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Paul Ashby

NAFTA-land Security: The Mérida Initiative,
Transnational Threats, and U.S. Security Projection in
Mexico

Thesis submitted for the Award of PhD in International Relations at the
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List of Abbreviations & Acronyms

AECA Arms Export Control Act

AOR Area of Responsibility

ARNORTH U.S. Army North

C-TAPT Customs-Trade Partnership against Terrorism

CBP Customs and Border Protection

CDG *Cartel del Golfo*

CISEN *Centro de Investigación y Seguridad Nacional*

CN Counternarcotics

CNTE *Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación*

COIN Counterinsurgency

CRS Congressional Research Service

CSI Container Security Initiative

CT Counterterrorism

CTFP DoD Counter-Terrorism Fellowship Program (Section 2249c)

DDAA Defense Department Authorization Act(s)

DEA Drug Enforcement Administration

DoD United States of America Department of Defense

DoE United States Department of Energy

DFS *Dirección Federal de Seguridad*

DHS United States Department of Homeland Security

DSCA U.S. Defense Security Cooperation Agency

DoS United States of America Department of State

DoT United States of America Department of the Treasury

DTOs Drug Trafficking Organizations

EPR *Ejército Popular Revolucionario*

ESF Economic Support Fund

EXBS Export Control and Border Related Security

EZLN *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*

FAA Foreign Assistance Act

FAM *Fuerza Aérea Mexicana*

FAST Free and Secure Trade Program

FBI Federal Bureau of Investigations

FDI Foreign Direct Investment

FMF Foreign Military Financing

FMS Foreign Military Sales

FMTR U.S. DoS / DoD Foreign Military Training Report

FY Fiscal Year

GAFEs *Grupo Aeromóviles de Fuerzas Espaciales*

GAO United States Government Accountability Office

GATT General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs

GDP Gross Domestic Product

GNP Gross National Product

GWOT Global War on Terror

HLED U.S.-Mexico High-Level Economic Dialogue

HR Human Rights

HS Homeland Security

HSC Homeland Security Council

HVT High-Value Target

IACHR Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

IFI International Financial Institution

IMF International Monetary Fund

INCLE International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement

INEGI *Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía*

INL United States Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs

IPE International Political Economy

IR International Relations

ISI Import Substitution Industrialisation

JSOC Joint Special Operations Command

MI Mérida Initiative

MOOTW Military Operations Other than War

MTT Mobile Training Team

NADR (U.S.) Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related Programs

NAMSI North American Maritime Security Initiative

NASP North American Security and Prosperity Plan

NAVSCIATTS U.S. Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School

NCAGS Naval Cooperation and Guidance for Shipping

NCIS U.S. Naval Criminal Investigation Service

NDDA National Defense Authorization Act(s)

NDU National Defense University

NORAD North American Aerospace Defense Command

OECD Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development

OFAC United States Office of Financial Asset Control

ONDCP Office of National Drug Control Policy

PAN *Partido Acción Nacional*

PNR *Partido Nacional Revolucionario*

PRD *Partido de la Revolución Democrática*

PRI *Partido Revolucionario Institucional*

PRM *Partido de la Revolución Mexicana*

PSRAT Port Security Risk Assessment Tool

SAP Structural Adjustment Program

SATMO U.S. Security Assistance Training Management Organization

SCT *Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes*

SEDENA *Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional*

SEGOB *Secretaría de Gobernación*

SEMAR *Secretaría de la Marina*

SENTRI Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection

SIVA *Sistema de Vigilancia Aérea*

SLD US DoE's Second Line of Defense

SNTE *Sindicato Nacional Trabajadores de la Educación*

SPP Security and Prosperity Partnership

SSP *Secretaría de la Seguridad Pública*

SOA U.S. School of the Americas (see WHINSEC)

SOF Special Operations Forces

STPRM *Sindicato de Trabajadores Petroleros de República Mexicana*

TCOs Transnational Criminal Organizations

TOC Transnational Organized Crime

UN United Nations

USAF United States Air Force

USCG United States Coast Guard

USSOCOM United States Special Operations Command

USNORTHCOM / NORTHCOM United States Northern Command

USSOUTHCOM / SOUTHCOM United States Southern Command

WB World Bank

WHA DoS Bureau for Western Hemisphere Affairs

WHINSEC U.S. Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation

WMD Weapons of Mass Destruction

WOLA Washington Office on Latin America

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This project is dedicated to the memory of my friend Scott Harmes, who never grew tired of telling me what a waste of time it all was, and the journalist Charles Bowden, whose work inspired me to write it.

Abstract

This thesis explores recent U.S. bilateral aid to Mexico through the Mérida Initiative (MI), a \$2.3 billion assistance commitment on the part of the United States (U.S.) officially justified as helping Mexico build its capacity to take on violent drug cartels and thereby improve security in both countries. There has been a good amount of engaging work on the MI. However this extant literature has not undertaken detailed policy analysis of the aid programme, leading to conclusions that it is a fresh approach to the Mexican counternarcotics (CN) challenge, or that CN is a ‘fig leaf’ for the U.S. to pursue other ‘real’ goals. This is a core gap in the literature this project seeks to fill. Through policy analysis, I make an empirically supported argument that Mérida is a *component* of a far more ambitious policy agenda to regionalise security with Mexico more generally. This *involves* stabilising Mexico itself, *not least* in response to serious drug-related violence. However the U.S. also aims to improve its own security by giving greater ‘depth’ to its borders, *and* seeks protect the political economy of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) from variegated security threats. In this way, recent U.S. policy in Mexico is both derivative of its wider grand strategic traditions in stabilising key political economies in line with its interests, and representative of some distinct developments stemming from the deeply integrated U.S.-Mexican economy as part of NAFTA. To assure U.S. interests accrued to it through the increasingly holistic North American economy, the U.S. has used the MI as the main vehicle in the construction of a nascent ‘NAFTA-land Security’ framework.

Introduction

The Mérida Initiative in U.S.-Mexican Relations

“What does seem clear is that the person who killed and mutilated these three poor women is the same person, said Pedro Negrete. Well, find him and put an end to this goddam business, said the mayor. But discreetly, if I may make one request, without sending anyone into a panic, said the man from the chamber of commerce.”¹

The Puzzle and Research Aims

The MI was announced in October 2007 by the administrations of President George W. Bush and President Felipe Calderón. Initially it was envisioned as a three year, \$1.4 billion commitment on the part of the U.S. to Mexico² to help the latter’s fight against drug trafficking and the violent groups or ‘cartels’ who engaged in it.³ In that announcement, the U.S. and Mexican administrations stated they would, “make it a priority to break the power and impunity of drug and criminal organizations that threaten the health and public safety of their citizens and the stability and security of the region.”⁴ Funds were appropriated through the MI in 2008, with the vast majority in terms of amounts taken up by military equipment,⁵ but also facilitating greatly increased levels of training for Mexican security forces, police, and judiciary.⁶ This complemented increased security spending by Mexico. It also supported a militarised strategy undertaken by Calderón that involved the widespread deployment of Mexico’s military.⁷ The administration of President Obama continued and deepened the policy beyond the original commitment, and total appropriations for the MI now stand at around \$2.3 billion in Fiscal Year (FY) 2014, with more likely to come.⁸ Although Obama’s administration shifted the aid towards institutional support and away from expensive military equipment, the stated rationale has remained the same. It is currently officially described as being a bilateral partnership designed to, “fight organized crime and associated violence while furthering respect for human rights and the rule of law.”⁹

¹ Roberto Bolaño 2666 (Picador, 2009) p.471

² In its early years, the Mérida Initiative also included aid for Central American countries, but this became separately administered.

³ There are a lot of definitional debates involved in Mexico’s security crisis. There is some reluctance to use the nomenclature ‘cartel’ for the groups that traffic and produce drugs through and in Mexico, because they do not work together or set prices. I will use it throughout the project for ease of reference, and to differentiate myself from official U.S. descriptors of these groups.

⁴ U.S. Department of State *Joint Statement on the Mérida Initiative* (Washington D.C. 22nd October, 2007)

⁵ Based on figures used by Security Assistance Monitor, which is an invaluable tool for researchers of U.S. security aid, almost 80% of the aid between 2008-2010 was military / police based. Note that the figures here are from the U.S. Department of State Budget Requests and differ slightly from official Mérida Initiative appropriations figures (provided in Chapter Five), however the ratio remains similar.

⁶ See Chapters Five and Six.

⁷ For an excellent brief overview of the adoption of Calderón’s strategy and its fallout, see Paul Kenny and Mónica Serrano ‘Transition to Dystopia’ in Paul Kenny and Mónica Serrano with Arturo Sotomayor (eds.) *Mexico’s Security Failure: Collapse into Criminal Violence* (Routledge, 2011) p.72-80

⁸ Clare Ribando Seelke and Kristin M. Finklea *U.S.-Mexican Security Cooperation: The Mérida Initiative and Beyond* (Congressional Research Service, April 2014) p.7

⁹ U.S. Department of State ‘Merida Initiative’ <http://www.state.gov/j/inl/merida/> Accessed 19.08.14

In essence the aim of this project is to explore and uncover the intentions of U.S. policy with regard to the MI. The initial spark for this aim is quite simple - the aid has now continued for almost seven years, and yet on its key stated performance indicators, it has spectacularly - and tragically - come up short. With regard to the security of Mexican citizens, the casualty figures in Mexico over the course of the MI are catastrophic. Whilst there is a good deal of controversy about statistics for homicide in Mexico, not least as the country's impunity rate is consistently reported as being at over 90%,¹⁰ by any measure the loss of life since Calderón launched his crackdown in 2006 is shocking. Perhaps the best indicator of this is the jump in the *overall* homicide rate from 8.1 per 100,000 in 2007 to 23.1 in 2011.¹¹ Overall, there were 121,683 homicides in Mexico from 2007-2012 (the Calderón administration's years in power), a total, as Molloy points out, that compares with countries stricken by

¹⁰ There are a number of issues that should invite caution with the data on drug-related killings. According to several estimations, Mexico's criminal impunity rate is staggering. Heinle, Rodriguez Ferreira and Shirk state that only 25% of crimes are even reported, whilst 98% go 'unpunished'. See Kimberly Heinle, Octavio Rodriguez Ferreira and David A. Shirk *Drug Violence in Mexico: Data and Analysis Through 2013* Justice in Mexico Project (University of San Diego, April 2014) p.13 This statistic is backed by a number of sources. In 2010, *El Universal* reported that only 5% of drug executions had *even been properly investigated*. In 2012 the United Nations (UN) estimated that 95% of those arrested for crimes in Mexico since Calderón took power have walked free due to lack of investigative rigour and the Mexican inquisitorial justice system. As an indicative example of why this problem persists, in 2011 there were just 14 homicide prosecutors working on a backlog of *over 8,000* murders in Ciudad Juárez. Apportioning detailed categorisation of murders in this context seems, basically, arbitrary, and a definitive total of 'drug murders' amongst the homicide total appears elusive at best. See Otero, Silvia 'No investigan 95% de muertes en "guerra"' *El Universal* (June 21st, 2010) <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/notas/689120.html> Accessed 10.01.12; Pedro Matias 'Impunidad en México alcanza 95%, alerta oficina de la ONU' *Proceso* (20th January, 2012) <http://www.proceso.com.mx/?p=295536> Accessed 29.01.12; Sandra Rodríguez Nieto 'Abandonan Indagatoria del Asesinato de reportero gráfico de El Diario' *El Diario de Juárez* (September 16th, 2011) <http://www.diario.com.mx/notas.php?f=2011/09/16&id=9dabdfa852a0c14534cbef63d91e6048> Accessed 17.09.11 Thus, whilst the Calderón government released database figures for homicides tied to organized crime during its tenure, they are extremely suspect in their assertions of detail. These problems, which continue into the administration of Enrique Peña Nieto, are summarised in Alejandro Hope 'Why the Mexican Govt's Murder Count is Worse than Useless' *Insight Crime* February 18th, 2013, accessed February 19th, 2013 <http://www.insightcrime.org/news-analysis/mexican-govts-murder-count-worse-useless> Accessed 03.03.13

¹¹ Heinle *et al* *Drug Violence in Mexico* p.6-7 This is based on overall figures for homicide the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía* (INEGI). These numbers have been dropping under the Peña Nieto administration, but as per the footnote above, this still remains troublesome.

warfare and internal instability.¹² The sickening practises of the cartels and their associates are also a complicating factor that likely means this is an undercount.¹³

With regard to the stated aim to ‘respect human rights’, complaints against the Mexican military *increased* in tandem with the MI and their widespread deployment across Mexico. This took place alongside continuing human rights problems in the Mexican police force.¹⁴ Notwithstanding the inherent difficulty in trying to measure the amount of narcotics entering a country (let alone measuring the impact of a particular policy on that flow), the MI continues the larger tragedy of the U.S. ‘War on Drugs’ as a supply-side policy that has failed to effect the amount entering the U.S. enough to be successful in harming availability.¹⁵ A large number of cartel ‘kingpins’

¹² Molly Molloy ‘The Mexican Undead: Towards a New History of the ‘Drug War’ Killing Fields’ *Small Wars Journal* (Aug 21st, 2013) <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/the-mexican-undead-toward-a-new-history-of-the-“drug-war”-killing-fields> Accessed 22.08.13 For example, the (likely low) tally of civilians fatalities in the war in Iraq provided by the respected *Iraq Body Count* put the total between 2003-2012 at 123, 781. Current UN estimates for the dead in Syria in a brutal civil war are 191,000 plus, although over a shorter time period. Iraq Body Count ‘Iraqi Deaths from Violence in 2012’ *Iraq Body Count* <https://www.iraqbodycount.org/analysis/numbers/2012/> Accessed 21.08.14; John Heilprin ‘UN: Death Toll from Syrian Civil War Tops 191,000’ *USA Today* (August 22nd, 2014) <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2014/08/22/united-nations-syria-death-toll/14429549/> Accessed 22.08.14 However this is not to compare the nature of violence and level of instability in these cases - suicide bombings are not a regular occurrence in Mexico City as they are in Baghdad.

¹³ Bodies have been disappeared in various ways. The regular discovery of mass graves (*narcofosas*) is common enough to suggest there are likely many more undiscovered, whilst acidic destruction has also been used. The targeting of migrants from Central America means an extremely vulnerable group may also be being missed in official tallies of the dead. For example, Randal C. Archibold ‘Victims of Massacre in Mexico Said to be Migrants’ *The New York Times* (August 25th, 2010) http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/26/world/americas/26mexico.html?_r=0 Accessed 12.07.14 The Peña Nieto administration released documents showing 25,000 had gone missing under Calderón’s leadership, though it did try to walk back that figure. William Booth ‘Mexico’s Crime Wave has Left About 25,000 Missing. Government Documents Show’ *The Washington Post*, (November 29th, 2012) http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-11-29/world/35584943_1_mexico-city-mexican-government-human-rights Accessed 30.11.12 Mexico has just posted record numbers of kidnappings. Joshua Partlow ‘Kidnappings in Mexico Surge to the Highest Number on Record’ *The Washington Post* (August 15th, 2014) http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/kidnappings-in-mexico-surge-to-the-highest-number-on-record/2014/08/15/3f8ee2d2-1e6e-11e4-82f9-2cd6fa8da5c4_story.html Accessed 15.08.14

¹⁴ Mexico’s National Human Rights Commission - *Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos* (CNDH) - reported 1,800 complaints against the military in 2009, an 890% increase on 2006. This is likely to underestimate the problem given these are just those complaints reported. Seelke and Finklea *Merida Initiative and Beyond* (April 2014) p.27 The problems in Mexico’s police force are more endemic and deep-seated, with wide-spread torture and large problems with corruption. See, for example, U.S. Department of State *Mexico 2013 Human Rights Report* (Washington D.C., 2014); Amnesty International ‘Known Abusers, but Victims Ignored: Torture and Ill-Treatment in Mexico’ *Amnesty International* (2012); Amnesty International ‘Out of Control: Torture and Other Ill Treatment in Mexico’ *Amnesty International* (2014)

¹⁵ Being an illegal activity, the drug trade is extremely difficult to gain reliable information on, from production onwards. U.S. Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report FY2014: Volume I Drug and Chemical Control* (March, 2014) p.21 In the past, the U.S. agencies tasked with interdicting drugs have talked up how interdiction up to the U.S. border has helped drive up price, lessen purity, and thereby decrease the use of drugs. Attributing any of these effects to a particular policy, however, is extremely problematic. In any case, critics have pointed out that enough drugs still enter the U.S. to satisfy demand. In 1997 a U.S. official estimated it only took nine large tractor-trailers full of cocaine to enter the U.S. to satisfy demand for a year. Peter Andreas *Border Games: Policing the U.S.-Mexico Divide* 2nd. edn. (Cornell

have been taken out by Mexican security forces, which the U.S. has proclaimed as success indicator, but experts - and even government officials - have posited this may have helped *increase* violence, and certainly has not significantly reduced it with regard to fatalities.¹⁶ Most alarmingly, the very state institutions that the U.S. is seeking to work with through the MI are highly involved in *all levels* of the drug trade.¹⁷ Finally, on the issue of Mexican stability, in 2013 Peña Nieto deployed troops to the state of Michoacán to deal with rising violence, the state where Calderón first initiated his crackdown almost seven years earlier.¹⁸ Given this context, the main animator of this thesis is *why the policy continues at all*.

Extant Literature & Key Arguments

There are various explanations for the puzzle identified. Despite being numerous and variegated, they fall essentially into two broad positions. Firstly, there is a widespread literature that accepts the official rationale for the MI as a new, bilateral, CN partnership. Secondly, a more critical literature states that in fact CN is a smaller issue compared to, or even a pretext for, a deeper goal to insulate Mexico's neoliberal political economy within NAFTA, especially from potential change from Mexican society. The first welcomes the policy but insists Mexico's security issues are compounded, needing time and ingenuity in policy to work through. The second suggests the policy is, from the U.S. perspective, largely successful in its broader aims. There are useful insights within both broad positions. However the extant literature has not engaged in a *deep policy analysis* of the MI.

This project aims to fill that gap. It contends that once we open up the MI to such analysis, it becomes necessary to reconsider what the policy is intended to do. Policy documentation and official justification shows how the MI is aimed at a wider set of objectives, aiming to build the capacity of the Mexican state to produce and maintain security in a number of areas, including *both* CN and counterterrorism (CT). However, this material also makes clear that there is a wider goal to engage Mexico and pull it into a U.S.-designed North American security architecture that seeks to better protect the U.S. homeland *and* the North American political economy. Whilst Mexico's drug related security crisis itself *has* become increasingly concerning to U.S. policymakers as it has deepened, it has also provided the most successful access point through which the U.S. can achieve its more expansive aims. Mérida is a key policy constituent of a

Publishing, 2009) p. 75 Finally, the MI has never had particularly clear success indicators on this issue. Seelke and Finklea *Merida Initiative and Beyond* p.25-26

¹⁶ See Eduardo Guerrero-Gutierrez 'Security, Drugs, and Violence in Mexico: A Survey' 7th North American Forum (Washington D.C., 2011) p.66-67 Indeed the Peña Nieto administration made this very assertion itself, before continuing the policy.

