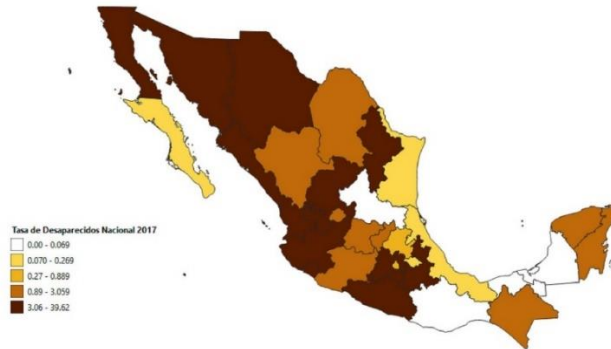
Table C. 2. Pearson's correlation of variables

	Turnout	Disappearances	Disappearances t-1	Disappearances rate	Percentile change on disappearances	Homicides	Social deprivation index	Margination index	Concurrence of the election	Municipality size
Turnout	1.00									
Disappearances	-0.07	1.00								
Disappearances t-1	-0.05	0.67	1.00							
Disappearances rate	-0.01	0.26	0.15	1.00						
Change in disappearances	-0.04	0.33	-0.01	0.27	1.00					
Homicides	-0.07	0.36	0.37	0.06	0.20	1.00				
Social deprivation index	-0.14	-0.14	-0.14	-0.10	-0.08	-0.13	1.00			
Margination index	-0.08	-0.16	-0.17	-0.10	-0.09	-0.15	0.96	1.00		
Concurrence of the election	0.32	-0.03	-0.02	-0.01	-0.02	-0.01	-0.02	-0.01	1.00	
Municipality size	-0.07	0.25	0.25	0.07	0.12	0.27	-0.42	-0.47	0.02	1.00

Figure C. 4. Disappearances distribution (RNPED, 2018)

Table C. 3. OLS models on voter turnout in Mexican mayoral elections (random effects)

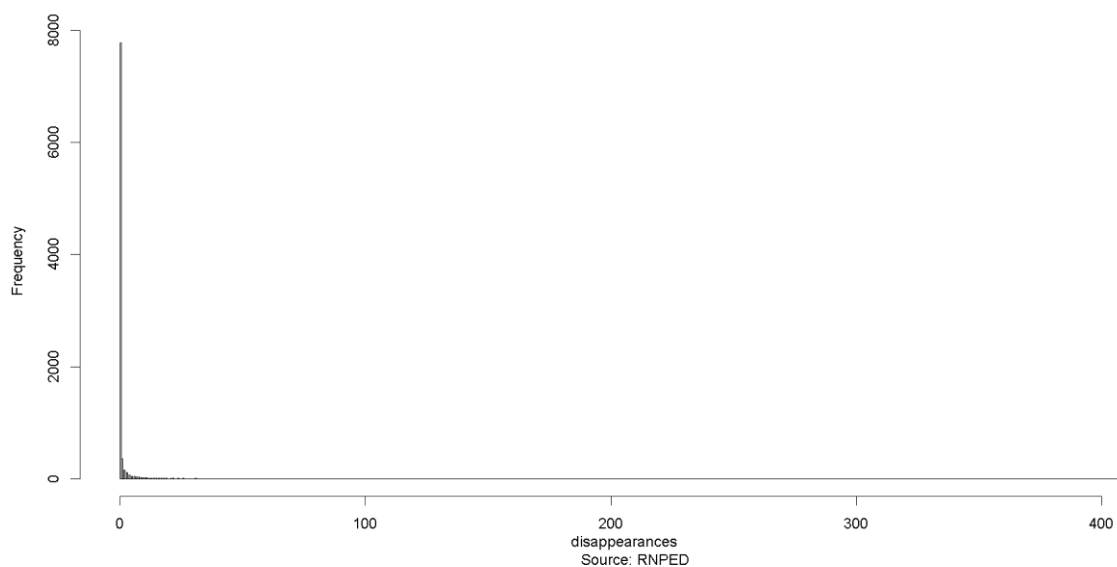|	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Disappearances	-0.12 ***	-0.06 **	-0.06 **			
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)			
Disappearances t-1				-0.12 ***	-0.05 *	-0.04
				(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Social deprivation index		-2.87 ***			-2.87 ***	
		(0.15)			(0.15)	
Margination index			-2.09 ***			-2.08 ***
			(0.16)			(0.16)
Concurrence		4.30 ***	4.34 ***		4.31 ***	4.34 ***
		(0.13)	(0.14)		(0.13)	(0.14)
Municipality size		-1.76 ***	-1.55 ***		-1.79 ***	-1.58 ***
		(0.14)	(0.15)		(0.14)	(0.15)
Homicides		-0.01 ***	-0.01 ***		-0.01 ***	-0.01 ***
		(0.00)	(0.00)		(0.00)	(0.00)
Constant	58.01 ***	55.79 ***	55.48 ***	57.99 ***	55.80 ***	55.49 ***
	(0.16)	(0.26)	(0.26)	(0.16)	(0.26)	(0.26)
N	8785	8785	8785	8785	8785	8785
State fixed effects	No	No	No	No	No	No
Year fixed effects	No	No	No	No	No	No
r.squared	0	0.14	0.13	0	0.14	0.13
adj.r.squared	0	0.14	0.13	0	0.14	0.13
AIC	71948.1	70580.15	70794	71961.75	70586.56	70799.93
BIC	71962.26	70622.64	70836.49	71975.91	70629.05	70842.42

