

Observatory of the National Guard and Militarization in Mexico

Mexico is facing a process of accelerated militarization, which implies a violation of the rule of law, of our system of guarantees and of the country's democratic structure.

The current government has deepened militarization to an unprecedented level in modern Mexican history. This can be observed in three simultaneous processes: acceleration of the militarization of public security; the overflow of the functions of the Armed Forces; and militarism as a political project.¹

Contrary to the speech about pacification and campaign promises, the federal government deepened the action of the Armed Forces in public security, particularly through the National Guard, a military corporation². The federal government also assigns them responsibilities and projects that belong to the civil sphere³. Even more serious, their actions are following a political project with military characteristics.

This new stage of militarization opens at least five risks. First, the deepening of militarization in public security may increase human rights violations. Second, the strengthening of Armed Forces weakens local police forces, particularly with budget reductions and elimination of municipal funds, but also with the incorporation of military personnel in managerial positions. Third, the overload of responsibilities in public security and other areas is likely to affect the public image of Armed Forces. Fourth, the new roles could generate a rift within the Armed Forces. Fifth, the Armed Forces are responsible for matters related to national security and emergencies, clearly defined by law; today, the federal government is using them for a political project.

It is important to point out the growing opacity of the Armed Forces. In this regard, *Causa en Común* carries out a permanent transparency exercise through requests of information related to the various statements made by the president and officials during the morning press conferences regarding security. During 2020, 42% of the responses related to the Armed Forces did not allow verification of statements made during the conferences. The most opaque institution was the Secretary of Security and Citizen Protection: 66% of its responses did not allow verification. Regarding the National Guard, 32% of its responses did not allow verification.

¹ This process is known as “new militarism” which consists of a new type of intervention by the Armed Forces in governments and political decision-making, mainly, but not exclusively, on public security issues, no longer forcibly, but this time by invitation of the democratically elected rulers. See also: Ríos Figueroa, Julio. “The New Militarism”. Nexos, March 1, 2019.

² The constitutional reform of March 2019 that created the National Guard allowed the Armed Forces with the possibility of conducting public security tasks in an extraordinary, regulated, supervised, subordinated and complementary manner for the next 5 years. However, in May 2020, the Agreement that would regulate the actions of the Armed Forces does not mention details about their “extraordinary, regulated, supervised, subordinated and complementary” participation. It allows the Armed forces to self-supervision by having omissions and contradictions within the operation criteria and the actions that Armed Forces must follow in security issues.

³ Among many others, the functions of the immigration police, those of control and operation of customs and ports, and major civil construction works stand out.

The Armed Forces, will not solve the country's public security crisis. Mexico needs to implement an urgent program for police development, nation-wide actions to prevent violence and to place victims and human rights at the center of the security strategy.

The Observatory of the National Guard and Militarization in Mexico, comprised by social organizations, academics and journalists, will continue to gather, classify and analyze official and media information. The objective is to raise public awareness regarding the insufficiencies and dangers of the militarization process in Mexico.

The page of the observatory is:

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