¹⁷ The evidence for this is irrefutable and multi-scalar, inter-secting with human rights issues. Corruption exists at the highest level of the state to the lowest. I discuss this further below.

¹⁸ Vanda Felbab-Brown *Calderón's Calderon: Lessons from Mexico's Battle Against Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking in Tijuana, Ciudad Juárez, and Michoacán* (Brookings Institute, September, 2011) p. 24-30; Joshua Partlow 'Mexican Army Has Taken Control of Major Port in Effort to Combat Drug Cartel' *The Washington Post* (December 1st, 2013)

http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/mexican-army-has-taken-control-of-major-port-in-effort-to-combat-drug-cartel/2013/11/30/ee768458-523b-11e3-9ee6-2580086d8254_story.html

Accessed 09.08.14; Nacha Cattán and Eric Martin '22 Killed in Western Mexico Shootout in Test for Peña Nieto' *Bloomberg* (July 24th, 2013) <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-07-24/22-killed-in-western-mexico-shootout-in-test-for-pena-nieto.html> Accessed 07.08.14

broader strategy to create a regional security framework, which I term ‘NAFTA-land Security’. I employ this term as it captures something *distinct* about both the NAFTA-zone as a *regional* entity, and encapsulates the fact that a lot of what the U.S. is doing in terms of policy in Mexico effectively extends the concept and strategies of Homeland Security (HS) to the perimeters of the North American political economic region.

Thus, the concept of ‘NAFTA-land’ helps make clear that the passage of the free trade agreement created a distinct political economic space, which can be defined as a *region* subject to *regional dynamics*. Of course, North American regionalism pre-dates NAFTA. Geography dictated that as the U.S. developed it needed to consider security issues arising from its neighbours, and security relations ebbed and flowed through direct competition and war to cooperation and integration. Similarly Mexico and Canada were early sites of U.S. economic expansionism beyond its borders. Paraphrasing Anderson, North America has always been subject to processes and dynamics of regionalism.¹⁹ However, what NAFTA effectively did was to ‘officialise’ North America as a region. It was explicitly regionalist in its aims and intentions, seeking to create a regional economic market. Since that time, the NAFTA zone has become a strategically important trilateral production hub within global capitalism. High levels of economic integration and regionalisation have driven this development along. NAFTA-land Security represents a security response to these realities: an explicit effort to create a *regional security architecture for the NAFTA zone*. Whilst Canada was already able and willing to play a role in this regional arrangement, Mexico was less so. Thus NAFTA-land Security is significantly being built through exporting the concepts and capabilities of HS to the region’s southern partner. What the NAFTA-land terminology helps make clear is the bespoke regional effort by the U.S. to extend HS concepts to NAFTA’s perimeters. Contemporary security aid to Mexico can only be understood with a careful but deliberate focus on North American regionalism and NAFTA as a distinct regional arrangement, and acknowledgement that U.S. strategic thinking is in a very important sense distinctly regional in seeking to protect and secure the NAFTA space.

This argument though begs deeper questions about *why* the U.S. pursuing such a strategy. There is a concomitant depth to the answer here that pre-exists but intersects with regional dynamics. I therefore preempt the policy analysis and its findings with a theoretical and historical discussion of U.S. foreign policy generally, and its relations with Mexico specifically. Taking a historical-materialist approach, I argue for the centrality of U.S. interests in securing and maintaining its position of primacy within a liberal international order, based on U.S. hegemony within open markets and globalised capitalism that it has done much to self-construct. This apex position affords the U.S. significant material and economic benefit *within* that hegemonic system, whilst also benefitting other core powers and transnational capital, but necessitates and pushes significant involvement in international affairs to maintain the order and its stability generally. More specifically, in the global South,²⁰ the U.S. has

¹⁹ Anderson states that North America has always been integrating, however this does not capture disintegrative periods and other complexities in the region. Greg Anderson ‘Security and Sovereignty in Post 9/11 North America’ *Review of International Political Economy* 19, 5 (2012)

²⁰ I follow Blakeley’s use of ‘North and South’ here in understanding them as a useful way to differentiate between those states in the Global North that are generally rich and share liberal (in the

sought to maintain stability and openness to investment and extraction through heavy and often quite brutal involvement, again to the benefit of the U.S.’ continued primacy, its capital and transnational capital, and other core powers. This is especially true in Latin America, which since the Monroe Doctrine has been viewed as the U.S. ‘backyard’ and within its direct sphere of influence.²¹ On one level, Mexico represents an interesting case for U.S. foreign policy in this context. Whilst the U.S. went to war with Mexico for territory in 1846-1848, and directly intervened in its Revolution (1910-1920), for most of the 20th Century U.S. involvement in Mexico was relatively limited. However following severe economic ructions in the 1980s the U.S. directly guided Mexico’s opening up to a less statist, liberalised economy, more welcome to foreign (and U.S.) investment and trade, changes then “locked in”, as Ikenberry puts it, through NAFTA.²²

This was part of a more global development as the U.S. led the shift from broadly Keynesian capitalism to what is popularly termed ‘neoliberalism’ in the 1980s and 1990s, spreading capital’s reaches in the process as the result of the collapse of the USSR. However, U.S. policy towards Mexico again provides an intriguing case within these wider developments. The implementation of NAFTA and the MI fit into U.S. grand strategic designs concerning the creation and maintenance of open markets that are *stable and secure*. Crucially, the level and pervasiveness of Mexico’s drug-related security crisis has become a *destabilising force within Mexico’s political economy*. The MI can thus be connected to the continuity within U.S. foreign relations in seeking to stabilise key political economies to ensure continued investment and extraction. The U.S.-Mexican economic relationship has always been close, and though the level of interaction has waxed and waned, key U.S. interests have straddled recent history, fundamentally based around securing Mexico as an open and stable economic ‘partner’.²³ However, the levels of U.S. involvement in Mexico have been strongest where its economy has been most integrated with Mexico’s, and where the subsequent interests created have been most threatened. There was a great level of economic interaction with Mexico prior to and during the latter’s revolutionary period,

broad political sense) political systems, and those in the South that are generally poorer, whilst appreciating that it is a broad-brush term that covers over important nuances and shifting global trends. However ‘North and South’ also allows one to capture how there are disparities of wealth *within* the North and South also, as well as between them. Ruth Blakeley *State Terrorism and Neoliberalism: The North in the South* (Routledge, 2009) p.2-3 As countries traditionally understood as part of the South rise and grow economically the U.S. has for the most part attempted to pull them into the wider liberal order. However there has also been a keenness to assert and maintain dominance, with financial power being used to assert the rules of the game, and a temptation in some quarters to confront the exemplar of the rising economic powers, China. On financial power, see, for example, Peter Gowan *The Global Gamble: Washington’s Faustian Bid for World Dominance* (Verso, 1999) On the neoconservative desire to confront China more robustly (not exactly followed through in Bush’s presidency) see The Project for the New American Century ‘Rebuilding America’s Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources For a New Century’ *Project for the New American Century* (September, 2000) p.19

²¹ On an official level, as U.S. ambitions in Latin America predate the famous Doctrine. For a fantastic overview of these ambitions, see Lars Shoultz *Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy Toward Latin America* (Harvard University Press, 1998) Of course U.S. influence is argued to be waning in Latin America following the ‘pink tide’ of democratically elected leaders following more statist development courses and collapse of the (neoliberal) Washington Consensus in macroeconomics.

²² G. John Ikenberry *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order After Major Wars* (Princeton University Press, 2000) p.240-244

²³ Albeit the ‘partnership’ has been historically balanced towards the interests of the U.S.

and U.S. involvement in and with Mexico was high. Currently, with economic integration with Mexico again at high-levels due to regionalisation processes connected to NAFTA, U.S. involvement on security questions is once again increased, reflecting the interest in securing and stabilising a strategically important political economy.

The security logic borne out of Mexico's neighbourly proximity has also been given added impetus by the events of 9/11 and renewed U.S. focus on what it has termed its HS. This post 9/11 HS focus has revolved around deep rethinks on how the U.S. achieves its own security. This goes beyond the physical security of the U.S. mainland. The U.S. has become increasingly concerned about how it secures open global economic chains, and its own openness to capital, goods, and people that are integral to its strategic success and global hegemony. This has been challenging as various transnational threats have been empowered by the same increasingly open and interconnected global trends of economic globalisation. The attempted solution to what is perceived as a new security environment has been to 'push U.S. borders outward' and defend HS 'in depth' through cooperation with other nations, and capacity building of allies' security institutions. However, it is here where we see the specificity of NAFTA-land Security most clearly. In North America the effort has been especially rigorous due to the depth of economic integration, and thus the U.S. has sought to create a regional security solution that pushes a security perimeter to NAFTA's border. The MI fundamentally interlocks with these aims. Thus, economic interactions and interests within NAFTA provide a push towards protecting that North American political economy - or NAFTA-land - *itself*. Therefore, three *interacting* logics underpin the MI and the effort to coordinate with Mexico to improve its wider security capacities within NAFTA land Security; stabilise Mexico and insulate *its* political economy from internal and external threats (to include drug-related violence), give greater depth to U.S. borders to better secure its own HS, and regionalise security arrangements across North America to gird *its* political economy against threats.

The final question that emerges through this project's aims and arguments is whether the MI, and the wider aim to drive to regionalise security, can be said to be 'working'? This takes me back to the original basis of the puzzle, the continuing instability and violence in Mexico itself. This is in fact the most complex question within the research project. The answer, at one level, is provided in the policy analysis itself and the argument already sketched out. The U.S. *has* succeeded in involving itself in Mexican security at an unprecedented level, and the integrative agenda, both on (intertwined) issues of economics and security, is in good health. Mexican security forces and policymakers are being actively convinced to adopt and adapt to U.S. security aims and practises. The continuance of the policy makes perfect sense on this level, and can be seen as a success. We need to consider the policy from the perspective of the U.S., and therefore we need to ask *what kind* of security the U.S. is striving to achieve. Despite the stated concern for 'citizen security' and counterdrug rationales, the overriding aim is the creation of a regional security framework where the most important aim is protecting the political economy of Mexico and, by extension, North America. Again, NAFTA-land Security helps us to capture this strategic logic - the security of the North American political economic free trade arrangement and economic / strategic interests within it outweighs and encapsulates (but does not erase) efforts to improve 'citizen security' or CN in the limited sense of harm reduction. This

is the thesis' key original finding. Nonetheless there are impediments to even this aim, not least the continued instability in Mexico. It also becomes legitimate and necessary to ask normative questions about citizen security and human rights (HR) in Mexico.

Research Questions

To summarise the above, here are the key research questions spelled out clearly.

Research Puzzle

Why has the United States continued to provide security assistance to Mexico even as the security situation has deteriorated on a number of indices?

Research Question

What are the aims of the United States in its increased provision of military, police, institutional and economic/social aid to Mexico under and associated with the MI?

Sub-Questions

- *Why is the U.S. seeking to regionalise security with Mexico under NAFTA-land Security arrangements?*
- *How important are CN concerns in this effort?*
- *Is the MI working? Or, more accurately, is the NAFTA-land Security project 'working'?*

Chapter Structure

The remainder of this chapter will focus on how the research is designed, its originality, methodology and some key concepts, through which I introduce the contemporary context of U.S. policy. From then on the project proceeds in this fashion:

Chapter Two - Literature Review: A Drug War Rationale, or a Drug War Pretext?

This chapter provides a detailed overview of the extant literature on the MI. I divide it into two broad groups, those who see Mérida as animated by a drug-war rationale, and those who the CN element as a pretext for the securing of other goals, namely the protection of Mexico's unequal economy from potential change from below. I also look at how both groups have connected Mérida to North American economic integration. I identify some of the gaps in the extant literature, including how it has not satisfactorily related the Mérida policy to the wider context of North American integration or theorised U.S. interests in Mexico within that context. This omission stems from the key gap in the extant literature, in that it has not looked at the policy *itself* in detail.

Chapter Three - Theorising U.S. Interests and the Projection of Security in Mexico

This chapter starts to build my case for looking at the MI more holistically with a focus on its context. It starts with basic building blocks with an extensive discussion of the state, how the state has interests, and how those interests are formulated. I take in

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insights from across International Relations' (IR) theoretical spectrum and use them to construct my own conceptions, based on a critical realist ontology and a historical-materialist approach. I then move onto U.S. foreign policy specifically, and show how it revolves around a consistent grand strategy designed to ensure U.S. primacy through the hegemonic construction and maintenance a liberal capitalist international order. This allows me to trace the connections and continuities with regard to U.S. foreign policy in and with Mexico. In turn I also show how this bilateral relationship (like most) is in some crucial ways unique. Most important here is the sharing of a 2000-mile border, and the deep integration catalysed by NAFTA. I explore how these facts have created distinct interests, and inspired contingent policies to meet them based on the regionalisation of security under 'NAFTA-land Security' arrangements.

Chapter Four - '...So Close to the United States...' The U.S.-Mexican Relationship in History

In this chapter I show how the U.S. has sought the core interests of openness and stability identified in Chapter Three in Mexico over the course of the twentieth century. I discuss how the U.S. intervened in the course of the Mexican Revolution to try and influence events in a favourable direction for U.S. interests - stability, and a regime open to U.S. investment and trade. I look at how Mexico remained a stable if proudly sovereign partner during the Cold War, and explore how Mexico's profound economic crisis allowed the U.S. the space and opportunity to open it up to *more* trade, investment, and U.S. influence, a process culminating in NAFTA. I weave key issue areas, not least narcotics, through this narrative. The goal here is to establish the continuity of interests in Mexico that are congruent with deep trends within U.S. foreign policy. I finish the narrative with the beginning of heightened U.S. involvement in Mexico's security.

Chapter Five - The SPP and the Logic of NAFTA-land Security

This chapter builds from the point of NAFTA's adoption to continue the empirical argument, and interweave it with the theoretical claims. Examining the fallout from the 9/11 terrorist attacks, it shows how concepts of layered security and security projection began to be employed in an effort to secure both the U.S. mainland and the open economic chains crucial to U.S. strategic success. Within North America these questions were especially profound due both to neighbourliness, and the deleterious effects 9/11 had within the North American political economy. Almost immediately the U.S. response was based around extending a security perimeter around North America to both better protect both the U.S., and the U.S.' interests within the North American economy. Several policies were employed to achieve this. The Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) is key to revealing the regional security goals, but was complemented by other programmes. The chapter also discusses how Mexico and its part in the North American economy remain vital to U.S. strategy and is in fact set to become more important. This sets the stage for the policy analysis of the MI, which should be seen *within* NAFTA-land Security logics.

Chapter Six - Mérida Initiative Policy Analysis

This chapter is a detailed analysis of the MI itself. It is based first and foremost on publicly available official material used to show that the MI is openly more than a CN programme, and instead part of a drive to create North American security. Thus I

make explicit connections between the logic of NAFTA-land Security and the MI. This involves a consideration of some of the indicative policy ‘on the ground’. Crucially I show how the MI connects up a number of different interlocking programmes all aimed at improving regional security in North America.

Conclusions - Is Mérida Working?

I conclude by summarising the key findings of the research, which answer the research questions set out above. The MI continues as a core component of the NAFTA-land Security construction process. However, is that process working with regard to its goals to improve security and stability in North America? I suggest, that the U.S.’ wider aim to integrate Mexico into NAFTA-land security arrangements has thus far been successful in terms of the inculcation of Mexico as an active NAFTA-land Security partner. Nonetheless I explore the limitations of this, based around the irrefutable fact that Mexican security remains fragile on a number of indices. I use this as a base to suggest looking at the policy from a normative perspective, and consider how it remains a troubling approach for human rights and civil-military relations in Mexico. I look at what the research has been unable to consider due to limitations of space and focus, and the prospect for future research.

Research Design: Ontology, Methodology, Scope and Limitations

Ontology & Epistemology

There are of course some assumptions within the broad summary of this research project above that I need to unpack. As Archer states, it is necessary to be clear about the ontological commitments within a research project, as they will impact upon the “explanatory” methodology employed.²⁴ As Stoker and Furlong put it questions of ontology and epistemology are a “skin” shaping the approach of research.²⁵ This thesis proceeds with a philosophically (as opposed to IR)²⁶ realist ontology, in that I understand there to be social phenomena prior and separate to our involvement in them and understanding of them,²⁷ and that these phenomena include (unobservable in and of themselves but nonetheless real) social structures that strongly influence social behaviour.²⁸ This is important because with regard to the explanatory basis of this project, I am arguing for the key role of *interests* in motivating U.S. action. Interests, as I explore further in Chapter Three, spring in large part from complex social structures constituted by material and ideational elements. In essence, deeper, unobservable, and complex causal processes are at work in helping to create U.S.

²⁴ Margaret S. Archer *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach* (Cambridge University Press, 1995) p.4

²⁵ Paul Furlong and David Marsh ‘A Skin not a Sweater: Ontology and Epistemology in Political Science’ in David Marsh and Gerry Stoker [eds.] *Theory and Methods in Political Science* 3rd edn. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) p.184

²⁶ An always important distinction to make in IR projects that predicate themselves on philosophical realism. I use Realists / Realism when talking about IR theoreticians, realists / realism in the philosophical sense. This is something I extend to ‘liberal’ in a general, political-philosophical sense, and ‘Liberal’ in IR theory.

²⁷ Andrew Sayer *Method in Social Science: A Realist Approach* 2nd edn. Revised (Routledge, 2010 [1984]) p.viii

²⁸ *ibid* p.4

policy. Such an understanding stems from, and necessitates, my use of a “deep ontology”, predicated on a critical realist philosophy of social science.²⁹ In getting at the *why* questions of this project, a depth ontology is necessary, because observables can only tell us so much.³⁰ This is important for the theoretical work I do in this project to establish the causal role of U.S. interests in the MI and NAFTA-land Security.

Thus, whilst my project is largely an empirical attempt to highlight and explain the ‘surface phenomena’, i.e. observable U.S. policy, it proceeds with an implicit understanding that these phenomena occur as the result of complex and contingent interactions of multi-causal inputs on a number of levels, that include (but are not limited to) ideology, discourses, rules, norms, economic interests, historical events, personalities and so on. Much of this becomes congealed within social structures that ‘push and pull’ actors (in this case U.S. policymakers) in certain directions, but of course all action requires agency, and structures are not fully determinative of how agency is employed. Again this is directly important in my theoretical discussion in Chapter Three that forms an integral part of the explanatory power of this thesis. Thus, my understanding of structure and agency is *informed* by Archer’s realist morphogenetic approach, whereby structure and agency are neither prioritised ontologically, nor conflated, but instead seen as distinct strata irreducible to one another. This allows me to look at the *interplay* between structure and agency involved in social action. The project focuses its explanatory elements on the *interests* of the U.S. state, which exist in that challenging space at the mechanistic nexus between structure and agency.³¹ Policy in pursuit of interests is both structurally and agentially informed, and thus in the theoretical element of the project I draw on established theory and observable U.S. behaviour and connect it to meta-theoretical discussion about structures and interests, and try to make conclusions. I then carry these forward into the empirical section of the project, which is a deep policy analysis of U.S.-Mexican relations and the MI implicitly (rather than explicitly applying, say, Archer’s approach, or critical realism, throughout the policy analysis).