All continuous predictors are mean-centered and scaled by 1 standard deviation.
Standard errors are heteroskedasticity robust. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Table C. 4. OLS models on voter turnout in Mexican mayoral elections (Municipalities' fixed effects)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Disappearances	-0.07**	-0.07***	-0.07***			
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)			
Disappearances t-1				-0.07***	-0.06***	-0.06***
				(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Social deprivation index		-6.46***			-6.41***	
		(0.97)			(0.97)	
Margination index			-1.73			-1.73
			(1.07)			(1.07)
Concurrence		3.61***	3.58***		3.60***	3.58***
		(0.33)	(0.33)		(0.33)	(0.33)
Municipality size		-0.72	-0.51		-0.72	-0.52
		(0.71)	(0.71)		(0.71)	(0.71)
Homicides		-0.01**	-0.01**		-0.00*	-0.00*
		(0.00)	(0.00)		(0.00)	(0.00)
N	8785	8785	8785	8785	8785	8785
Municipality fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
r.squared	0.75	0.76	0.76	0.75	0.76	0.76
adj.r.squared	0.66	0.67	0.67	0.66	0.67	0.67
AIC	64315.61	64001.39	64134.53	64316.65	64007.22	64138.74
BIC	80469.77	80182.58	80317.02	80470.81	80188.41	80321.23

All continuous predictors are mean-centered and scaled by 1 standard deviation.
Standard errors are heteroskedasticity robust. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Table C. 5. OLS models on voter turnout in Mexican mayoral elections (State' fixed effects)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Disappearances	-0.21***	-0.09***	-0.09***			
	(0.04)	(0.01)	(0.01)			
Disappearances t-1				-0.24***	-0.10***	-0.10***
				(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Social deprivation index		0.55			0.55	
		(0.81)			(0.81)	
Margination index			0.88			0.87
			(0.83)			(0.83)
Concurrence		3.58	3.57		3.57	3.56
		(2.55)	(2.54)		(2.55)	(2.55)
Municipality size		-3.37 ***	-3.23 ***		-3.38 ***	-3.24 ***
		(0.59)	(0.54)		(0.59)	(0.54)
Homicides		-0.00 *	-0.00 *		-0.00 *	-0.00 *
		(0.00)	(0.00)		(0.00)	(0.00)
N	8785	8785	8785	8785	8785	8785
State fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
r.squared	0.46	0.51	0.51	0.46	0.51	0.51
adj.r.squared	0.46	0.51	0.51	0.46	0.51	0.51
AIC	66640.05	65710.21	65725.97	66643.65	65716.14	65732.31
BIC	66944.58	66043.04	66058.82	66948.18	66048.97	66065.16

All continuous predictors are mean-centered and scaled by 1 standard deviation.
Standard errors are heteroskedasticity robust. *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05.

Figure C. 5. Coefficients of Table C.5
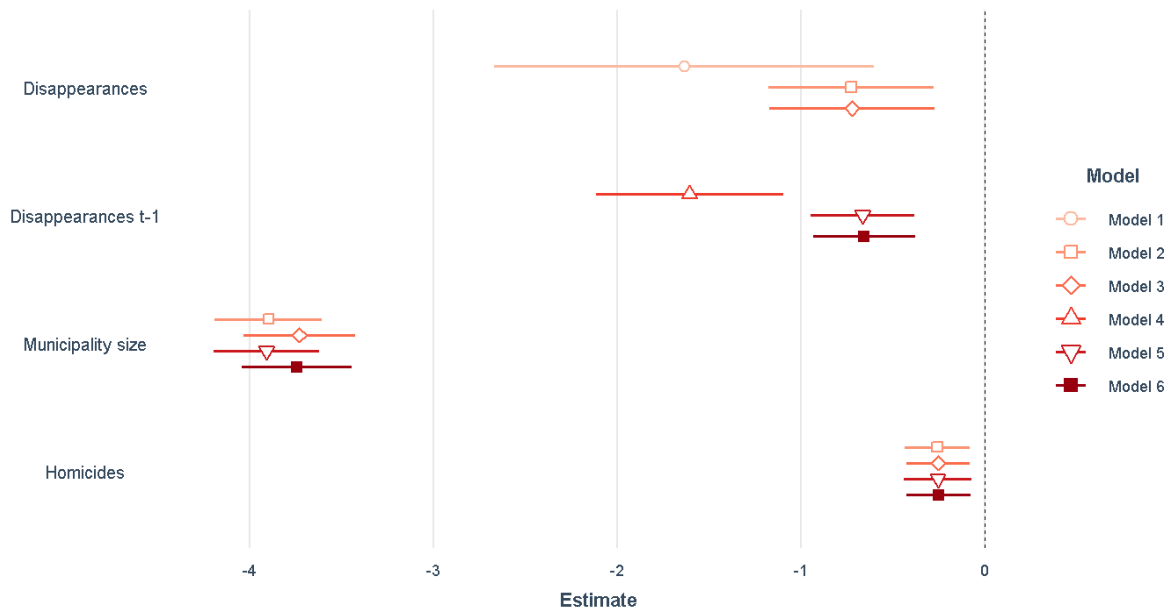
Table C. 6. OLS models on voter turnout in Mexican mayoral elections (Disappearances rate + State' fixed effects)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Disappearances rate	-0.11***	-0.09 ***	-0.09 ***			
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)			
Disappearances rate t-1				-0.09***	-0.06 ***	-0.06 ***
				(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Social deprivation index		0.54			0.55	
		(0.81)			(0.81)	
Margination index			0.86			0.87
			(0.82)			(0.82)
Concurrence		3.55	3.55		3.52	3.52
		(2.54)	(2.54)		(2.54)	(2.54)
Municipality size		-3.48 ***	-3.33 ***		-3.49 ***	-3.34 ***
		(0.60)	(0.55)		(0.60)	(0.55)
Homicides		-0.01 *	-0.01 *		-0.01 *	-0.01 *
		(0.00)	(0.00)		(0.00)	(0.00)
N	8785	8785	8785	8785	8785	8785
State fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
r.squared	0.45	0.51	0.52	0.45	0.51	0.51
adj.r.squared	0.45	0.51	0.51	0.45	0.51	0.51
AIC	66755.82	65690.62	65705.28	66787.74	65720.89	65736.33
BIC	67060.35	66023.45	66038.13	67092.26	66053.71	66069.18