This is important because my argument and originality depends on my claims that this project represents a *stronger* empirical argument about the MI, and its core section revolves around empirically evidenced claims. In establishing how I consider interests to work in a macro-theoretical sense within a critical realist ontology I distance myself from a naïve ontological empiricism in recognising initially that these observables

²⁹ Milja Kurki *Causation in International Relations: Reclaiming Causal Analysis* (Cambridge University Press, 2008) p.11

³⁰ *ibid* p.118

³¹ Archer *Realist Social Theory* p.14-16 Without tumbling too far down the rabbit hole, we should of course acknowledge that social structures are just that - socially constructed (albeit within material conditions). However I am looking at U.S. foreign policy *now* and thus social structures are a pre-existing fact prior to actors, however they came to be. I don’t need to follow the approach in the project itself as the focus is on establishing interests as emergently causal in their emanation from social structures. Plus others have stated the fact that structures and agency are not co-constitutive but irreducible with distinct properties. See Jonathan Joseph ‘Philosophy in International Relations: A Scientific Realist Approach’ *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 35, 2 (2007) p.356; Douglas V. Porpora ‘The Four Concepts of Social Structure’ in Margaret Archer, Roy Bhaskar, Andrew Collier, Tony Lawson and Alan Norrie [eds.] *Critical Realism: Essential Readings* (Routledge, 1998) p. 339-355

spring in large part from unobservable phenomena. However, some deeper questions associated with the post-positivist turn in IR around ‘knowledge claims’³² and the relationship between ontology and epistemology in terms of how we “hook up” to independent reality³³ interject themselves here. Critical realism proceeds with the understanding that an independent reality we can produce (competing) knowledge claims about does exist, but those knowledge claims can only ever be made based on subjective experience and within a pre-existing social position as part of wider social reality. We are therefore implicated in the world, too, and not neutral in our observations.³⁴ Plus our claims they are always fallible. How then is my argument stronger given my pre-configured social position, implication in the world, and inherent fallibility?

Our subjective access to the world and implication within it this is precisely why we need scientific inquiry to *help us try* to bridge the gap between independent reality and subjective experience, and intersubjective shared meanings and knowledge that do not equate with reality.³⁵ In comparison to the privileging of ideas, discourses, and shared meanings in constructivist or poststructural accounts, or of empirical observables in positivist ones, critical realist ontology asks why some constructions have more power than others, and asserts that this is because of the enabling and constraining powers of a complex and stratified independent reality with observable *and* unobservable causal depths.³⁶ Thus some knowledge claims are also stronger than others precisely because they measure up to this independent reality (or a particular referent or object) in more convincing (but still fallible) ways, something we can get at through judgmental rationalism.³⁷ This project therefore proceeds from these ontological and epistemological commitments to suggest it can offer a convincing appraisal of the case and questions it is concerned with. It does this through a deep and extensive case study policy analysis, using a historiography that draws heavily on primary documentation and historical narrative, informed by a prior explanatory theoretical discussion that posits, through informed critique, inference and argumentation, the links between U.S. interests, social structures, and its foreign policy. These of course are sketches across controversial meta-theoretical issues, but offer guidance to the project (rather than a straightjacket).

³² Steve Smith, Ken Booth and Zalewski, Marysia [eds.] *International Theory: Postivism and Beyond* (Cambridge University Press, 1996) Milja Kurki and Colin Wight ‘International Relations and Social Science’ in Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki and Steve Smith [eds.] *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity* Third Edition (Oxford University Press, 2013) p. 20-32 Kurki and Wight refer to the post-positivist turn as the fourth debate in IR, which they see as ongoing.

³³ Patrick Thaddeus Jackson *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations: Philosophy of Science and its Implications for the Study of World Politics* (Routledge, 2011) p.26-32

³⁴ Critical realism is thus epistemologically relative and encourages plurality in method.

³⁵ Kathryn Dean, Jonathan Joseph, John Michael Roberts and Colin Wight ‘Realism, Marxism and Method’ in Kathryn Dean, Jonathan Joseph, John Michael Roberts and Colin Wight *Realism, Philosophy and Social Science* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) p.3

³⁶ Joseph ‘Philosophy in International Relations’ p.354

³⁷ Colin Wight *Agents, Structures and International Relations* (Cambridge University Press, 2006) p.37-45; Colin Wight ‘MetaCampbell: the Epistemological Problematics of Perspectivism’ *Review of International Studies* 25, 2 (1999); Garry Potter & Jose Lopez ‘General Introduction: After Postmodernism The New Millennium’ in Jose Lopez & Gary Potter *After Postmodernism: An Introduction to Critical Realism* (The Athlone Press, 2001) p.27-38

Initial Concepts: Ontology, Causality, and Interests

As should already be clear, the aims of the project are quite tightly focused, with a clear but limited explanandum - U.S. aid to Mexico. Also, I have already stated that U.S. interests are key in what I consider to be the explanans of that aid. They are therefore conceptualised as causal. Although causality has enjoyed recent reappraisal in IR,³⁸ placing interests at the centre of the research in an explanatory, causal capacity is likely to raise some red flags. IRs' dominant paradigms - (Neo) Realism (Neo) Liberalism - have been charged with flattening out 'interests' to a degree that they become unhelpful generalities (e.g. 'security') that ignores the social aspect involved in their formulation.³⁹ There is a (soft) positivist or Humean aspect here, in that some structural Realists especially have constructed law-like regularities around what a state's interests are given anarchic conditions.⁴⁰ However, some of the sharpest work identifying the problems in Realism has in turn reduced interests to epiphenomenons of ideas held by actors and / or provided by ideational structures. In this way, actors *define* their interests, a process that can lead to the gradual creation of inter-subjective meanings and ideational structures that constrain and compel actions. Material factors here are under-theorised or even left out, with the power of the ideational itself holding the trump card, for example in the axiom that, "security is what actors make it".⁴¹ Thereby structures are hollowed out and reduced to ideational constituents, voluntarism is risked, and our ability to assess the mechanisms that exist *between* structure and agency is denuded.⁴²

In Chapter Three I proceed with the understanding that in some sense interests are 'out

³⁸ Kurki *Causation in International Relations*; Erika Cudworth and Stephen Hobden 'Of Parts and Wholes: International Relations Beyond the Human' *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 41, 3 (2013); Nazya Fiaz 'Constructivism Meets Critical Realism: Explaining Pakistan's State Practice in the Aftermath of 9/11' *European Journal of International Relations* 20, 2 (2014); Andrew Bennett 'The Mother of all isms: Causal Mechanisms and Structured Pluralism in International Relations Theory' *European Journal of International Relations* 19,3 (2013)

³⁹ For example, see Martha Finnemore *National Interests in International Society* (Cornell University, 1996); Jutta Weldes *Constructing National Interests: The United States and the Cuban Missile Crisis* (University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Peter J. Katzenstein *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (Columbia University Press, 1996); David Campbell *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* Rev Edn. (University of Minnesota Press, 1998); Richard Jackson *Writing the War on Terrorism: Language, Politics, and Counter-Terrorism* (Manchester University Press, 2012) Also see Kurki's discussion in *Causation in International Relations* p.126-127 I contend this charge is truer of structural or Neo- variants of Realism and Liberalism, rather than their classical antecedents, and contemporary neo-classical Realism has taken some steps to overcome it. I examine this further in Chapter Three.

⁴⁰ See above footnote. For example, see Mearsheimer's five assumptions about international relations (A, or more accurately the interaction of A¹, A², A³ etc.) and claims about self-interested, aggressive (and tragic) state behaviour (tends to = B) that flows from them. John Mearsheimer *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2001) p.30-31 However, like many of his neo-Realist peers, in actuality Mearsheimer uses these as guides and places a much bigger role on domestic politics than the theoretical assumptions suggest, especially regarding his work on U.S. foreign policy. Again, also see Kurki's discussion on rational choice within structural Realism and game theory modelling. Kurki *Causation in International Relations* p.106-108

⁴¹ Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge University Press, 2003) p.48

⁴² I go onto make these points in greater detail in the thesis, but see Doug Stokes 'Ideas and Avocados: Ontologising Critical Terrorism Studies' *International Relations* 23, 85 (2009); Douglas V. Porpora 'Critical Terrorism Studies: A Political Economic Approach Grounded in Critical Realism' *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 4, 1 (April, 2011); Kurki *Causation in International Relations* p.137,

there' as they are materially *and* ideationally constituted and are given by real and complex social structures and actors positions within them. These structures, and interests embedded within them, pre-date individual actors.⁴³ Interests have an *emergent* causal power in that actors are compelled to *try* to identify them (albeit through subjective processes) and act to *try* and achieve them. The process of *achieving* interests is therefore social and subjective. However although actors can misidentify interests, or may indeed miss them altogether (hence their emergent rather than determinative character), this will involve long-term and/or short-term costs and / or (at least) consequences as a result of structural realities.⁴⁴ Interests, then, are understood as crucial mechanistically, and since critical realism sets out much of its methodological basis in, "identifying and describing the mechanisms through which things work"⁴⁵ I focus on them in an explanatory sense. This does not mean interests are deterministic; instead they are contingent, and dependent upon historical specificities at any one given time.⁴⁶ In addition when we investigate the social we are dealing with an open causal system, in which any number of myriad factors can interrelate with any number of others. However, the use of a 'deep ontology' that recognises "the reality and causal nature of such aspects of social life as rules, norms, ideas, reasons, discourses, as well as, importantly 'structures of social relations'"⁴⁷ can help situate interests as mechanisms within a rich explanatory context.

Historical Materialist Framework

With these points in mind, the project will proceed with a broadly historical materialist theoretical underpinning. I consider economic factors, and social relations within capitalism, as crucial (but not determining) elements in the firmament of social life. Both historical materialism, and a view of causation based in a critical realist philosophy of science, lend themselves to historical narrative as the method for revealing the interacting mechanisms by way of explanation.⁴⁸ This is especially true of the unobservable elements that may make up these mechanisms, as we can only come to know them through their effects, and hence may only get at them through a mixture of theoretical abstraction, hypothesising, and empirical observation of the effects themselves.⁴⁹ As I detail further below, in this case this means analysing policy and making connections to historical-materialist theory that places interests at the centre of U.S. policymaking, whereby the observable elements bolster that theory. In this I will be following a broadly culturally Marxist approach, in line with a more Gramscian, Poulantzian, or latterly Jessopian outlook that attempts to account for social life without reducing it to the economic.

This is especially true of the way I conceptualise the state, in that I see it as an institutional structure reflecting a complex historical balance of social forces that nonetheless has crucial functional roles within capitalist social relations, rather than merely an instrument of capitalist class power. This is key to interest formation for states. Again this will be established further in the Chapter Three's theoretical

⁴³ Joseph 'Philosophy in International Relations'

⁴⁴ Wendt *Social Theory* p.56-57;

⁴⁵ Porpora 'Critical Terrorism Studies' p.42

⁴⁶ *ibid*

⁴⁷ Kurki *Causation in International Relations* p.11

⁴⁸ Porpora 'Critical Terrorism Studies' p.42

⁴⁹ Wight *Agents, Structures and International Relations* p.52, 60-61

discussion. I show how contemporary U.S. policy in Mexico fits into existing historical-materialist or Marxian theories of U.S. foreign policy especially, and more broadly those that see the U.S. state's aims as being set on the macro-level by the drive to secure and maintain international primacy. This means I also utilise and take seriously Realist theories, especially neo-classical Realist work,⁵⁰ as well as historical work from the revisionist school of U.S. foreign relations and the insights of IR constructivists.⁵¹

Design, Methodology and Scope of Study: From Theory to Policy Analysis

My work here and in Chapter Three supplies the explanatory basis of the project. However it also further justifies the empirical core of the thesis. Whilst I hold these ontological commitments, this is at heart an empirical project, and simplifications will therefore be made. The theoretical chapter serves to establish these simplifiers so I can busy myself with the empirical work in Chapters 4 to 6, moving from complexity to clarity through the chapter. Whilst the roots of U.S. foreign policy and the MI may be profoundly intricate, the policy itself is quite clear in its aims, and connects quite clearly both to historical continuities in U.S. foreign policy, and 'newer' strategic interests within North America. The design of the project is employed precisely to highlight these links and strongly make these arguments, through historical narrative and policy analysis. This project is a focused qualitative case study, with a tight set of aims that are for the most part bounded within that case study and its literature. I am not intending to construct a new theory of U.S. foreign policy, or even modify existing ones, from this singular case study (which would in any case be an ambitious and fairly unprecedented research design!) Instead I intend to move down from concepts and theory to the case study, in order to employ them to examine the case study itself.⁵²

Within that a number of methods are employed, in line with methodological variety stemming from critical realism.⁵³ The first task methodologically involves making clear some key concepts that underpin the theory used, and animate the whole work (something I have already begun). U.S. foreign policy, as a complex social phenomenon, is constructed through all number of inputs. As Sayer contends, this reality in social science, "throws a huge burden onto abstraction - the activity of

⁵⁰ Neoclassical realism essentially tries to construct theories of *foreign policy*, rather than IR, by looking at both 'unit-level variables' and international structure. Whilst I think the ontology and method could be modified further, the work produced is extremely interesting. I especially engage with Christopher Layne, whose reinvigoration of Appleman William's 'Open Door Thesis' is a challenging and interesting work for historical materialists in IR. I also enter into discussion with the work of Christopher Dueck.

⁵¹ The Revisionist school of U.S. diplomatic history, most famously associated with William Appleman Williams, but also including Walter LaFaber and Gabriel Kolko, built its work around the central premise that underlying logic of U.S. foreign policy was political-economic expansion (and not idealism or containment, though these could be *believed* by actors to be their motivations). Whilst foundational on the left, alongside Layne's work the school has also received renewed wider 'mainstream' attention through the scathing critiques of American empire and militarism by Andrew Bacevich (see footnote 60).

⁵² However I do think some interesting but tentative wider conclusions about the direction of U.S. foreign policy can be drawn from my findings, of which more below.

⁵³ Douglas V. Porpora 'Do Realists Run Regressions' in Lopez and Potter *After Postmodernism* p.543-559

identify particular constituents and their effects.”⁵⁴ I start at this point below therefore, drawing out a little more on some key causal concepts, and some terms that it is important to make clearer at the outset. After reviewing the extant literature, I flesh out my macro-theoretical / conceptual positions further still, focusing on the state, its interests, and subsequent foreign policy and grand strategy. This provides the basis for pulling together a defensible theory of U.S. foreign policy and applying it in a broad way to Mexico. This allows me to make clear the continuities and contingencies involved in NAFTA-land Security. Moving back and forth between the theoretical and empirical is of course an inevitable part of all research, but with regard to the *contingencies* I am making theoretical points ‘ground up’ from the case findings, more in tune with formal case study methods.⁵⁵

I then move onto the empirical section of the thesis. In Chapters Four to Six I employ several methodological tools to help me interrogate the history of U.S.-Mexican relations, the MI, and the NAFTA-land Security project. The aim here is to use historical narrative and what may be termed a ‘depth policy analysis’ to draw out a convincing explanatory case in keeping with the broadly critical realist ontological commitments of the thesis, and the historical materialist theoretical framework. I am keen to show ‘in actuality’ how interests (stemming from social structures significantly based around capitalist socio-economic relations) act as underlying causal mechanisms and drivers that can help explain policy efforts and outcomes. I do this through strongly evidentially backed inference.⁵⁶ For example in, Chapter Four, I use established work and primary documentation in a broad historiography to show that core U.S. strategic interests in the stability and openness of Mexico’s political economy have largely guided its bilateral relations and policies. Extending the historical narrative into ‘the present day’. I trace connections between these established U.S. interests in Mexican political economic stability, whilst highlighting the *deepening* of those interests through economic regionalisation after NAFTA. I show the evidence that NAFTA provoked an almost instantaneous increased U.S. involvement in Mexico’s security affairs. However, as Chapter Five shows, the formation of NAFTA-land Security policies was catalysed by 9/11 and its aftermath; effectively a huge contingency in the historical narrative. The strategic importance and vulnerability of North American economic interdependence was in large part *revealed* to U.S. policymakers through the terrorist attacks. Again, historical narrative allows me to show the complex developmental process leading to NAFTA-land Security, taking in contingencies and complications to offer a rich explanatory milieu, whilst holding onto the historical materialist insight that U.S. interests stemming from capitalist social relations have acted as a core driver for its policies.

Thus, whilst the work in these chapters focuses on U.S. interests in a clear and straightforward manner, the theoretical and ontological depth of Chapter Three that shows the complex roots of these interests forms its backdrop. However, providing evidence for the centrality of U.S. strategic interests is harder to do with contemporary security policies, simply because the material available is different in content, form,

⁵⁴ Sayer *Method in Social Science* p.2

⁵⁵ Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen *Process Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines* (University of Michigan, 2013) p.3, p.146-157

⁵⁶ Beach and Pedersen *Process Tracing Methods*: p.1-5

and scope, and is lacking the benefit of historical hindsight and insight. Chapters Five and Six continue the core commitments of the thesis, but employ a depth policy analysis alongside a narrative overview of the development of NAFTA-land Security, the MI, and the connections between them. In this depth analysis, I utilise a wealth of primary and secondary documentation. This includes official U.S. government sources - Budget justifications, policy justification documents and fact sheets, speeches, Congressional testimony, diplomatic cables released by the whistle-blowing website WikiLeaks, departmental budget requests, departmental fact sheets and so on - but also secondary sources such as NGO and think-tanks reports, and U.S. and Mexican news sources. The depth element in this analysis is in the sheer amount of data collected and *critically evaluated*, and, just as importantly, the *linking up* of these different pieces of direct evidence. For example, in revealing how a particular U.S. training course provides a particular skill to a Mexican security institution, that links to a particular piece of Mérida aid, and a particular aim expressed by the original plans for the SPP, I provide a piece of evidence that a wider regional security logic underpins the MI. The depth analysis does this expansively and repeatedly, linking back the details of the MI to U.S. regional security aims expressed after 9/11, connecting non-Mérida programmes to the goals of the MI, and connecting MI effects to the expansion and success of complementary programmes and aims, to build an overall picture of NAFTA-land Security construction. In turn, I link this back to core strategic U.S. interests. In conjunction with the historical narrative, the cumulative effect of this is a strengthened empirical case that U.S. interests inform a NAFTA-land Security project that the MI is *part of*. Thus, I offer a stronger appraisal of what the MI is intended to do *and why it is intended to do it*, by the test of judgmental rationalism.

Limits and Pitfalls of the Method

The advantages to primary documentation are in the access it gives to official policymaking, though this is dependent on providing as much material as possible *with* a critical-analytical eye. However there are also limitations and pitfalls. Importantly relying on official sources can risk the researcher accepting what they 'say' is important, as opposed to what they mean, or really represent. In addition, without clear access to the thoughts and deliberations behind policy decisions, weight can be given to documents that are in fact not as important, or vice-versa important documents can be missed. Finally, NAFTA-land Security and the MI itself are ongoing, contemporary policies, and thus information is both not always easy to come by, and will not be the 'complete picture' (if there ever will be one).⁵⁷ To illustrate, as one anonymous reviewer reminded me, the emphasis on terrorism could've been included within the justification materials for the original MI in order to convince, or perhaps cajole, Congress members into supporting the measure. I have attempted to overcome these issues by, first and foremost, taking a generalised critical attitude to the primary documentation, but more importantly seeking to verify findings across sources. The empirical work is rooted in the level of detail and cross-referencing provided, with clear connections drawn between stated policy, detailed policy documentation, diplomatic cables, policy on the ground, and so on, i.e. making sure as many sources as possible say the same thing in a variety of policy-level contexts - from justification to application. Only once these links are established do I make stronger claims about

⁵⁷ Some of the issues with primary documentation are covered in Ariadne Vromen 'Debating Methods: Rediscovering Qualitative Approaches' in Marsh and Stoker *Theory and Methods* p.261-265

the deeper links to U.S. interests, trends in its foreign policy, and the overall aims of the MI and NAFTA-land Security.

WikiLeaks and Method: Methodological and Ethical Considerations

The use of WikiLeaks cables is key within the primary documentation used. However I use it to *complement* the other primary documentation, as opposed to seeing it as an evidential panacea. They are not that in any case. Whilst at times the cables are more direct in their assertion, for example, of U.S. aims, they are by no means radically different from the aims stated 'in public' in official documentation, and by officials. There were some issues with WikiLeaks from an ethical perspective, as (apparently in a fit of pique) all 200,000 plus cables were dumped onto the internet without redaction, with personal information that may have put individuals in Afghanistan at risk. This does not overly affect my project as I am looking at Mexico of course, however I have not used cables referring to the human rights information requests the U.S. Department of State (DoS) runs of Mexican institutions and individuals because they are both not pertinent to the project, and contain names.

Key Concepts

Structure, Interests, and the State

I have already made key claims about how I conceptualise interests above, and Chapter Three revolves around discussing them at length. However some reiterative and preparatory pointers are worth stating here. It is also crucial to establish how the *state* has interests - a decidedly more complex question. Actors have interests, as well as a generational *role* in defining them, as a result of their positions within those real structures. For a crude example, I could *decide* it's in my interest to stop writing this PhD three weeks prior to submission, but there would be very real costs involved, and a very high likelihood that it most certainly is not. Those costs would be reputational, social, and economic as I fail to complete a task that an institution and individuals have helped me to do, mark myself out as a quitter and failure in the eyes of my peers (and future employers), and hurt my earning potential by closing off what I have trained for - a result different for me in relation to another PhD candidate who may have independent inherited wealth, for example, or for someone whose family could not support them as mine could.⁵⁸ Hence these consequences and costs would be influenced in good part by complex material-ideational social structures within capitalist social relations.

However, I am of course an individual actor. For the U.S. *state* things get trickier. I conceptualise the U.S. state is an *emergent* actor, made to act by policymakers as agents, but with interests that are not reducible to the thoughts of, or shared meanings between, those policymakers. Those interests were formed as the result of processes within its (capitalist) political and economic development, congealing around ensuring that foreign markets were open to the U.S. continued economic expansion. As U.S. economic expansion increasingly globalised, so U.S. grand strategy increasingly

⁵⁸ Stretching the example further, this does not mean I could not follow an alternative path that could lead to success. The same holds for states that shift policy priorities. However the costs and the limits to this would be real.

settled (despite fierce debates) around a broad consensus in securing an open, liberal, capitalist order across the world, underpinned by the U.S.' power. The U.S. fully engaged in this grand strategy after World War II, embracing its unrivalled global position. Not only did the strategy largely secure and augment that position, it also deepened and proliferated its interests in its continuation, associated spread of its economic interests, and the interests of capital more holistically. The U.S. set about furthering the expansion of global capitalism through the 20th Century and into the 21st under its aegis, benefitting itself whilst also guaranteeing the interests of other core powers and increasingly transnational capital. This, therefore, is a hegemonic arrangement, as set out in further detail below. Powerful social structures have privileged or necessitated certain strategic choices that have led to this reality, and continue to do so. The material impulses within capitalist social relations are key here, but exist in amalgam with more ideational tendencies in U.S. foreign policy that identify the U.S. as an indispensable leader in international affairs with a superior, exportable political-economic system. A grand strategic culture that attempts to preserve and justify U.S. *primacy* and *power* internationally has emerged from this, and is deeply intertwined with the U.S. state, prefiguring, but sustained and modified by actors within and without of the state's "institutional ensemble".⁵⁹

Thus, consistency in U.S. foreign policy can be explained on several interconnected levels. Firstly vested interests that spring from wider social structures of capitalist production and social relations confront the state, and a level of consistency can be understood as U.S. policymakers attempting to meet those interests and avoid the costs of *not* meeting them (albeit through subjective processes). Secondly, certain actors and certain strategies are privileged - and again those structures that the state is nested in mean these are strategies meeting the needs of capital more generally (and not necessarily complementary and by no means exclusively) powerful capitalist economic interests.⁶⁰ Thirdly over time the U.S. grand strategy of liberal order building and the promotion of global capitalism has *itself* taken on structural properties, and a relatively insulated policy elite helps ensure its continuation, whilst

⁵⁹ Bob Jessop *State Power: A Strategic-Relational Approach* (Polity Press, 2008) p.5 I follow Bacevich in seeing a culture that believes in and seeks to maintain exceptionalism and primacy within U.S. foreign policy, both in material and moral terms, as still dominant in the U.S. foreign policy-making elite. Andrew Bacevich *American Empire: The Realities & Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy* (Harvard University Press, 2002); *Washington Rules: America's Path to Permanent War* (Metropolitan Books, 2010) It sets parameters on certain actions whilst facilitating others (and hence I see it more explicitly structurally than Bacevich). However it can be modified (what Archer calls "structural elaboration"), and even perhaps undergo fundamental change. In terms of modifications within that structure, witness the unilateralist drive and incredible belief in the ability of American power to shape international outcomes of the Bush administration (still aimed at maintaining primacy) versus the more multilateralist agenda of the Obama Presidency, and its apparent (though contested) conclusion that U.S. power is not infinite and must be used sparingly (*also* still aimed at maintaining primacy). See Mann's works on these Presidencies for an overview of their differences and the debates within them. James Mann *Rise of the Vulcans: A History of Bush's War Cabinet* (Penguin, 2004); *The Obamians: The Struggle Inside the White House to Redefine American Power* (Viking, 2012) Indeed Obama's 'Realism' has drawn praise from those who have critiqued this culture from a Realist perspective. See Stephen Walt 'Is Obama More of a Realist Than I Am?' *Foreign Policy* (August 19th 2014) http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/08/19/is_barack_obama_more_of_a_realist_than_i_am_stephen_m_walt_iraq_russia_gaza?utm_content=bufferb6bf9&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer Accessed 20.08.14

⁶⁰ Bob Jessop *State Theory: Putting Capitalist States in their Place* (Polity Press, 1990) p.9-10

dissenters and alternative policies are shut out in various ways. Fourthly, and this is important, to a good degree this grand strategy ‘delivers the goods’. It secures U.S. interests, secures the U.S. “global advantage”, has led to unprecedented relative prosperity (though its fruits are not shared equally on a domestic level) and, for the most part, has augmented U.S. power.⁶¹ As I will show, U.S. interests in Mexican political stability, and the security of the integrated NAFTA economy, which relate to these consistencies, are key to explaining U.S. security aid to Mexico.

Primacy, Hegemony, Empire (... and Power)

Grouping these concepts together may seem strange and ambitious given how much energy could go into unpacking them. However, in doing so here my main aim is definitional. I want to make clear how I use these terms, which are inter-related in many ways, as I am not examining hegemony or primacy in U.S. foreign policy on a macro-scale. Nonetheless, they do of course relate in important ways to the case under inspection, and they are absolutely integral to contemporary understandings of U.S. foreign policy. Thus, in the project I try to use ‘primacy’ as a descriptor of the U.S. current position in the international system, as far and away the most powerful state on a number of indices. ‘Primacy’ and ‘hegemony’ are not straightforwardly interchangeable in this positional sense, however. Whilst U.S. primacy is a contemporary *fact*, I see hegemony as a much more complex term. My understanding of hegemony is informed by the neo-Gramscian work within IR, whereby it is seen as an unequal set of relations between states, with one state, the U.S., in a hegemonic position, i.e. is able to *most* bend international events and systems to its will through a *consensual* acceptance of its leadership within a *capitalist, liberal global order*.⁶² Global economic relations are key here, as is the U.S. global role as guarantor within them. However, this is underpinned by its relative (economic and military) power vis-à-vis other states, and therefore *coercive* force bulwarks hegemony. Hegemony can thus be understood as *the method by which* the U.S. assures its primacy. Therefore whilst referring to the U.S. as hegemonic or as the hegemon in international relations is perfectly acceptable, I try to only do so when ‘primacy’ is not sufficient to capture the point. Again, this is mostly relevant in Chapter Three.

This brings me on to empire, and power. In referring to hegemony as in part a method I have flagged that my understanding of the U.S. current international status is hegemonic rather than imperial. I base this on a number of points. Firstly, I contend that if we are to keep hold of the meaning of ‘empire’ and not stretch it to breaking point, we need to hang onto the idea of territoriality and political control as being key to its definitional basis.⁶³ This is contested of course. Bromley, referencing Brown,

⁶¹ For a very thorough account of the advantages accrued to the U.S. as hegemon see Carla Norloff *America's Global Advantage: US Hegemony and International Cooperation* (Cambridge University Press, 2010) Norloff does not see hegemony in a neo-Gramscian sense, see below.

⁶² This school of thought is most associated with Robert W. Cox, for example Robert W. Cox with Timothy J. Sinclair *Approaches to World Order* (Cambridge University Press, 1996) Also see *inter alia* Stephen Gill *American Hegemony and the Trilateral Commission* (Cambridge University Press, 1990); William I. Robinson *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention, and Hegemony* (Cambridge University Press, 1996); Jonathan Joseph *Hegemony: A Realist Analysis* (Routledge, 2002) Of course large differences span these works.

⁶³ John Agnew *Hegemony: The New Shape of Global Power* (Temple University Press, 2005) p.1 It is precisely for this reason that the genuinely imperial attempt by the U.S. under the Bush administration

states an imperial system is one in which the autonomy of states to direct their own affairs is contingent upon the whims of a stronger, imperial power.⁶⁴ For example, South and Central America's development has historically been contingent on the direct involvement, policies and decisions of the United States. For Michael Cox, (describing Britain's imperialism), "The real issue [...] was not the means they employed to secure the outcomes they wanted, but the outcomes themselves."⁶⁵ As just one example then, territorial conquest was not necessary for the U.S. to direct the 'developmental' policies of nations like Chile in the manner it desired.⁶⁶ By these definitions, the US certainly engages in *imperial behaviour*, and historically operated close to an imperial system within its self-defined 'sphere of influence' in Latin America (especially Central America), but does it follow that it continues to have an established empire? As Barkawi and Laffey put it, "Where then are we to locate the break between US imperialism and Empire?"⁶⁷ I suggest, however, that these descriptions could, and should, be just as easily defined as expressions of *relative* power rather than the results of U.S. empire. It would open up a Pandora's Box of little empires were we to suggest that a state's ability to use power to achieve results within other states is always imperial in the sense of operating an empire.

We are better off thinking of U.S. primacy as secured through hegemony rather than empire, in part for these negating reasons, in part for the more supportive reasons I outlined above.⁶⁸ Hegemony also captures how challenges to the U.S., both from states and more widely from civil society, can exist outside of direct control and be countered by the U.S. in ways that do and do *not* involve coercive power. As Agnew puts it, the U.S.' hegemonic techniques revolve around pulling states and peoples into its orbit through, "convincing, cajoling, and coercing them *that they should want what you want*."⁶⁹ Thus it can work in ways that responds to its critiques with its own positive claims in areas like development, international ethics, international security, and so on - not *just* through the 'barrel of a gun' as it were. In important senses we can see this hegemonic dynamic in North America, where Canada and increasingly Mexico have tied their developmental policies and immediate futures to the U.S., and Mexico is now becoming part of a regional security strategy largely implemented by the U.S. Understanding the U.S. as a hegemon within a liberal capitalist order allows us to be flexible enough to also suggest that that this arrangement has some important imperial aspects (for example extensive lily-pad basing and the establishment of

to control Iraq and its political future was so distinctive and provoked such renewed academic interest in U.S. empire.

⁶⁴ Simon Bromley 'Universalism and Difference in International Society' in William Brown, Simon Bromley and Suma Athreye [eds.] *Ordering the International: History, Change and Transformation* (Open University, 2004) p.84

⁶⁵ Michael Cox 'The Empire's Back in Town: Or America's Imperial Temptation - Again' *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 32,1 (2003) p.17

⁶⁶ William Blum *Killing Hope: US Military & CIA Interventions Since World War II* (Zed Books, 1986) p.206-215 and Naomi Klein *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (Penguin, 2008) p.64-6 & 75-97

⁶⁷ Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey 'Retrieving The Imperial: Empire and International Relations' *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 31,1 (2002) p.125 I have used these points in other work.

⁶⁸ Interestingly Cox does consider the U.S. to operate an empire. Robert W. Cox 'Beyond Empire and Terror: Critical Reflections on the Political Economy of World Order' *New Political Economy* 9, 3 (September 2004) p.308-309 He also outlines growing challenges to U.S. hegemony and that empire.

⁶⁹ Agnew *Hegemony* p.2 My emphasis.

global rules and norms constructed or emanating from the U.S., that it then often refuses to be bound by itself). It also allows us to more effectively examine the latent or emergent imperial tendencies that are directly expressed to differing degrees, from economic pressure to direct military intervention, within U.S. hegemony without reducing everything to a matter of direct force and relative power.⁷⁰ Again this has implications for my case here.

This brings us to power. Power is both what the U.S.' aims to secure and augment as part of maintaining and securing its primacy, and what allows it to set about doing so. The more direct relevancy of these important definitional concepts further emerges here. Again, Mexico is an interesting case for thinking about U.S. hegemony and power. Why has Mexico attached itself to the U.S. economically under NAFTA, and is now increasingly doing the same on security issues under NAFTA-land Security? Whilst this project does not focus in detail on *how* this has developed, it does show how over time Mexico has increasingly been enveloped within economic relations where the U.S. exerts incredible influence in Mexico's political economy. We see this in the two parts of the study's empirical element; Chapter Four shows how U.S.-Mexican relations are bookended by two periods of *deliberately constructed* extensive U.S. influence upon and within Mexico, Chapters Five and Six show how the U.S. is now integrating Mexico into a regional security framework. There is undoubtedly a power relation at work here. However whilst coercion has at times been applied upon Mexico, to understand the contemporary closeness of this relationship we should think about how other forms of power *within U.S. hegemony* have created a situation whereby Mexican elites increasingly think of their interests as *tied* to the U.S.⁷¹ They want, in some sense, what the U.S. wants, and to a good degree buy into the construction of regional security, rather than being coerced into NAFTA-land Security by an imperialistic U.S. The hegemonic and power dynamics here are diffuse and complex.

This requires a considered, nuanced, but brief appraisal of U.S. power within its hegemony. Following Mabee, who in turn draws on Barnett and Duvall, I see power within a four-prong typology, whereby the U.S. can draw upon power that is compulsory (coercive power that allows the U.S. to directly change realities), institutional (power within institutions to set actor preferences and rules / norms largely - but not totally - in line with the U.S.' interests), structural (U.S. relative

⁷⁰ Under Bush, this extended actual invasion and political control. Bush's policies of course triggered a resurgence in academic and wider work on whether the U.S. was an empire, and critiques and defences of U.S. imperialism. For example Cox 'The Empire's Back in Town'; Victor Davis Hanson 'A Funny Sort of Empire' *National Review Online* (November 27th, 2002) <http://www.nationalreview.com/hanson/hanson112702.asp> Accessed 31.08.14; Max Boot 'The Most Realistic Response to Terrorism is for America to Embrace its Imperial Role' *The Weekly Standard* (15th October, 2001) <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000%5C000%5C000%5C318qpvmc.asp> Accessed 31.08.14; G. John Ikenberry *Liberal Order & Imperial Ambition: Essays on American Power and World Politics* (Polity Press, 2006); Bacevich *American Empire*; Chalmers Johnson *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic* (Metropolitan Books, 2004); Alejandro Colás and Richard Saull [eds.] *The War on Terrorism and the American 'Empire' After the Cold War* (Routledge, 2006)

⁷¹ With important limits of course, for example Mexico's refusal to support the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003.

power within IR and the global economy, allowing it relative room for manoeuvre) and productive (discourses creating a particular enabling / constraining identity for the U.S. within IR). These allow it to achieve ends directly, and / or maintain its hegemonic position and the promulgation of the liberal capitalist hegemonic order.⁷² Within hegemony all four power types interact and (ideally) complement one another, although overall structural power within the global capitalist economic order that it has done much to self-construct underpins U.S. primacy and hegemony in its current form. It sets parameters for others, and indeed attunes state interests and the interest of ostensibly 'national capitals' into buying into U.S. hegemony, which allows others to benefit, but returns the most gains to the U.S. itself. There are also of course complexities here and operative reality it is not as smooth as all this, for example the use of compulsory / military power may signal and / or catalyse the decline in other types of power.⁷³

With regard to Mexico's acceding to a developmental path fundamentally tied to the U.S. through NAFTA, we can see the different components of U.S. power within its hegemony interacting. Elements of compulsory power were applied when the U.S. 'guided' the restructuring of Mexico's political economy along more neoliberal lines following its profound economic crisis in the 1980s. However the U.S.' favoured structural position within the global economy, and (associated!) institutional power within international financial institutions (IFIs) underpinned that compulsory power and its ability to guide this process. Within Mexico itself the political fallout of an economy in freefall had facilitated the ascendance of technocratic elite to lead the one party state under the *Partido Institucional Revolucionario* (PRI). Much of this elite bought into the wider emergent consensus around broadly neoliberal development and changing from macroeconomic structures, in Mexico's case built around import-substitution-industrialisation (ISI), as well as the fact they and Mexico's wider economic elite were able to benefit from the glut of deregulation and privatisation of much of Mexico's large state sector. Thus productive power associated with the U.S.' ideological influence was also involved, intersecting with some of the more material logics within capitalism, and Mexican domestic politics. Mexico, or its policymaking and economic elite at least, in some part bought into U.S. restructuring, though their choices were constrained by their own economic crisis. The developments in this period culminated in the signing of NAFTA in 1994.

NAFTA was effectively a game-changer, 'locking in' Mexico's macroeconomic changes and tying Mexico to a deregulated, export-led development plan with a greatly changed role for the state. This has created an institutional-structural logic in North America, where economic interconnections and bilateral, even trilateral forms of production have increased, and vested interests for *all three states*, and their national elites, capitals, firms and individuals, have been created or deepened.⁷⁴ On the other hand threats to those interests have simultaneously

⁷² Bryan Mabee *Understanding American Power: The Changing World of US Foreign Policy* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) p.60-81 Mabee also uses Mann's typology of political, military, economic and ideological power to strengthen his conception of U.S. power.