All continuous predictors are mean-centered and scaled by 1 standard deviation.
Standard errors are heteroskedasticity robust. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

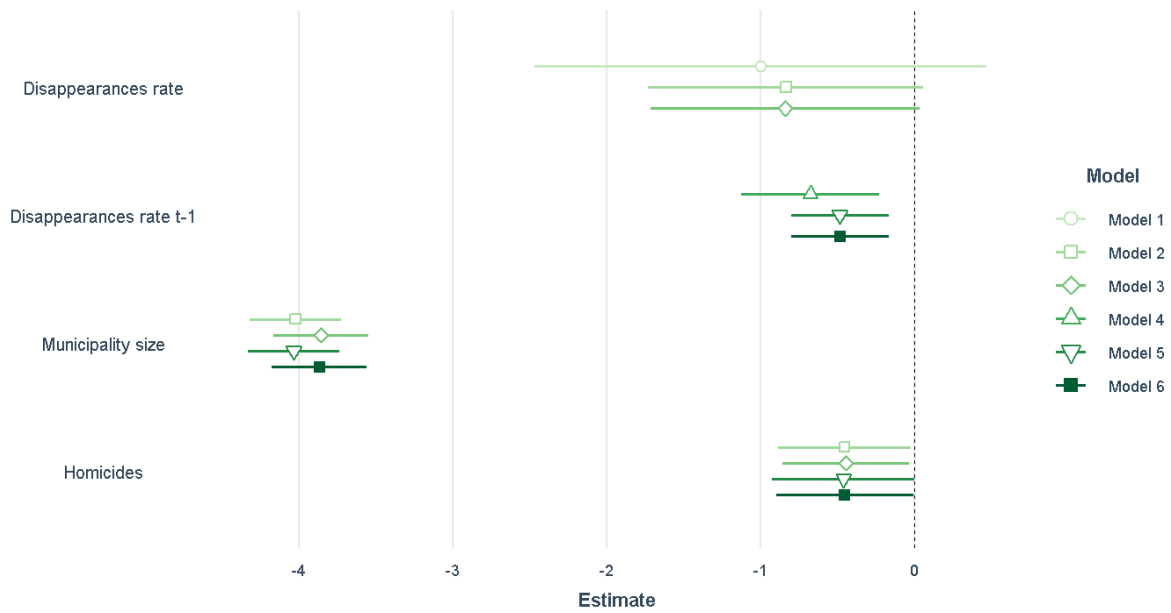**Figure C. 6.** Coefficients of Table C.6

Figure C. 7. Predicted effect of disappearances rate on voter turnout, according to table C.6
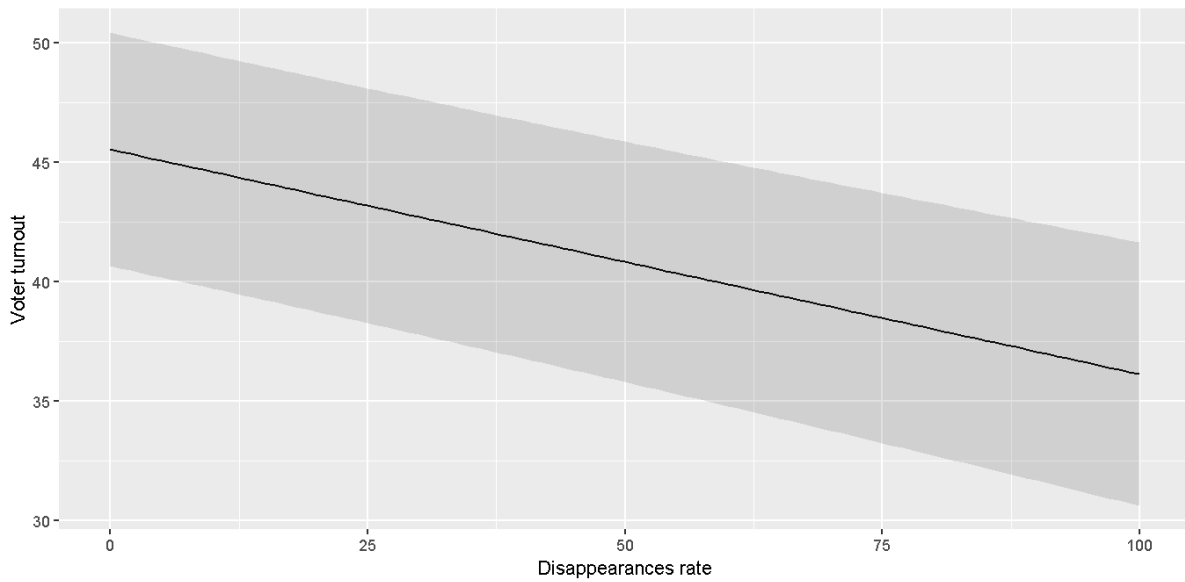
Table C. 7. OLS models on voter turnout in Mexican mayoral elections (Percentile change in disappearances + state' fixed effects)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Change in disappearances	-0.003***	-0.001**	-0.001**			
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)			
Change in disappearances t-1				-0.01***	-0.004***	-0.004***
				(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Social deprivation index		0.56			0.55	
		(0.81)			(0.81)	
Margination index			0.89			0.88
			(0.83)			(0.82)
Concurrence		3.54	3.53		3.58	3.57
		(2.53)	(2.53)		(2.53)	(2.53)
Municipality size		-3.49 ***	-3.34 ***		-3.46 ***	-3.31 ***
		(0.60)	(0.55)		(0.60)	(0.55)
Homicides		-0.01 *	-0.01 *		-0.01 *	-0.01 *
		(0.00)	(0.00)		(0.00)	(0.00)
N	8785	8785	8785	8785	8785	8785
State fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
r.squared	0.45	0.51	0.51	0.45	0.51	0.51
adj.r.squared	0.45	0.51	0.51	0.45	0.51	0.51
AIC	66797.33	65739.65	65755.21	66782.74	65735.7	65751.49
BIC	67101.86	66072.48	66088.07	67087.27	66068.53	66084.35

All continuous predictors are mean-centered and scaled by 1 standard deviation.
Standard errors are heteroskedasticity robust. *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05.