⁷³ A much made argument in the wake of Bush's presidency and adventures in Iraq. Ikenberry *Liberal Order & Imperial Ambition*

⁷⁴ Many have also lost out or not benefitted in these developments, or fail to see enough 'national' interest within economic integration, and some have challenged the trilateral consensus. See Jeffrey

developed or become increasingly pressing - with the drug related security crisis especially pertinent, and the protection of the North American space has become a core interest for those same actors. NAFTA-land Security is the contingent, specific response, and Mexico has once again significantly bought into it. Thus Mexican elites have acquiesced or even championed these policies, partly in response to power realities, partly as a result of the more subtle ways U.S. power works in foreign relations, but also (and relatedly to the second point) significantly due to their own interests *and* the genuine challenges Mexico faces. In a regional microcosm of hegemony more generally, the U.S. has constructed, through its power, a framework that benefits others whilst benefitting itself disproportionately. It does not need to provide much coercion to augment this framework with a security aspect by encouraging Mexico to participate in NAFTA-land Security, but that does not mean other types of power within hegemony are not at work here. I will show this in more detail at points in the thesis, but build it out a little in a final key concept.

NAFTA-land Security, Security Projection and U.S. Hegemony

As elucidated above, I use NAFTA-land Security as a catch-all for the U.S.' overarching policy goal (which the MI forms a part of) to regionalise and integrate security approaches within and around the NAFTA-zone, effectively creating a NAFTA security perimeter that protects the North American economy, helps stabilise Mexico, and bolsters U.S. HS. NAFTA-land Security is fundamentally multi-purpose in this regard. It facilitates cooperation to tackle drug cartels. It aims to improve Mexico's CT abilities and southern border security. It builds Mexico's institutional capacity in judicial areas and intelligence capability, whilst encouraging it to engage in maritime and aviation security on a bigger scale. It also links up with more global aims to secure supply chains, control what and who enters the U.S, and improve U.S. HS through 'layered defence' security approaches, all of which can be summarised as security projection, and all of which requires cooperation with partners and the building of partner capacity through the kind of aid imparted to Mexico on a large scale in the MI. However, throughout the thesis it must be kept in mind that the U.S. is not just a global hegemon, but also a *regional hegemon* within NAFTA. The security capabilities that the U.S. seeks to impart to Mexico are also in significant part sought by Mexico itself (especially on CN), but the U.S. is *most concerned about accruing its own security gains*. Mexico might engage in NAFTA-land Security, but does not do so under conditions of its own choosing. The hegemonic reality of NAFTA means Mexico must in some sense acquiesce to U.S. preferences. Again, this is not something I am able to build in great theoretical and empirical clarity due to

Ayres & Laura Macdonald 'Introduction: North America in Question' in Jeffrey Ayres & Laura Macdonald *North America in Question: Regional Integration in an Era of Economic Turbulence* (University of Toronto Press, 2012) p.14-15; Teresa Healy 'North American Community from Above and Below: Working Class Perspectives on Economic Integration and Crisis' in *ibid* p.145-170; Rosalba Icaza '(Re)Thinking the 'New' North America Through Women's Citizenship Struggles in Mexico' in *ibid* p.309-333; Timothy A. Wise; Hilda Saalazar & Laura Carlsen *Confronting Globalization: Economic Integration and Popular Resistance in Mexico* (Kumarian Press, 2003) Of course the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (EZLN) effectively preempted NAFTA in actually beginning in their resistance movement as it came into effect. Watt and Zepeda make a convincing case that Mexico's continuing inequality, deepened through neoliberalism, is a generative force in Mexico's drug violence. Peter Watt and Roberto Zepeda *Drug War Mexico: Politics, Neoliberalism and Violence in the New Narcoeconomy* (Zed Books, 2012)

limitations of space and the thesis' aims, but it is important to keep in mind that it is key to the concept of NAFTA-land Security. It operates from and within unequal power relations, rather than through partnership and equal standing.

Originality

The originality of this project lies in its use of a deep and detailed analysis of the MI and policy that is connected to it. The extant literature that has examined the MI has not engaged in such an analysis. The depth of my argument here is therefore unique. Through a deliberative examination of official (and unofficial, in terms of public availability) U.S. documentation, I am not only able to reveal elements of the MI that have not been sufficiently highlighted, but through this process make conclusions and connections that do not feature in the existing work on this policy, or U.S.-Mexico relations more generally. My overall assessment of the Initiative, therefore, is distinct from the existing literature in several ways. I clearly show how it is a multi-purpose security package designed to improve Mexican state capabilities in meeting variegated security threats. Therefore it goes beyond 'CN'. Crucially, however, I include the violence within Mexico that is associated with drug trafficking as *amongst* the security threats that the U.S. seeks to tackle. I am able to contest that it is Mexico's *political economic stability* that is most concerning to U.S. policymakers, without resorting to seeing the 'drug war' as a convenient pretext for U.S. intervention in Mexico to meet these 'real' goals. This does not mean, however, that CN has not provided the most successful access point for U.S. involvement in Mexico's overall security affairs. It has, as I will go on to show.

Thus, my project's findings and argument are clearly demarcated from existing work on the MI. More substantively, though, this focus on the 'nuts and bolts' of the policy itself, and my subsequent methodological decision to engage in historical narrative and depth analysis, opens up other paths of originality. It allows me to draw out and highlight connections to wider strategies within U.S. policymaking and relations with Mexico, within North America, and on a global level. Tracing U.S. policy through history, I can highlight very clear continuations in the U.S.' relations with Mexico based around its interests in Mexico remaining a politically stable and economically open (interests that have been met to various degrees in various specific temporal contexts), *and therefore* show how Mexico's current instability is a real concern for the U.S. I show how this is clearly connected to deeply rooted predilections for intervening in other nation's security within U.S. foreign policy, and that itself is predicated on protecting U.S. interests in openness of other countries to capital investment, accumulation and extraction. Since Mexico's current instability is significantly the result of its drug related security crisis, U.S. aid within the MI to tackle trafficking, reduce corruption and confront cartels is a direct but rather unique expression of this wider strategy. This connection has not been highlighted in the current literature, even in the critical work (often informed by historical materialist theory) that instead effectively separates 'drug issues' from the U.S.' 'real goals'.

The originality also goes beyond this to consider connected but quite novel expressions of U.S. interest seeking within North America more holistically. Placing the MI in its historical context, and analysing the policy and the process of its

formulation in depth, shows clearly that it is not as overwhelmingly ‘new’ as many have claimed in its aims and approach,⁷⁵ nor is it just about U.S.-Mexican security relations. Instead it is intimately implicated within a wider goal to regionalise security in North America, which itself is an progressively pressing concern for the U.S. as the North American economy integrates further in trade, investment *and* production, and thereby becomes increasingly integral to the U.S.’ own continued economic success and international primacy. North American cross-border trade, production and investment is at unprecedented level and continues to grow, and this requires that Mexico’s political economy be stable and secure for investors, that novel approaches to internal border security deter and detect potential ‘transnational threats’ (like terrorism and drug smuggling linked to instability) whilst expediting licit movement, and that the North American economic zone *itself* is protected and secured. This is not a groundbreaking argument in and of itself, but in the way this project reveals the practises and the policy - which *includes* the MI -that is being put into place to directly achieve these goals, it stands out from both the literature on the MI and North American integration more generally. Additionally, through this, I am able in part to move beyond to highlight important new directions in the U.S.’ foreign policy, grand strategy and political economy. I contend that the project shows that North America is becoming increasingly important to U.S. strategic thinking.

⁷⁵ I establish this trope in the Literature Review

Chapter Two

Literature Review: A Drug War Rationale, or a Drug War Pretext?

Introduction

This chapter summarises the extant literature on the MI, its foreign policy aims, and how these relate to U.S. interests. I have divided this literature into two broad groups. Much of the existing literature has worked with an acceptance that the provision of aid is primarily motivated by a ‘drug war rationale’, whereby the U.S. effort to interdict illegal drugs is a genuine one. Whilst it is by no means homogenous, this literature sees the primary U.S. aim as stemming drug flows and, more importantly, associated levels of violence Mexico, by denuding the cartels’ ability to operate through both robust enforcement at the border and in Mexico, and mitigation of some of the political / social / economic contextual conditions that are argued to empower them. However a smaller set of literature is more skeptical of this rationale, and even posits that in fact official justifications provide a pretext for, or obscure, differing aims behind U.S. policy. These are based in the protection and stabilisation of Mexico’s neoliberal political economy, tied to NAFTA from forces that seek to challenge or change it. Often these forces are seen as stemming from civil society or social movements. Thus violence and insecurity in Mexico does not unitarily flow around drugs, but in fact a portion of it is directed from the state towards certain sections of civil society. Whilst there are of course many quite significant permutations within these two positions, they differ most significantly from one another.

For the most part I will be reviewing this literature, delineating the differences between analyses, and drawing out key themes and conclusions. Of course the wider and more substantive aim in doing this is to begin to highlight the gaps in the existing work on the MI and to construct the space for my own analysis of the policy, its intent, and whether it can be said to be ‘working’. The first focus in this chapter is really to look at what existing research makes of the MI in terms of its *intentions*, which then of course colours whatever conclusions one reaches about the policies efficacy for the U.S. However, in doing this I am going to speak to other questions that naturally intrude on this limited aim. We cannot avoid, for example, seeing how the differing strands of the current literature actually define the nature of the violence in Mexico, pinpoint where it is coming from, or choose *what* violence to focus on. There is also the controversial and thorny question of whether the U.S.-supported strategy is *causing* or at least exacerbating the increased violence in Mexico. This gets pulled in again to what the intention of the policy is, as the more critical literature sees some of the violence of the Mexican state as *functional*. These are complex questions, and again they do have some important implications for this thesis’ more central aims. It is important though to repeat those central aims revolve around uncovering what the MI and associated bilateral security policy is intended to do.

Broad Points

The deviation in the extant literature already identified has roots in theoretical differences, and specifically divergent conceptions of the state and state interests. Put simply, those who posit a ‘drug-war rationale’ implicitly work with a reified version of the state and treat its interests as rather unproblematic and pre-given, in line with

the dominant theories of IR and their underlying assumptions. Thus they separate state foreign policy interests from their societies to a great degree. Additionally, in line with Liberal or Neoliberal IR theory, both the U.S. and Mexican *states* are argued to have interests in mutual security, mutual economic development and growth, and the mutual well being of their citizens. The state's interests broadly equate to the nation's or country's interests, in terms of its populations. Critical analysts work with a more complex picture in line with more critical IR theory, in which the state is made up of social actors, and its foreign policy interests cannot be separated from that societal level. Moreover both in U.S. foreign policy and Mexican domestic policy this literature often works in broadly Marxian terms, whereby state actors represent *class* interests in a capitalist economy, and thus we cannot simply assume shared interests within society or between the U.S. and Mexico. There is broad convergence amongst the existing Critical literature that both the U.S. and Mexican interests revolve around elite class interests in sustaining a neoliberal economic order in Mexico that is radically unequal and favours the U.S. disproportionately.¹

This chapter will also go onto consider the wider set of literature concerning U.S.-Mexican integration. Again in line with established Neo-Liberal IR theory, many observers of North American politics and integration suggest that cooperation within the economic arena through the formal institutions of NAFTA appears to be 'spilling into' other areas of policy,² not least a more symbiotic approach to targeting drug traffickers, and indeed military-to-military relationships beyond CN.³ Some voices in the extant literature, meanwhile, also connect Mérida to economic coalescence and NAFTA. However they suggest a wider security rationale for the policy that goes beyond drugs - or in the more critical framing, uses drugs as a pretext - to include threats like terrorism, political violence and - again in the more critical understandings - the prospect of social unrest and change. They explicitly connect Mérida to the SPP, a much more ambitious integrative North American security project borne from the post 9/11 fallout and Global War on Terror (GWOT). They argue this was designed to protect NAFTA's political economy from a wide set of threats to maintain the unequal status quo. Again, much (but not all) of this work is Marxian in its underlying claims.

Chapter Structure

This chapter proceeds in three sections. Firstly I look at the existing literature on Mérida specifically. Dividing the current research and work into two wide sections - one that accepts a 'drug war rationale' for Mérida, and one that posits a 'drug war pretext' - I summarise the key arguments and draw out key points, continuities, and

¹ Much of the Critical literature thus works within the larger body of literature that considers the turn to neoliberal economic tenets since the 1970s as a state/class project to reclaim and increase capitalist class power (amongst numerous examples, David Harvey *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Penguin, 2005); Naomi Klein *The Shock Doctrine* (Penguin, 2007); Jamie Peck *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason* (Oxford University Press, 2010); Ruth Blakeley, *State Terrorism and Neoliberalism: The North in the South* (Routledge, 2009)

² Robert O. Keohane *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton University Press, 1984) p.8 As Keohane points out, this Neo-Liberal assumption follows established Liberal Institutional theory.

³ See Roderic Ai Camp *Armed Forces and Drugs: Public Perceptions and Institutional Challenges* in Eric L. Olsen, David A. Shirk & Andrew Selee (eds.) *Shared Responsibility: U.S. Mexican Policy Options for Confronting Organized Crime* (Woodrow Wilson Mexico Institute, Oct 2010)

differences. Of course using such a broad brush to put a wide array of work into two groups risks homogenising disparate voices and missing differences within the groups, so I show how the debate is not merely reducible to merely two schools of thought. There is an especially lively difference in the ‘drug war rationale’ literature between those who see drug violence as a social problem as opposed to those who saw it as a novel military challenge, for example. However to fully capture the debate I also conclude this section of the Review by looking at some outlying literature that either straddles or does not quite fit the two macro positions. These outliers in fact nicely lead into the second section, which broadens out the discussion to include some of the wider literature on North American integration and its progress, and where Mérida fits into this ongoing process.⁴ Finally I conclude by starting to briefly identify gaps left by the extant literature, and the debates it opens up. I make a case that we need to think carefully about state interests in IR to consider what U.S. aims are. I also contend there needs to be both a stronger situating of current bilateral policy in the history of U.S.-Mexican relations, and, as an analytical starting point, a policy analysis of Mérida that is far more in-depth.

Existing Analysis of the Mérida Initiative

A Drug War Rationale

Building on the prohibition and criminalisation of drugs that had of course been in place in the United States for the best part of the 20th Century, in 1971 President Nixon declared narcotics to be ‘Public Enemy number one’ and the ‘War on Drugs’ became a popularised term.⁵ Although Nixon had closed the border with Mexico to pressure the country to improve its interdiction efforts in Operation Intercept in 1969, and drug trafficking investigation had formed part of the murkier underworld of U.S. intelligence and foreign policy for some time,⁶ CN began to be more overtly pulled into national security strategies over the coming years. In 1973 the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) was formed. In 1981 Congress gave the U.S. military the power to aid civilian law enforcement agencies inside and outside the U.S., and in 1986 President Reagan signed National Security Decision Directive 221, which designated drugs as a National Security threat.⁷ U.S. troops participated in CN operations in Bolivia in 1986, and budgets increased for military involvement in CN. In 1989 the Pentagon became the lead agency for CN intelligence, and the U.S. invaded Panama to remove Manuel Noriega and try him for drug trafficking. U.S. aid for CN in a host of countries increased through the 1990s; Plan Colombia was launched with a drug war justification in 2000, and in 2007 the U.S. jointly announced the MI alongside Mexico, again justified in CN terms. Despite the Obama

⁴ I do consider this a continuing process, but withhold judgment for now as to how fast or slow it is developing, and why.

⁵ Perhaps lost in the history though is the fact Nixon’s early anti-drug budgets actually spent more money on harm reduction than the supply side solutions and criminalisation that would come to be so negatively associated with the ‘War on Drugs’. See Michael F. Walther ‘Insanity: Four Decades of U.S. Counterdrug Strategy’ *Strategic Studies Institute* (December, 2012) p.4

⁶ See Douglas Valentine’s history of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics. Douglas Valentine *The Strength of the Wolf: The Secret History of America’s War on Drugs* (Verso, 2004)

⁷ Meanwhile the CIA was aiding the Contras to smuggle drugs into the U.S. to help fund their insurgent activities in Nicaragua.

administration distancing itself from the term ‘War on Drugs’, large amounts of CN aid continues to flow to a number of countries around the globe.⁸

The majority of analysts see the MI within this ‘War on Drugs’ foreign policy paradigm of the United States. The need to interdict drugs in this case is also given extra impetus by the disturbing levels of violence in Mexico itself, and the failure of Mexican agencies to stem that violence and provide security in large areas of the country.⁹ There is some debate here though around the nature of the problem within Mexico, which affects how the policy’s intention and efficacy is seen. I have therefore divided my summary of those who see the MI primarily in these terms into two-sub-sections: Crime-Based and Military-Based. This reflects a distinction between those who maintain that Mexico’s drug problems remain criminal in scope, and those who posit that the violence and tactics of cartel or drug trafficking organisations / transnational criminal organisations (DTOs / TCOs)¹⁰ now in fact resemble a criminal or “narco” insurgency. Unremarkably, there is a level of fluidity and a number of grey areas between the two positions, but there is certainly enough of a distinction to warrant separating them initially. It should also be noted that this reflects a wider policy debate in Washington¹¹ and in military policy and academia¹² about how to classify the violence in Mexico, and indeed the language of the Military-based analysts mirrors official U.S. training documents.

However, despite this distinction, many of the core conclusions of both sets of literature cut across them. They share similar assumptions on the violence being overwhelmingly drug-related, similar conclusions as to what is producing that violence, and, importantly for us, what U.S. and Mexican interests are at stake as a result. There are also shared conclusions that U.S. policy is primarily aimed at tackling DTO power and associated violence and trafficking. They also share a close evaluation of what explains the failure of the policy to stem violence thus far, and indeed how U.S. policies can be attuned to greater success. The distinguishing feature between the two is very much focused on the issue of *the definition* of the Mexican

⁸ Amongst others, the reports of the U.S. DoS Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) make this clear. For example the FY2013 report discusses CN aid programmes in Africa, the Western Hemisphere, Asia, Europe, and Eurasia. U.S. Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs *Program and Budget Guide: Fiscal Year 2013 Budget* (Washington D.C., 2013)

⁹ Paul Kenny, Mónica Serrano and Arturo Sotomayor (eds.) *Mexico’s Security Failure: Collapse into Criminal Violence* (Routledge, 2011)

¹⁰ DTO and TCO have been variously applied by the U.S. government to Mexico’s trafficking groups. Recently TCO has become a standardised term.

¹¹ For example, see the various efforts of Congressmen McCaul (R-TX) and Mack (R-FL) to officially designate DTOs as terrorists and Mexico’s drug violence as an insurgency, which met with considerable opposition. Geoffrey Ramsey ‘US Congressman Repeats Call to Designate Mexican Drug Gangs as ‘Terrorists’ *Insight Crime* (October 5th, 2011) <http://www.insightcrime.org/news-briefs/us-congressman-repeats-calls-to-designate-mexican-drug-gangs-as-terrorists> Accessed 25.05.13; ‘Enhanced Border Security Act’ H.R. 3401 Proposed Bill, 112th Congress (2011) <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/112/hr3401> Accessed 13.05.13

¹² See the debate between Bunker and Rexton Kan on whether ‘insurgency’ is a useful or accurate term to apply to Mexican drug violence. (e.g. Paul Rexton Kan ‘What We’re Getting Wrong About Mexico’ *Parameters* 41, 2 (Summer 2011) Again the debate appears settled officially in calling cartels TCOs, although ‘narco-terrorists’ appears to be still popular in military training courses.