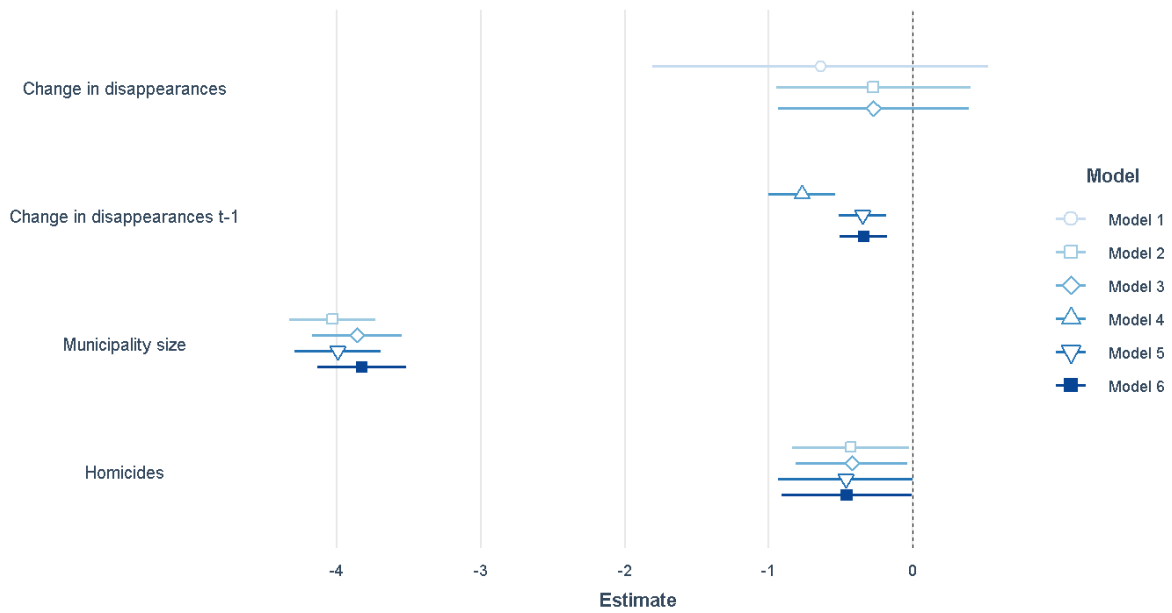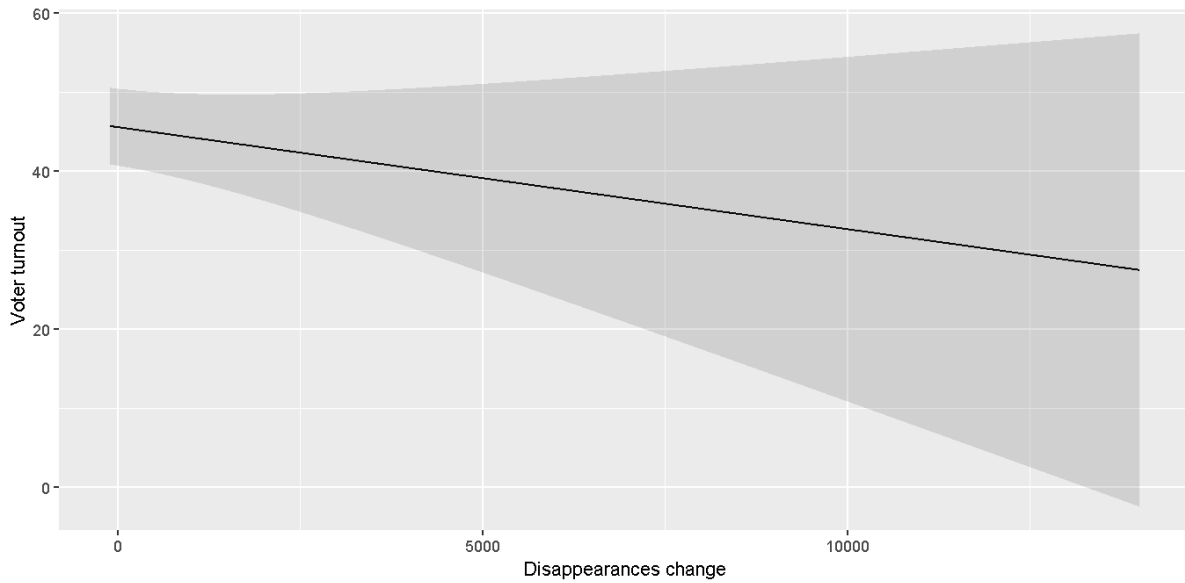**Figure C. 8.** Coefficients of Table C.7

Figure C. 9. Predicted effect of percentile change in disappearances on voter turnout, according to table C.7

5. Conclusion

How does the environment of criminal violence and state weakness affect human rights? My thesis studied the effects of that combination on physical abuse in society. The topic is relevant because we know little about the impact of this environment on human rights, although there are many examples around the world. Scholars have focused on traditional conflicts, such as civil or international wars. In contrast, criminal violence has been less studied, even if these Violent Non-State Actors (NSA) have plenty of access to resources to acquire firepower and infiltrate state agents, undermining the state and its protection of human rights.

This is the case in Mexico. President Felipe Calderón started a 'war on drugs' in 2006, with military operations against criminal organisations. This campaign introduced Mexico to the effects of an armed conflict, in terms of casualties and brutal violence (Kalyvas, 2015), and catalysed the previous weakness of the Mexican state, generated after a combined process of merely electoral democratisation and decentralisation without sufficient resources (Hernández, 2008).

Specifically, the main argument of my thesis is that the scenario of criminal violence combined with Mexican state weakness creates adverse conditions for the physical integrity of society. From my perspective, it is a self-reinforcing situation. Criminal organisations extract resources and rents from society, including politicians, authorities and business people. Although the state is so damaged, weakened and even coopted by criminals, its survival is not in danger, even though authorities are menacing, because criminals are interested in controlling local governance (Trejo and Ley, 2020).

As a result, the Mexican state cannot protect society, which is its original reason for existence (Weber, 2008). Furthermore, the state is on the side of the abusers when they respond brutally or when criminals coopt them (Aguayo et al., 2017; Pereyra, 2012).

Consequently, this environment provokes human rights abuses to society from different actors. People receive regular physical aggression from state agents and criminals. In one sense, this context affects the physical integrity of state agents, encouraging their human rights abuses, putting them in survival mode due to their vulnerability against criminals, and providing incentives for their cooptation. In another sense, the environment makes people more vulnerable, with dozens of different types of crimes surrounding them, and also creates the necessity to hide those abuses. Naturally, the environment provokes citizens' distrust of governments, making it harder to make authorities accountable and disincentivising them to strengthen the state.

5.1. Findings

This environment has had severe effects in terms of human suffering and institutional damage. First, it has multiplied violence across the Mexican territory. In only a few years, criminal violence has moved from a few events in specific areas of the country to expanding across the whole territory, reaching the major cities, spreading fear and casualties everywhere. Second, the criminals have weakened Mexican state capacities, even taking de facto control of considerable areas of Mexican territory, making those local authorities follow their instructions. Third, the state has mimicked the actions and strategies of criminals (Aguayo et al., 2017; Pereyra, 2012), or has been coopted by them, creating a grey zone of criminal governance (Trejo and Ley, 2020) where it is very difficult to distinguish authorities from criminals.

I develop the former argument in three empirical chapters. In chapter two, I argue that the state's physical abuse is a response to criminal threats due to the state agents' survival being at risk, although criminals are not trying to overcome the state. Next, I argue that state capacities are crucial in shaping state response. To test my hypotheses, I collected original data from human rights agencies in the Mexican states obtained through transparency requests. I found that the criminal violence and security dimension of state capacities increase violations of physical integrity and have an amplified effect when those components interact. In contrast, administrative capacity does not affect abuses.

Combining official data on disappearances with information on the presence of criminal organisations (Animal Político, 2020; Phillips, 2015), I analyse the determinants of disappearances in the context of criminal violence in chapter three of this thesis. Building upon qualitative studies, given the absence of quantitative studies on the matter, I show that political competition is more critical to disappearances than criminal competition is.

Finally, I analyse the people's response to disappearances during elections in chapter four. Since perpetrators use disappearances to be unnoticed, I use official data on disappearances and elections at the municipality level to show that disappearances decrease voter turnout. I argue that disappearances_are associated with lower voter turnout because they do not mobilise relatives and victims in electoral politics, while at the same time, I point out the inefficiency of authorities on the rest of society due to the particular nature of the crime.

5.2. Contributions

This thesis makes three main contributions. First, it improves the knowledge of the determinants of human rights abuses, including the effects of non-traditional conflicts in the matter. It enhances the knowledge of criminal violence, a non-

traditional type of conflict where Violent NSA pursue profitable goals (Berti, 2018), in contrast of traditional conflicts where Violent NSA are looking for political goals, such as rebels or terrorists. Furthermore, my research focuses on territorial criminals, who differ from paradigmatic cases of criminality, such as Italian or Russian mafias, since territorial criminals in Mexico have a much broader portfolio that ranges from drug selling to avocados' selling (Dehghan, 2019).

Second, it adds to the knowledge of the state's role in its relationship with criminal violence, analysing the effects of the state's features on human rights abuses. Previous research has focused on the political regime types to determine human rights (Carey, 2009; Davenport, 1999; Davenport, 2007; Fein, 1995). This thesis improves our knowledge by studying the relationship between state capacities and partisan coordination across governments in federal systems.