“problem”¹³ and its subsequent treatment, rather than what generates it, or the *motivation* for the U.S. to intervene and help deal with it. I thus focus on the different definitions of the problems separately, before moving on to show how the ‘drug war rationale’ literature *as a whole* conceptualises the intention of U.S. policy, and the apparent failure of U.S.-Mexican policy to stem the tide of violence.

Crime-Based Definitions

To differing degrees, work within the Crime-Based literature largely accepts the officially provided statistics and analysis on drug-related violence in Mexico. It also accepts that the spiking official homicide statistics are predominately the result of inter-cartel violence. Thus, despite an acknowledgement that, “Measuring drug-related violence in Mexico is inherently challenging” due to it being a, “highly subjective exercise, prone to substantial guesswork even when done by government authorities”,¹⁴ there is a tendency to use official information. There is also a shared narrative amongst this literature that the majority of the violence, in terms of actual homicides, affects those within the drug trade. For example, Shirk uses Mexican government data to summarise that, “Explosive clashes and territorial disputes among powerful drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) have killed more than thirty-five thousand people¹⁵ since President Felipe Calderón took office in December 2006.”¹⁶ Longmire designates the violence that has been officially deemed to be, “drug related” as falling generally into, “three categories: violence directed against the authorities, against other cartels, and against the general public.”¹⁷ Dell, again working with (different) official Mexican figures, concludes that, “More than 85 percent of the violence consists of people involved in the drug trade killing each other.”¹⁸

However, despite the acceptance that the, “majority of those killed are involved in the drug trade”,¹⁹ the Crime-Based literature argues that the concomitant instability and insecurity generated by drug violence and cartel activity has serious ramifications for U.S. interests. Shirk summarises this in four key areas; the ability of unchecked

¹³ *ibid*

¹⁴ Viridiana Rios & David A. Shirk ‘Drug Violence in Mexico: Data and Analysis Through 2010’ Trans-Border Institute (February, 2011) p.4

¹⁵ Shirk cites official data released by the Mexican government in January 2011 covering December 2006 to December 2010. This data explicitly tries to isolate murders definitively tied to drug trafficking. See Johanna Tuckman ‘Mexico Drugs War Murders Data Mapped’ *Guardian* (January 14th, 2011) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2011/jan/14/mexico-drug-war-murders-map> Accessed 15.01.11 This official database was updated on 11th January 2012 with official figures on drug-related homicides up to September 2011. It added 12, 903 killed to the previous total of 34, 612. The database has not been updated since then, forcing analysts to rely on triangulation, interpretation and analysis of other data to come up with totals. In any case there were serious flaws with the methodology of the original database.

¹⁶ David A. Shirk ‘The Drug War in Mexico: Confronting a Shared Threat’ *Council of Foreign Relations* Special Report No. 60 (March 2011) p.3 As we saw in the Introduction this number has since spiked.

¹⁷ Sylvia Longmire *Cartel: The Coming Invasion of Mexico’s Drug Wars* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) p.8

¹⁸ Melissa Dell *Trafficking Networks and the Mexican Drug War* (2011) Job Market Paper. <http://econ-www.mit.edu/grad/mdell/papers> Accessed 18.12.11 p.7

¹⁹ Vanda Felbab-Brown ‘The Violent Drug Market in Mexico and Lessons from Colombia’ *Brookings Institute Policy Paper* No.12 (March 2009) p.1

cartels to operate and effect criminal enterprises on the U.S. side of the border which harm the health and security of U.S. citizens, the negative economic ramifications of insecurity in Mexico that could result in “market collapse” of a crucial economic partner, the “*destabilizing effect*” cartel violence has across Central America, and the potential for humanitarian disaster as civilians flee escalating drug conflict.²⁰ These core concerns are variously echoed and expanded upon in a number of other studies and pieces. For example, O’Neil cites the burgeoning U.S.-Mexican economic interdependence threatened by potential, “crime-ridden political and economic turmoil”.²¹ Rexton Kan explores the, “national security challenge” posed by “narco-refugees”.²² Again emphasising the posited deep link between U.S. border security and the MI, as well as the associated War on Drugs, Clarkson states the Initiative, “suggests the war on drugs will remain the US priority for security on its southern border.”²³ Some Crime-Based studies also charge that there is a threat to U.S. national security on the border, especially in the form of, ‘spillover violence’ affecting the U.S. border regions.²⁴

The basis of this threat to U.S. interests in Mexico, at the border, and into the U.S. is the increased scope of cartel power. We should be clear that Crime-based accounts often include an explicit rejection of the ‘failed state’, ‘narco-terrorist’ or ‘criminal insurgency’ analysis proffered in some of the Military-Based²⁵ circles (of which more below).²⁶ Bailey summarises thus, “This [is] not a political- ideological insurgency,

²⁰ Shirk ‘The Drug War in Mexico’ p.4-5 My emphasis

²¹ Shannon K. O’Neil ‘The Real War in Mexico: How Democracy Can Defeat the Drug Cartels’ *Foreign Affairs* 88, 4 (July/August, 2009) p.77; Also see Shannon K. O’Neil *Two Nations Indivisible: Mexico, the United States, and the Road Ahead* (Oxford University Press, 2013) p.159-164

²² Paul Rexton Kan ‘Mexico’s ‘Narco-Refugees’: The Looming Challenge for U.S. National Security’ *Strategic Studies Institute* (October 2011) Disturbingly, the U.S. has recently encountered a crisis over Central American children and families often fleeing drug-related violence in such countries as Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. For example see Marta Sánchez-Solar ‘Confronting the Central American Refugee Crisis’ *CIP Americas Program* (June 25th, 2014) <http://www.cipamericas.org/archives/12441> Accessed 05.07.14

²³ Stephen Clarkson *Does North America Exist: Governing the Continent after NAFTA and 9/11* (University of Toronto Press, 2008) p.400

²⁴ Sylvia Longmire ‘Border Violence Spillover: A Growing, but Undefined Problem’ *Small Wars Journal* (January 15th, 2013) <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/border-violence-spillover-a-growing-but-undefined-problem> Accessed 31.07.13 However it should be noted that this is a highly debatable concept, and there are equal attempts to refute it within the same literature. Indeed, Olsen *et al* argue that it is a distraction that, “has shifted [U.S.] federal resources away from the urgent task of disrupting the flow of weapons and money to Mexico” Eric L. Olsen, David A. Shirk and Andrew Selee ‘Introduction’ in Olsen *et al Shared Responsibility* p.4 Undoubtedly some acts of cross-border violence have occurred. However, official reports have discussed the difficulty of defining spillover and its limited nature. U.S. GAO *Southwest Border Security: Data Are Limited and Concerns Vary about Spillover Crime along the Southwest Border* (Washington D.C., February 2013) and Kristin M. Finklea *Southwest Border Violence: Issues in Identifying and Measuring Spillover Violence* (Congressional Research Service, 2013)

²⁵ It should be noted that Rexton-Kan is in fact a military thinker, and is perhaps swimming against the tide regarding the conclusions of his peers.

²⁶ For an excellent and persuasive example, see Paul Kenny & Mónica Serrano ‘Introduction: Security Failure Versus State Failure’ in Paul Kenny & Monica Serrano with Arturo Sotomayor (eds) *Mexico’s Security Failure: Collapse into Criminal Violence* (Routledge, 2012) p.1-25 These authors go onto insist, “The Mexican state doesn’t confront a drug insurgency aiming to overthrow it. The Mexican state faces coalitions of individuals - some of them extremely powerful and violent - whose ultimate ambition is to pay taxes to the state, to be able to issue Treasury-registered receipts to their hotels’

but rather a transnational criminal-industrial complex passing through a particularly violent phase.”²⁷ However, there are a number of authors within the Crime-Based perspective who are increasingly contending that growing cartel power is beginning to represent a threat to the stability and rule of the Mexican state. The cartels’ ability, (afforded by huge drug trafficking profits) to heavily arm themselves and to corrupt local police and political authorities, is seen as expanding to a point where it can even provide an alternative model of criminal rule in specific areas.²⁸ Some cartel tactics are seen as at least *resembling* terrorist or insurgent actions, albeit they are taken in pursuit of profit-driven, rather than ideological, motives.²⁹ In terms of the levels of violence and criminality, Bailey concludes that, “What in the past had been a chronic but tolerable problem of public security has passed the tipping point to become a genuine threat to national security and democratic governance.”³⁰ O’Neil concurs that there is a threat to Mexico’s fledging democracy, and U.S. interests lie in protecting that democracy and aiding Mexico’s political and economic development.³¹ Kilroy, Sumano and Hataley discuss how the existence of heavily armed and well-funded cartels “destabilizes” Mexico through their ability to create a “weaker rule of law”.³² All of this in turn makes it easier for drugs to continue flowing into the U.S., and puts pressure on the border. Olsen, Shirk and Wood summarise that the Mexican government’s ability to “maintain a monopoly on the legitimate use of force” has been compromised.³³

From this perspective, it is unsurprising that the Crime-Based literature characterises the various policies that make up the MI as being differentiated instruments to aid the Mexican government to check and decrease cartel power. Essentially, then, U.S. policy is aimed to do more or less what U.S. public officials and arms of the executive government have stated it is aimed to do. Shirk summarises that the MI seeks to, “provide U.S. equipment, training and technical assistance, counternarcotics intelligence sharing, and rule of law promotion programs” to Mexico and beyond.³⁴ A RAND study undertaken in 2009 asserts that the aid package is aimed, “primarily for

customers, to receive a states subsidy for their agricultural businesses. This enemy wants the state to function for it....” Paul Kenny and Monica Serrano ‘Conclusion: Authoritarian Evolution’ in *ibid* p. 197 However I feel a critique of this from the position we identify below as ‘Military-Based’ would likely suggest this sounds effectively like a captured ‘narco-state’. Also, for a very brief nod to the failed state narrative in what is not a particularly ‘military’ source see W. Dirk Raat and Michael M. Brescia *Mexico and the United States: Ambivalent Vistas* 4th edn. (University of Georgia Press, 2010) p. 235

²⁷ John Bailey ‘Combating Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking in Mexico: What are Mexican and U.S. Strategies? Are They Working?’ in Olsen *et al Shared Responsibility* p.329

²⁸ Vanda Felbab-Brown ‘Calderón’s Caldron: Lessons from Mexico’s Battle Against Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking in Tijuana, Ciudad Juárez, and Michoacán’ *Brookings Institute* (September, 2011)

²⁹ Longmire *Cartel* p.8

³⁰ Bailey ‘Combating Organized Crime’ p.327

³¹ O’Neil ‘The Real War in Mexico’

³² Richard J. Kilroy Jr., Aberlado Rodríguez Sumano & Todd S. Hataley, *North American Regional Security: A Trilateral Framework?* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013) p.140

³³ Eric L. Olsen, David A. Shirk and Duncan Wood ‘Introduction’ in David A. Shirk, Duncan Wood and Eric L. Olsen [eds.] *Building Resilient Communities in Mexico: Civic Responses to Crime and Violence* ((Mexico Institute at the Woodrow Wilson Center and the Justice in Mexico Project at the University of San Diego, March 2014) p.2

³⁴ Shirk ‘The Drug War in Mexico’ p.6

technical assistance and equipment to combat drug trafficking,” and as such includes police training programmes, the provision of Black Hawk helicopters to, “support interdiction and rapid response by Mexican law enforcement agencies”, and improvement of intelligence sharing.³⁵ These same voices also summarised the aims of the Obama administration’s ‘Beyond Mérida’ renewal of the Initiative announced in the 2011 Budget Request in terms that echo official language.³⁶ Olsen and Wilson describe the ‘Beyond Mérida’ agenda as being based upon four pillars, two of which “refine” the original policies as summarised above, and two of which, “represent a new and expanded approach to anti-drug efforts.” They conclude, “While the majority of U.S. funding in the first phase of the MI went to expensive equipment, particularly aircraft, the new approach shifts the focus toward institution building.”³⁷ The overall goal, however, remains the same, namely to, “increase cooperation in the hemispheric fight against drug trafficking.”³⁸

Military-Based Definitions

I have demarcated a separate group of writings as ‘military-based’ within the ‘Drug War rationale’ literature. This work tends to see the instability in Mexico as more of a ‘militarised’ problem, in that cartels utilise military tactics and control space in ways often seen as akin to an insurgency. This therefore requires a militarised or counterinsurgency (COIN) solution. As with the Crime-Based literature, the violence currently gripping Mexico is seen as ‘drug-related’ in these Military-based accounts, and official figures are used to support this conclusion. For example, Killebrew informs us that, “there have been more than 30,000 deaths tied to drug trafficking in recent years”, whilst Cardash *et al* quote DEA testimony to state there were “almost 43,000 drug-related deaths in the past five years.”³⁹ Again, this drug-related violence represents a threat to U.S. interests. The direct problems again come from the power of the cartels, who are stimulating the rising violence, instability and insecurity to disrupt the U.S.-Mexican relationship in key areas, much as the Crime-Based authors argue. Thus, we see similar references to the impact of the cartels inside the U.S., their role in human trafficking, and their involvement in diversifying criminal activities.⁴⁰ Economic issues also feature heavily. Lairsey discusses the potential for bi-national trade to be negatively affected, including the crucial supply of crude oil from Mexico to the U.S.⁴¹ Brands also shares this concern, stating that, “Rising political *instability* could also imperil the \$364 billion in annual commerce that crosses the U.S.-Mexican border and more than \$84 billion in U.S. direct

³⁵ Agnes Gereben Schaefer, Benjamin Bahney & Jack K. Riley, *Security in Mexico: Implications for U.S. Policy Options* (RAND Corporation, 2009) p.53

³⁶ I explore ‘Beyond Mérida’ on Chapter Six.

³⁷ Eric L. Olsen & Christopher W. Wilson ‘Beyond Merida: The Evolving Approach to Security Cooperation’ *Mexico Institute at the Woodrow Wilson Center / Trans-Border Institute* (May, 2010) p.3

³⁸ *ibid*

³⁹ Robert Killebrew ‘Criminal Insurgency in the Americas and Beyond’ *NDU Prism* 2, 3 (June, 2011) p.39; Sharon L. Cardash, Frank J. Cillufo & Burt. B. Tussing ‘Mexico and the Triple Threat’ *U.S. Army War College, Center for Strategic Leadership* (2011) p.3 The DEA source was speaking in October 2011

⁴⁰ For example, Martin Edward Andersen ‘A Roadmap for Beating Latin America’s Transnational Criminal Organizations’ *Joint Forces Quarterly* 62 (July, 2011); Robert J. Bunker ‘Strategic Threat: Narcos and Narcotics Overview’ in p.8-29 in Robert J. Bunker [ed.] *Narcos Over the Border: Gangs, Cartels and Mercenaries* (Routledge, 2011) p.8-29

⁴¹ Johnny M. Lairsey Jr., ‘A Strategy for Mexico?’ *Small Wars Journal* (June, 2011) p.5

investment.”⁴² However, we are no longer talking about an abnormally high rate of *criminality* giving rise to these threats, but instead conceptualising the cartels as actors engaging in an *insurgency* against the Mexican state.⁴³

Cardash *et al* conclude that based on the, “available evidence [...] one would be hard-pressed to deny the existence of a narco-insurgency” in Mexico.⁴⁴ Brands uses the same term, and highlights that cartels now regularly use trained “paramilitaries” - the prime example being *los Zetas*⁴⁵ - to defeat rivals, terrify the civilian population, and, crucially, take on the state.⁴⁶ Bunker and Sullivan argue that this criminal insurgency has the potential to transform Mexico into a, “criminal state” or, “narco-democracy,” that the cartels could form a, “terrorist-criminal nexus” with other actors, and that some cartels even display a competing value system to modern liberal democracy.⁴⁷ Manwaring highlights the rise of, “privatized violence” in Mexico, with large and small private, “military organizations” employing, “an ambiguous mix of terrorism, crime, and conventional war tactics and operations.”⁴⁸ Turbiville writes of, “narcoparamilitaries” who, “surpass Mexico’s federal, state, and municipal law enforcement capabilities.”⁴⁹ Mexico’s cartels are also often featured in wider arguments about the increasing threat posed to the U.S. and its allies by TCOs across Latin America, and indeed the globe.⁵⁰ Andersen argues that the rise of TCOs is, “morphing what once seemed strictly law enforcement problems into national security threats” and that, “the violence they can bring to bear [is] challenging not only a growing number of civilian governments and civil societies throughout the hemisphere, but also the concept of national sovereignty itself.”⁵¹

The Military-Based literature is perhaps more disparate than the Crime-Based, and by no means are all of these various motifs accepted universally. There is a prevalent narrative within this literature that Mexico is, or is becoming, a ‘failed state’.⁵² However this is itself an area of debate, with differing analyses of the timescale and

⁴² Hal Brands *Mexico’s Narco-Insurgency and U.S. Counterdrug Policy* (Strategic Studies Institute, May 2009) p.13 My emphasis

⁴³ Ioan Grillo *El Narco: Inside Mexico’s Criminal Insurgency* (Bloomsbury Press, 2011)

⁴⁴ Cardash *et al* ‘Mexico and the Triple Threat’ p.3

⁴⁵ *Los Zetas* were originally hired guns for the *Cartel del Golfo*, before going independent and gaining a reputation as simultaneously Mexico’s most tactically sophisticated and brutal cartel.