Third, it makes theoretical and empirical contributions to studying the repertoire of violence. In this sense, the thesis improves the knowledge of the types of violence used in criminal violence contexts, although it could be helpful to analyse other conflicts, such as civil wars. The thesis focuses on the side effects of criminal violence, analysing types of violence that authorities and criminals try to hide or make invisible. Specifically, I found ways to study violations of physical integrity by adapting previous studies (Beer and Mitchell, 2004) with original data, and making one of the first attempts to study disappearances from a quantitative perspective (Osorio et al., 2018), building upon qualitative studies and journalist reports, looking for broader explanations of the matter.

5.3. Policy implications

The results of this thesis point out an eroding process of the Mexican state. The environment of criminal violence and state weakness in Mexico works just for

the criminal side. The situation should be a wake-up call for politicians and authorities. Their tolerance of criminality, or cooptation in many cases, is an excellent situation for criminals because they obtain the gains from using customary violence to run their businesses, while avoiding the costs it.

The game does not work for authorities and politicians. They are not avoiding the costs of their incapacity to protect society. Furthermore, they could also be victims of criminal violence, especially when criminals try to make a visible statement to them or try to conquer a territory. Even more important, they are not fooling anyone because society is aware of the violent context, even if it has become usual nowadays, creating conditions for the losing of legitimacy by the state.

Consequently, the human rights situation in Mexico is not improving. It is even worsening. What can we do? There are two different opportunity areas. The first level is that, ideally, the Mexican state should improve its capacities to gain a chance to re-establish peace. I assume that any future policy implications should consider Mexican violence as a particular armed conflict and make a decision based on this. Consequently, expanding administrative capacity is a first step to improving security because it would increase the resources available to use force with fewer people suffering. European history shows constant conflicts were indispensable for building modern European states (Tilly, 1985). From my point of view, expanding administrative capacity is the first step to extending security resources to contain and restrain criminal organisations. In other words,

The second opportunity area concerns concrete action now. From my perspective, two actions are the most urgent. First, the Mexican state should collect and provide data on this hidden violence. Otherwise, any attempt to fix the situation would lack a proper diagnosis and not involve academia, victim's collectives and civil society. I understand that both types of violence that I studied are

complicated to measure because violations to physical integrity and disappearances are measures of wrongdoing that perpetrators try to hide and deny. Consequently, they are underrepresented because reporting them are voluntary actions that not all victims undertake. Second, there is evident urgency to improve Mexican state capacities. At least, the professionalisation of security forces is a must when facing criminal violence. The results in chapter two show that improving security capacity could diminish state violence. The professionalisation of security forces would strengthen the Mexican state, making their security forces more efficient and robust against criminal challenges to the authority of force. Additionally, scholars have shown that partisan use of security usually leads to more violence (Phillips 2015; Osorio 2015; Trejo and Ley, 2016). My research confirms that premise in less visible types of violence, such as disappearances and physical abuses by state agents. For me, further research seems urgent to identify opportunity areas to improve coordination across authorities at the local level, and to identify their inabilities to provide security to their citizens.

5.4. Limitations and future research

The study of human rights abuses under criminal violence faces different challenges for scholars. The main one is the availability and richness of the data. Although this could be addressed by applying models for counted variables, as I did, I think this is a glimpse of the hidden and undesired nature of this violence. Also, I think the problem with data is transversal to Mexican public administration because there are differences among the Mexican states on the quality and availability of data. For instance, even vote counting, organised by well-funded agencies such as electoral authorities in Mexico, shows considerable differences in data quality and availability.

However, some of these limitations are opportunities because there are research fields to be developed. For example, although the Mexican case has certain particularities that do not apply to other countries -especially the proximity to the US market, which increases the resources and activities of criminals and improves their access to firepower- my results are applicable in other cases, because the combination of profit-oriented Violent NSA with a weak state, the cornerstone of my thesis, exists elsewhere. In that sense, many conflicts worldwide involve these two elements.

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