⁴⁶ Brands ‘Mexico’s Narco-Insurgency’ p.7-11

⁴⁷ Robert J. Bunker and John P. Sullivan ‘Cartel Evolution Revisited: Third Phase Cartel Potentials and Alternative Futures in Mexico’ in Bunker & Sullivan *Narcos Over the Border* p.30-54 For a similar argument about terrorist-DTO nexus see Cardash *et al* ‘Mexico and the Triple Threat’ p.3 The 2011 case of a DEA sting that captured an Iranian agent who was allegedly seeking to establish ties with *Los Zetas* to carry out terrorist actions is taken as evidence of this potentiality. See Charlie Savage and Scott Shane ‘Iranians Accused of a Plot to Saudi’s U.S. Envoy’ *New York Times* (October 11th, 2011) <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/12/us/us-accuses-iranians-of-plotting-to-kill-saudi-envoy.html?pagewanted=all> Accessed 08.05.12

⁴⁸ Max. G. Manwaring *Gangs, Pseudo-Militaries and Other Modern Mercenaries: New Dynamics in Uncomfortable Wars* (University of Oklahoma, 2010) p.121-122

⁴⁹ Graham H. Turbiville ‘U.S. Military Engagement with Mexico: Uneasy Past and Challenging Future’ *Joint Special Operations University Report* (2010) p.9

⁵⁰ For example, Douglas Farah ‘Terrorist-Criminal Pipelines and Criminalized States: Emerging Alliances’ *NDU Prism* 2, 3 (June, 2011); Killebrew ‘Criminal Insurgency’; Andersen ‘Latin America’s Transnational Criminal Organizations’

⁵¹ Andersen ‘Latin America’s Transnational Criminal Organizations’

⁵² As we saw above there are trenchant critiques of this conclusion. See footnote 27.

scope of state failure. For example Bunker and Sullivan entertain the notion of complete rapid state breakdown,⁵³ whereas Farah contends that it is the governmentality of “black-hole” border areas that should concern U.S. planners.⁵⁴ Manwaring contends that, “Under President Felipe Calderon, Mexico is responding constructively to the threat and can be seen as shifting away from the possibility of state failure.”⁵⁵ However, the Military-Based authors do share the conclusion that the Mexican state is under threat, and that this represents a deeper problem for the U.S. Whereas Crime-Based scholars tend to see the current threat to the state from cartel activity as nascent and localised (as well as overlapped), those writing within this literature present it as *urgent, widespread, and real*. Brands offers that, “In some regions—particularly in areas of Chihuahua, Durango, and Sinaloa—the cartels have become so powerful as to render government authority nominal or nonexistent.”⁵⁶ Manwaring argues that the violence employed by cartels, “tends to create and consolidate semiautonomous enclaves (criminal free states) that develop into quasi-states.”⁵⁷ Some cartels provide a better example in this regard than others.⁵⁸

However, despite the fact the Military arguments may define the Mexican problem differently in terms of what it represents and the interests threatened, its analysis of the MI is similar to that of the Crime-Based literature. Mérida is again seen as a set of policies designed to undercut cartel power and influence in various areas. Brands contends that, “The central aim of the Merida Initiative is to use U.S. money, training, and equipment to strengthen Mexico’s military and law enforcement agencies, thereby giving them the capacity to take and hold the initiative in the fight against the cartels.”⁵⁹ Manwaring provides a similar appraisal, “The United States, under the Merida Initiative, is providing a 3-year \$1.4 billion aid package aimed at helping Mexico fight the drug cartels with increased law enforcement training, military equipment, and improved bilateral intelligence cooperation.”⁶⁰ In other words, the U.S. is seeking to redress the instability and insecurity plaguing Mexico by tackling those forces seen as largely responsible for it. Thus, despite the emphasis on ‘insurgency’, state failure and so on, there is actually significant correlation between the two literatures on this point. We see similar correlations in how they treat the current failure of policies to quell drug violence, and in some of the policy recommendations they make in light of this failure.

Explaining the ‘Failure’ of Policy in the Drug War Rationale Literature

The ‘drug war rationale’ literature is broadly supportive of the general direction and

⁵³ Bunker & Sullivan ‘Cartel Evolution Revisited’ The failed state narrative is also discussed in Gary Hale ‘A “Failed State” in Mexico: Tamaulipas Declares Itself Ungovernable’ *James Baker III Institute for Public Policy* (July 26th, 2011); Ted Galen Carpenter, ‘Mexico: The Rot Deepens’ *The Cato Institute* (March 5th, 2012a) <http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/mexico-rot-deepens> Accessed 28.09.12

⁵⁴ Farah ‘Terrorist-Criminal Pipelines’ p.16

⁵⁵ Max G. Manwaring ‘A “New” Dynamic in the Western Hemisphere Security Environment: The Mexican Zetas and Other Private Armies’ *Strategic Studies Institute* (September, 2009) p.3

⁵⁶ Brands ‘Mexico’s Narco-Insurgency’ p.11

⁵⁷ Manwaring *Pseudo-Militaries and Other Modern Mercenaries* p.122

⁵⁸ For example the strange *La Familia* group, which operates in Michoacán. George W.Grayson *Mexico: Narco-Violence and a Failed State?* (Transaction Publishers, 2010) p.197-213

⁵⁹ Brands ‘Mexico Narco-Insurgency’ p.2

⁶⁰ Manwaring ‘A “New” Dynamic’ p.34

make-up of U.S. policy as embodied in the MI, but this does not mean it is unaware of problems and failings that beset it, or that it treats these uncritically. However, it does not conceive of these issues (such as the spiraling homicide rate despite increased efforts to counter cartels) as particularly difficult questions to puzzle over. Instead, they are seen as, variously, the result of the intractable nature of the drug problem in Mexico, the history of violence and shifting loyalties between and within the cartels, misapplication or inadequacies of certain, specific policies, and the fallout of the Mexican government's unprecedented decision to actively and aggressively 'take on' the cartels. Thus, much of the explanation provided for the failure of Mexico's U.S.-supported strategy to quell violence and increase stability and security is based around what actually generates that violence in the first place. There is a sense in a number of the examples in the literature of the rise in violence being an inevitability, perhaps in some cases even a necessity, of tackling cartel power. It also indicates the need to *continue* and/or *refine* the current approach in light of the interests at stake, rather than pursue a wholesale overhaul or rethink of policy. This is pertinent as many within this literature deem more radical (but perhaps desirable) options such as the decriminalisation of illegal drugs as not currently politically viable⁶¹ or as very much a long-term project with its own significant risks.⁶²

This literature, then, explains the failure of U.S. and U.S.-supported policy to temper levels of violence in Mexico in two areas - the history and pervasiveness of Mexico's drug problems that preceded Mérida, and the impact (or otherwise) of the policies adopted in recent times themselves. Regarding the first of these, there are a number of historical narratives that appear in many of the Crime-Based studies, and again these also appear in a number of Military-Based arguments. Within these narratives, Mexico's current notoriety as *the* drug transit country and site of shocking drug violence stems from its 'convenient' geographical location and 2000-mile border with the world's largest drug consuming nation. These authors point to how these brute facts have interacted with specific historical developments over a number of years to produce the current situation. The stifling of Caribbean transit routes and the relative decline and suppression of the previously dominant Colombian cartels by U.S. authorities and allies in the 1980s and 1990s is argued to have increased the importance of Mexico as a trafficking conduit, and the power and influence of Mexican cartels in the supply chain.⁶³ The break up of old alliances between cartels that has occurred since division of the previously homogenous Mexican, "drug empire" into distinct areas or *plazas* in the 1980s are also argued to be major progenitors of the current violence.⁶⁴ A significant role is assigned to Mexico's

⁶¹ Dell 'Trafficking Networks and the Mexican Drug Networks' p.39

⁶² Shirk 'The Mexican Drug War' p.18-19

⁶³ *ibid* p.7-8; Luis Astorga and David A. Shirk 'Drug Trafficking Organizations and Counter-Drug Strategies in the U.S.-Mexican Context' in Olsen *et al Shared Responsibility* p.31-62; Brands 'Mexico's Narco-Insurgency' p.5

⁶⁴ Tony Payan *The Three U.S.-Mexico Border Wars: Drugs, Immigration, and Homeland Security* (Praeger Security International, 2006) p.28-30; Longmire *Cartel* p.4-7; Eduardo Guerrero-Gutiérrez 'Security, Drugs, and Violence in Mexico: A Survey' 7th North American Forum (Washington D.C., 2011) p.27-40 The Mexican drug trade prior to this was effectively run by Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo. He divided his territory up amongst lieutenants due to pressure from the U.S. and Mexican authorities in the 1980s. These areas or *plazas* apparently still largely represent the battlegrounds, and core geographical strongholds, of the cartels operating today, though some have fared better than others.

democratic opening, as the power of the previously dominant PRI dissipated following the economic ructions of the 1980s. The PRI are argued to have provided an effective, “carte blanche” to traffickers, providing certain lines were not crossed.⁶⁵ Corruption of state and police officials was rife, and the state is even said to have acted as a kind of final arbiter in drug disputes via “established patron-client relationships with drug traffickers.”⁶⁶ However, the slow decline of the PRI’s centralised power grip over the 1980s and 1990s, “destabilized the equilibrium that had developed between state actors and organized crime.”⁶⁷

Thus, whilst the corruption of state officials and institutions fed by cartel profits remained (and remains) “endemic”⁶⁸ it is now argued to be far more chaotic than under the PRI. In addition there are both high levels of impunity for a staggeringly large number of the most violent crimes⁶⁹ and a continuing, “Instability and lack of coordination [...] in federal, state and municipal public security institutions”.⁷⁰ Manwaring has argued that, “Weak or corrupt state security institutions, as in Mexico, are notoriously unhelpful and tend to be part of the problem - not the solution.”⁷¹ Many of these analysts also place two important ‘economic’ factors into this volatile mix. Firstly, the huge increase in border trade engendered by NAFTA, and Mexico’s opening to “economic globalization”⁷² are argued to have naturally increased opportunities for cartels to smuggle drug shipments, channel drug money, and establish “transnational” connections across the Americas, and beyond.⁷³ As Payan notes, the 5 million trucks that cross the U.S.-Mexico border annually (2005 figures) cannot all be routinely inspected, and thus large amounts of contraband does get through, with cartels, ‘riding the formal NAFTA economy’ to generate increased profitability.⁷⁴ In addition, “Globalization and the ‘dollarization’ of the Mexican economy have opened a variety of new fronts for the movement of profits from drug

⁶⁵ This line *was* apparently crossed in 1985 with the kidnap, torture and murder of U.S. DEA agent Enrique Camarena, which prompted a swift response by U.S. authorities. Despite levels of state complicity in the murder, Mexican authorities eventually arrested drug kingpins, Ernesto Fonseca Carillo, Rafael Caro Quintero and Félix Gallardo. The U.S. renditioned others involved in Camarena’s torture and death. Caro Quintero was released by Jalisco’s state court and is now a wanted fugitive in the U.S.

⁶⁶ O’Neil ‘The Real War in Mexico’ p.63

⁶⁷ Astorga & Shirk ‘Drug Trafficking Organizations’ p.33 Also see Brands ‘Mexico’s Narco-Insurgency’ p.6; O’Neil ‘The Real War in Mexico’ p.63; Juan. D. Lindau ‘The Drug War’s Impact on Executive Power, Judicial Reform, and Federalism in Mexico’ *Political Science Quarterly* 126, 2 (2011) p.179-180;

⁶⁸ Olsen *et al* ‘Introduction’ p.3

⁶⁹ For example Shirk ‘The Drug War in Mexico’ p.11 In February 2011 Mexico’s Human Rights Commission, the *Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos* (CNDH) released statistics that over ten years only 98% of crimes had resulted in convictions. See Julieta Martínez, ‘Impunidad obliga a las personas a huir: CNDH’ *El Universal* (February 28th, 2011) <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/notas/748364.html> Accessed 02.01.12

⁷⁰ Guerrero-Gutiérrez ‘Security, Drugs and Violence’ p.9

⁷¹ Manwaring ‘A ‘New’ Dynamic’ p.1

⁷² O’Neil ‘Real War in Mexico’ p.64

⁷³ See *ibid* p.64-66; Douglas Farah ‘Money Laundering and Bulk Cash Smuggling: Challenges for the Mérida Initiative’ in Olsen *et al* *Shared Responsibility* p.141-166; Farah ‘Terrorist-Criminal Pipelines’; David R. Mares & Gustavo Vega Cánovas ‘The U.S.-Mexico Relationship: Toward a New Era?’ *Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies* (2010) <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/1kb4c76j> Accessed 21.06.11 p.5-6

⁷⁴ Payan *The Three U.S.-Mexican Border Wars* p.34

cartels and other transnational criminal organizations.”⁷⁵

Secondly, the pernicious effect of Mexico’s continued relative economic underdevelopment, and the economic ructions it suffered in the late 1970s/early 1980s and mid-1990s, are argued to be coalescing with the other factors previously identified and exacerbating drug-related problems. Shirk argues that the economic crisis of 1982 heightened unemployment and criminal activity, and the introduction of free market reforms in the wake of that crisis, “pushed many ordinary Mexicans to find alternative employment in an expanding underground economy that, by some estimates, accounted for 40 percent of all economic activity.” The expansion of Mexico’s drug trade coincided with these events.⁷⁶ Brands contends that, “cartels thrive on the resentment that often results” from Mexico’s entrenched poverty rates.⁷⁷ Cartels are able to draw loyalty and recruits from this wellspring of disenfranchised, impoverished populations with gifts and much sought after employment opportunities.⁷⁸ O’Neil has highlighted that this phenomena is especially troublesome as, according to a recent Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report, Mexico has the third largest inactive youth population⁷⁹ amongst OECD countries. This is especially pronounced for young males, and in areas with high levels of drug violence. The implication is that such disaffected young men become easy targets for recruiting cartels.⁸⁰ Bailey perhaps goes furthest in this regard, arguing specifically that, “Neo-liberal policies since the mid 1980s have not generated a new social contract to replace the populist consensus of the “golden age” of growth with stability (1950s–1970s). Rampant, drug-related criminality has thrived in this environment.”⁸¹

Some analysts have also begun to posit that U.S./Mexican policies and strategies may be having a *causal* impact on the increasing levels of violence. The tactic of eliminating cartel ‘kingpins’, a key part of Mexican strategy supported by U.S.

⁷⁵ Farah ‘Money Laundering’ p.146

⁷⁶ Shirk ‘The Drug War in Mexico’ p.7

⁷⁷ His figures - 40% and 18% respectively for basic and extreme levels of poverty - are based on World Bank data from 2009. Mexico’s poverty rate is troublingly persistent in the NAFTA era. Using official figures from Mexico’s *Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social* (CONEVAL) Wilson and Silva show how poverty rates have declined on both the overall and extreme levels between 2010 and 2012 from 46.1 to 45.5% and 11.3 to 9.8% respectively. However the number of impoverished Mexicans has increased due to population increases, and income-based poverty is rising. Christopher Wilson and Gerardo Silva ‘Mexico’s Latest Poverty Stats’ *Wilson Center: Mexico Institute* http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/Poverty_Statistics_Mexico_2013.pdf Accessed 07.07.14 The World Bank has charted a steady increase in the ‘Poverty Headcount Ratio at National Poverty Line’ in recent years, from 42.9% of the population in 2006, to 52.3% in 2012 The World Bank ‘Data: Poverty Headcount Ratio at National Poverty Line (% of Population)’ *The World Bank* <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.NAHC/countries/MX?display=graph> Accessed 08.09.14

⁷⁸ Brands ‘Mexico’s Narco-Insurgency’ p.19-20

⁷⁹ Neither employed nor in education, or in the Spanish colloquialism *ni estudian, ni trabajan*, or ‘ni-ni’s’

⁸⁰ Shannon K. O’Neil ‘Mexico’s NiNis’ *Council on Foreign Relations* (November 2011) <http://blogs.cfr.org/oneil/2011/11/04/mexico's-ninis/> Accessed 05.11.11; Ioan Grillo ‘Mexico’s Lost Youth: Generation Narco’ *Time* (November 7th, 2010)

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2028912,00.html#ixzz1Z5H2ssA3> Accessed 5.11.11

⁸¹ Bailey ‘Combating Organized Crime’ p.327

intelligence, training, and equipment transfers, has been argued to *increase* violence as cartels compete for territories vacated by arrested/killed cartel leaders, take advantage of increased instability and insecurity, and smaller gangs proliferate in power vacuums left by government offensives. Many of these accounts are, “qualitative and descriptive” in nature.⁸² For example, Shirk contends that, “that inter-cartel dynamics and the government’s chosen strategy to combat organized crime groups by targeting top leadership structures has contributed to the fractionalization of organized crime groups [and] more severe and disorganized violence.”⁸³ Corcoran cites a phenomenon dubbed the ‘cockroach effect’, whereby, “the government cracking down in one region will, at best, lead to the criminal actors scurrying to other locales. As they set up shop in their new residence, the criminal exiles are no less violent than before”.⁸⁴ Guerrero-Gutiérrez has found more quantitative evidence that violence rates increase after the arrest or ‘killing’ of a high-ranking cartel operative.⁸⁵

These conclusions are not a matter of particular controversy. Indeed similar conclusions are often part of the more critically-inclined literature we come onto below.⁸⁶ This literature also demonstrates an awareness that drug violence *has* increased very sharply since Calderón launched his military offensive in Michoacán in December 2006, whilst the MI continues. However the response to the more negative findings within the ‘drug war rationale’ literature has not been an automatic rejection or wide-ranging critique of the U.S. strategy itself. Dell instead argues that her research should be used to employ a more informed ‘crackdown’ approach, in line with Guerrero-Gutiérrez’s argument that the Mexican government should target singular cartels progressively, rather than collectively.⁸⁷ This ties in with the fact that elements of this literature do not treat rising levels of violence and spiraling body counts as the key indices of policy success or failure. Olsen *et al* express this view in arguing that, “it is entirely possible that the violence will get worse before it gets better, even if public policies have succeeded in weakening the grip of organized crime.” They go on to state that violence may decline even as the power of one or a group of cartels increases, and its/their ability to corrupt the Mexican state grows symbiotically with that power.⁸⁸ Nonetheless, policy prescriptions in how to better tackle cartels are offered.

⁸² Dell *Trafficking Networks* p.7

⁸³ David A Shirk *Drug Violence and State Responses in Mexico* (Manuscript: University of San Diego, 2011) p.2

⁸⁴ Patrick Corcoran ‘Release of Mexico Murder Stats Reveals Shifting Landscape’ *Insight Crime* (October 23rd, 2011) <http://www.insightcrime.org/insight-latest-news/item/1744-release-of-mexico-government-info-reveals-shifting-landscape> Accessed 25.10.11

⁸⁵ Guerrero-Gutiérrez ‘Security, Drugs and Violence’ However these links are hard to pin down definitively. Guerrero-Gutiérrez states that there is not necessarily proof of a causal connection between U.S. supported Mexican strategy and heightened levels of violence. On the reverse side, Felbab-Brown (‘Calderon’s Cauldron’ p.1-15) has cautioned against automatically reading *reduced* levels of violence in Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez as signs of government policy success, as one should always consider that the cartels themselves may have established peace, dominance, or violent exhaustion in the area. The cartels own strategies or actions may just as easily explain the reverse effect of increasing violence.

⁸⁶ I briefly reiterate some of these key points myself in Chapter Four.

⁸⁷ Dell *Trafficking Networks* p. 36-39; Guerrero-Gutiérrez ‘Security, Drugs and Violence’ p.71-72

⁸⁸ Olsen *et al* ‘Introduction’ p.1

Potential Solutions

Thus, for many of these analysts, the problems are characterised as simply too embedded to respond quickly to the policies that are designed to mitigate them. As Olsen *et al* summarise, “The weakness of Mexico’s domestic security apparatus — the ineffectiveness and corruption of police forces, the judiciary, and the entire criminal justice system — severely limits the state’s capacity, and requires deep, sustained changes over the long term.”⁸⁹ In addition, whilst remaining supportive of the broad thrust of the Mérida programme and the positives of “bilateral and multilateral security cooperation”,⁹⁰ many cite a need for deeper collaboration in specific policy areas, and even a refocus of policy, away from traditional ‘supply side’ drug policies and towards a more holistic effort that encompasses increased efforts in a number of policy areas. Again, Olsen *et al* charge that the Mexican government’s strategy has been too heavily biased towards military interdiction efforts. They go on to state:

On the U.S. side, funding for the Mérida Initiative [...] largely appears to reinforce the shortcomings of Mexico’s efforts by underfunding judicial reform while prioritizing the “presence and patrol” strategy used thus far by the military and law enforcement agencies. Moreover, efforts to curb the flow of drug money and weapons south, while significantly enhanced in the last three years, appear to fall far short of weakening the drug trafficking organizations.”⁹¹

The more holistic policy proffered would include ‘demand-side’ drug treatment programmes in the U.S., a crackdown on firearms smuggling, a serious effort to tackle the drug profits laundered in both countries, and so on.⁹² It would also incorporate much bolstered efforts to aid Mexico’s economic development utilising increased economic and social programmes, a renewed endeavor to reform Mexico’s judicial system to tackle impunity, and the continued strengthening of public institutions in the name of efficacy and anti-corruption.⁹³ Despite the fact that the Military-Based accounts take, as their starting point, that Mexico is experiencing something akin to an insurgency, there is still significant correlation between the two literatures regarding the need for a multi-area effort or, “whole-of-government” approach⁹⁴ that would attempt to tackle the “structural” elements of the problem⁹⁵ as well as a far greater focus on specific issues such as money laundering and gun smuggling.⁹⁶ Thus some analysts have been cheered by the Obama Administration’s ‘Beyond Mérida’ approach, which they argue takes further steps in this multi-level policy direction, incorporating more, “binational collaboration to combat DTOs, greater assistance to strengthen the judicial sector, more effective interdiction efforts through twenty-first-century border controls, and new social programs to revitalize Mexican communities

⁸⁹ *ibid* p.27

⁹⁰ Shirk ‘The Drug War in Mexico’ p.20

⁹¹ Olsen *et al* ‘Introduction’ p.4

⁹² For example, Shirk ‘The Drug War in Mexico’ p.20-26; O’Neil ‘The Real War in Mexico’ p.69-77

⁹³ *Inter alia* and for example, *ibid*; Olsen *et al* ‘Introduction’ p.28-30

⁹⁴ Andersen ‘Latin America’s Transnational Criminal Organizations’

⁹⁵ Brands ‘Mexico’s Narco-Insurgency’ p.v-vi;

⁹⁶ Farah ‘Money Laundering’

affected by crime and violence.”⁹⁷

The Military-Based literature, unsurprisingly, does give more credence to military solutions, including, in logical fashion, the use of COIN tactics. This includes deepening current policies, including the military training element, rather than an about-turn. Turbiville indicates that, “trained Mexican special operations units, as well as a number of other well-trained Mexican forces used in special operations roles, are executing many of the direct armed engagement missions against narcoparamilitaries” and, “they will be instrumental in effecting any positive change in Mexico’s still deteriorating security environment.”⁹⁸ As Andersen has recognised, this military focus in the drug war in Latin America has troubled human rights and liberal think-tank organisations such as Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), which foresee a return to the dark past of military control.⁹⁹ Some analysts have also highlighted the threat of potential military overreach in Mexico. Even prior to Mérida, Freeman and Sierra highlighted the hazards of increased military aid to Mexico.¹⁰⁰ More recently, Lindau has written of the re-consolidation of military and executive power that is taking place in the drug war context.¹⁰¹ However, this is at the sharp end of the debate, and much of the Crime-Based literature falls into the middle ground in arguing that the military are likely to play a role (not least because of the endemic corruption in the Mexican police), but that it must be balanced with economic and social programmes, and that it must be a stopgap whilst institutional reform takes place.¹⁰² This is part of a wider shared belief *across* the drug war rationale literature that what the U.S. policy in Mexico needs to succeed is renewed effort, and time.

Reviewing the Drug War Rationale Literature

Notwithstanding these debates, and despite the recognition of the problems that beset the MI and U.S-Mexican security collaboration on drugs, the fundamental point here in terms of what I will attempt to argue in this project is that these analysts *are focusing on Mérida as a CN-based aid package*. To drive the point home, this has been done *without* a *deep* investigation of the actual policy itself. This is my crucial first observation. Bailey sums up the position of much of this literature when it comes to the intent of U.S. policy, and is worth quoting at length. He contends that, “With respect to the United States, the strategies could be viewed as ‘working’ in the short term in the sense that the quality and price of illegal drugs remained relatively stable in major urban markets.” He also focuses on spillover violence as a key short-term goal (contending there is not enough evidence on this to make a clear judgment). He continues, “With respect to longer-term judgments”, based on the longer-term reduction of violence, in turn based on the undermining of cartel power by various means, “much depends on the performance of institutions and programs that are being

⁹⁷ Shirk ‘The Drug War in Mexico’ p.15

⁹⁸ Turbiville ‘U.S. Military Engagement with Mexico’ p.46-47

⁹⁹ Andersen ‘Latin America’s Transnational Criminal Organizations’ Of course Mexico avoided military control during the Cold War.

¹⁰⁰ Laurie Freeman & Jorge Luis Sierra ‘Mexico: The Militarization Trap’ in Coletta A. Youngers & Eileen Rosin (eds.) *Drugs and Democracy in Latin America: The Impact of U.S. Policy* (Lynne Rienner, 2005)

¹⁰¹ Lindau ‘The Drug War’s Impact on Executive Power’

¹⁰² For example, Shirk ‘The Drug War in Mexico’ p.20-26

assembled and implemented in the Obama Mérida” (i.e. the Four Pillar approach) Bailey contends that if these institutions and programmes can reduce violence in the long-term in cities like Ciudad Juárez, then the U.S. would consider Mérida a success.¹⁰³ Clearly then, the policy is seen in CN terms. However, this conclusion is based on a narrow examination of *actual* Mérida policy, not looking particularly deeply at some of the available material on policy detail, or connecting the Initiative to wider bilateral policies

There are other gaps in the drug war rationale literature, less directly related to the central research aims of this project but pertinent nonetheless. Often this literature is cautious about *deeper* linkages between the CN strategy being employed and the violence itself. Economic underdevelopment and lack of necessary social spending, argued to be contributing to drug violence and resultant insecurity, is divorced from its historical and political context. We should see this instead as partly a consequence of the U.S. and IMF/World Bank backed *project* of the PRI in the 1980s (and the *Partido Acción Nacional* [PAN] since 2000) to rollback state economic involvement in a number of areas, maintain macroeconomic stability, and encourage attractiveness for foreign investment. Related to this, NAFTA’s role in improving the cartels’ hand through increased unemployment and further smuggling opportunities is mentioned, yet further economic integration and liberalisation are proffered as part of the solution to the problem.¹⁰⁴ There at least appear to be questions here about how *political economic* policies have fed into Mexico’s security crisis. These issues are perhaps thornier than the dominant ‘drug war rationale’ literature has allowed for, and it has been left to the Critical literature to explore them. It is to this that we now turn.

A Drug War Pretext

This section summarises the more critical literature around the MI that has posited that CN concerns act more as a ‘pretext’ than an overriding motivating factor in U.S. policy. I approach this literature in a slightly different fashion to the previous section in that I first look at how it describes the nature of the violence currently afflicting large areas of Mexico. This literature claims variously that the levels of violence are underplayed, that *who* is committing the violence is oversimplified, and that the *structural and functional violence* of the Mexican state against Mexican civil society, in defence of political / class interests, is obscured or ignored. This gives us the correct context in which to consider the arguments regarding the U.S.’ involvement in this ‘hidden’ side of Mexico’s security crisis and, more importantly, what interests may motivate its involvement. This is based around an emphasis on the U.S. desire to stabilise Mexico’s open political-economy. Watt and Zepeda crystallise the position of much of this literature in stating that, “U.S./Mexico policy would appear to prioritise protecting and developing unpopular economic interests, while employing heavy-handed military and police methods to deter challenges from social movements and civil society, using the *convenient pretext* of the drug war.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Bailey ‘Combating Organized Crime’ p.346

¹⁰⁴ O’Neil ‘The Real War in Mexico’ p.69-77; Shirk ‘The Drug War in Mexico’ p.20-26

¹⁰⁵ Peter Watt and Roberto Zepeda *Drug War Mexico: Politics, Neoliberalism and Violence in the New Narcoeconomy* (Zed Books, 2012) p.208 My emphasis. It should be noted straight away that these authors *do* conceive of the drug violence in Mexico itself as a genuine, disturbing and pressing social problem. It is just that they consider U.S. goals to be unrelated to drug violence in their main intent,

Violence in Mexico

According to the Critical literature, violence in Mexico is too multi-faceted to summarised as simply ‘drug-related’. The official figures on drug-related homicides provided by Mexican and U.S. authorities are treated with huge skepticism in many Critical analyses. Using figures obtained by the Mexican newspaper *El Universal* in 2010,¹⁰⁶ Bowden and Molloy contended that the, “federal government had investigated only 5 percent of the first 22,000 executions” and that this was no basis on which to claim, as the Mexican government had done, that the majority of those killed worked within the drug trade.¹⁰⁷ In a study released in August 2013 Molloy undertook painstaking research to suggest 130,000 people may have died in the ‘drug war’ Calderón launched in December 2006.¹⁰⁸ The skepticism is well-founded, given that the various datasets used by various official bodies all have conflicting totals and inputs which further confuse the picture. An official government database released in January 2011 stated there had been 35,000 drug-related deaths, but it did not specify how ‘drug-related’ was ascertained. The Mexican government’s office for national statistics, INEGI, periodically releases homicide figures, but does not differentiate between drug-related and ‘normal’ homicides. In addition, Mexican newspapers keep their own, different, tallies.¹⁰⁹ In any case, the chronic lack of investigation and levels of impunity renders these counts largely meaningless in terms of real detail, indicating only the existence of a large-scale problem. The true number of violent deaths, both associated with the drug trade or otherwise, could even be higher given wide scale under-reporting and practises of the cartels.¹¹⁰

The lack of investigation and clarity about homicide figures and their association to the drug trade is disturbing in itself. However, what truly animates these critical analyses is the assertion that the automatic designation of violence in Mexico as ‘drug-related’ and stemming overwhelmingly from the cartels’ actions is obfuscating violence committed by other actors, including *state actors*, in pursuit of various goals. Again, this violence is multi-faceted. A prevalent theme is that Mexican state

and therefore they unable or not designed to tackle the crisis. This is also due to the Mexican state having motives other than stopping drug violence, not least because so much of it is caught up in the drug trade according to these accounts. Therefore major and radical alternatives arising from civil society are necessary, but often choked off at the source by the very security policies the U.S. and Mexico are following. For example see *ibid* p. 209-235; Laura Carlsen ‘Plan Mexico’ *Foreign Policy in Focus* (October 29th, 2007) http://fpif.org/plan_mexico/ Accessed 23.05.09

¹⁰⁶ Silvia Otero ‘No investigan 95% de muertes en “guerra”’ *El Universal* (June 21st, 2010) <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/notas/689120.html> Accessed 10.01.12

¹⁰⁷ Charles Bowden & Molly Molloy ‘Who is Behind the 25,000 Deaths in Mexico?’ *The Nation* (July 23rd, 2010) http://www.thenation.com/article/37916/who-behind-25000-deaths-mexico?page=0_0 Accessed 10.01.12

¹⁰⁸ Molly Molloy ‘The Mexican Undead: Towards a New History of the ‘Drug War’ Killing Fields’ *Small Wars Journal* (Aug 21st, 2013) Molloy, who has paid unrivalled attention to this issue and uses a triangulation of the *overall* homicide figures provided by the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía* (INEGI - <http://www.inegi.org.mx>) in her tally. This means murders not strictly ‘drug-related’ may be captured in the total, but this is preferable to undercounting by relying on data provided by the government.

¹⁰⁹ Patrick Corcoran ‘Mexico Govt Backtracks on Murder Data’ *Insight Crime* (January 10th, 2012) <http://www.insightcrime.org/insight-latest-news/item/2056-mexico-govt-backtracks-on-murder-data> Accessed 11.01.12

¹¹⁰ See Introduction

institutions are not just corrupted by cartels in specific locales, but that the Mexican state is *intimately* involved in the battle for *control* of drug profits that enter the country. Gibler quotes a Mexican journalist who argues there are two ‘drug wars’ in Mexico; “*la Guerra del Narco*,” or the official U.S.-backed government war on cartels as described in the majority of the literature, and “*la Narcoguerra*,” in which various state entities and actors, allied with various cartels, fight *for* control of the Mexican drug trade. The second of these wars is real, the other, a spectacle.¹¹¹

Bowden uses a similar distinction, though perhaps goes even further in arguing that the first drug war simply, “does not exist” and that the “line between the government and drug world has never existed.”¹¹² As does much of the critical literature, Mercille shares the view that the PRI exercised a level of control over the drug trade prior to the 1980s and 90s, and that the breakdown of this control is contributing to violence. However, in contrast to the ‘drug war rationale’ approach, he contends that, “significant sectors of the Mexican government and security forces are still associated with it.”¹¹³ Gibler summarises this viewpoint elsewhere by contending:

...in Mexico, drug trafficking on its present scale is only made possible through the active participation of government employees, elected politicians, army generals and commandos, police chiefs and patrol officers, prison guards, and local and federal judges by protecting one set of drug traffickers from another and, importantly, from incarceration.¹¹⁴

State actors, then, are argued to be committing violent acts in a war *for* drugs, rather than against it. Gibler again cites a Mexican journalist who was subjected to a harrowing experience in Reynosa, Tamaulipas, where *Los Zetas* and *El Cartel del Golfo* (CDG) were vying for supremacy of the border town. The journalist encountered *Cartel del Golfo* operatives brazenly patrolling the streets in SUVs mounted with automatic weapons. The local police were acting as lookouts for *Golfo* against *Los Zetas*. Someone, possibly those police, tipped *Golfo* operatives off as to the journalist’s whereabouts, and he and his partner were subjected to a precise beating designed to inflict maximum pain in specific areas, and then questioned by men in military style uniform that sported CDG insignia carrying assault rifles and grenades.¹¹⁵ Bowden’s descriptions of Juárez convey the sense that the local police, who suffer high casualties in the city, are more likely to be killed for being with the wrong cartel than for being in the police *per se*.¹¹⁶ He cites the dramatic increase in the murder rate in Juárez after the arrival of the military in 2008, and draws (largely implicit) links between the two, due to the army also being a player in the drug battle. Campbell echoes these sentiments, contending that, “The thoroughly corrupt federal, state, and municipal police in Juárez viewed each other as enemies allied with rival

¹¹¹ John Gibler *To Die In Mexico: Dispatches from Inside the Drug War* (City Lights Books, 2011) p.68

¹¹² Charles Bowden *Murder City: Ciudad Juárez and the Global Economy’s New Killing Fields* (Nation Books, 2010) p.18, 22-24, 202

¹¹³ Julien Mercille ‘Violent Narco-Cartels or US Hegemony? The Political Economy of the ‘War on Drugs’ in Mexico’ *Third World Quarterly* 32, 9 (October, 2011) p.1641

¹¹⁴ John Gibler *Mexico Uncovered: Chronicles of Power and Revolt* (City Lights Books, 2009) p.56

¹¹⁵ Gibler *To Die in Mexico* p.147-158

¹¹⁶ Bowden *Murder City*; Charles Bowden *Down by the River: Drugs, Money, Murder and Family* (Simon & Schuster, 2003)

branches of organized crime.”¹¹⁷

In addition to accusations of direct involvement in the drug trade, these more critical analysts have documented the dramatic rise in human rights complaints against the military and Mexican federal police since Calderón deployed them in 2006. Again, Campbell summarises that, “Everywhere Calderón sent the military and federal police, the violence increased. In the states of Michoacán, Chihuahua, Sinaloa, Durango, and others, the bloody story was the same. Human rights violations and homicides [...] skyrocketed.”¹¹⁸ This facet of Mexico’s security crisis has been recognised in a number of human rights reports that document intimidation, theft, torture, extra-judicial killings, rape and disappearances, for which there is an extremely low investigation and conviction rate within the military’s internal, secretive justice system.¹¹⁹ It has also been documented within the ‘drug war rationale’ literature itself, with Brands stating that military abuses, “allegedly include extrajudicial executions, illegal detentions, and torture.”¹²⁰

However, the critical analyses should be set apart from the ‘drug war rationale’ literature on this question of Mexican state actors involvement in violence and corruption within the ‘drug war’. Much of the ‘drug war pretext’ literature asserts that institutional violence has a *structural* and *functional* form that serves specific political and economic interests, rather than it being an unfortunate side-effect of military deployment, or result of institutional weakness or everyday corruption (that can be mitigated through Mexican efforts and U.S. training).¹²¹ These interests are seen in various lights, but often they involve viewing the Mexican state as made up of *social*

¹¹⁷ Howard Campbell ‘No End in Sight: Violence in Ciudad Juárez’ *NACLA Report on the Americas* 44, 3 (May/June 2011) p.21

¹¹⁸ *ibid* p.22

¹¹⁹ Human Rights Watch ‘Uniform Impunity: Mexico’s Misuse of Military Justice to Prosecute Abuses in Counternarcotics and Public Security Operations’ *Human Rights Watch* (2009); Human Rights Watch ‘Neither Rights or Security: Killings, Torture and Disappearances in Mexico’s “War on Drugs”’ *Human Rights Watch* (November, 2011); Human Rights Watch ‘Mexico’s Disappeared: The Enduring Cost of a Crisis Ignored’ *Human Rights Watch* (February, 2013); Maureen Meyer, Stephanie Brewer & Carlos Cepeda ‘Abused and Afraid in Ciudad Juárez: An Analysis of Human Rights Violations by the Military in Mexico’ *Washington Office on Latin America* (September 2010); Amnesty International ‘Known Abusers, but Victims Ignored: Torture and Ill-Treatment in Mexico’ *Amnesty International* (2012); Amnesty International ‘Out of Control: Torture and Other Ill Treatment in Mexico’ *Amnesty International* (2014) Recent court cases have begun to challenge the previous legal arrangements on internal military trials. Under pressure from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) and several NGOs regarding a number of high-profile military abuse cases, the Mexican Supreme Court ruled in June 2012 that military members did not have immunity from civilian prosecution, a decision the Mexican Congress passed unanimously in April 2014. See ‘Mexico: Supreme Court Limit on Military Jurisdiction Must Become Binding Precedent’ *Amnesty International* (August 22nd, 2012) <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/mexico-supreme-court-limit-military-jurisdiction-must-become-binding-precedent-all-courts-2012-> Accessed 12.09.12; Reuters ‘Mexico Votes to Allow Civilian Trials for Soldiers’ *Reuters* (April 30th, 2014) <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/01/us-mexico-military-idUSBREA4002520140501> Accessed 07.07.14

¹²⁰ Brands ‘Mexico’s Narco-Insurgency’ p.17 Also see Olsen *et al* ‘Introduction’ p.23; Roderic Ai Camp, ‘Armed Forces and Drugs: Public Perceptions and Institutional Challenges’ in Olsen *et al* *Shared Responsibility* p.320; Shirk ‘The Drug War in Mexico’ p.6; Sullivan, John P. ‘Police-Military Interaction in Mexico’s Drug War’ *Air & Space Power Journal-Spanish Edition*, (Third Trimester 2009) <http://www.airpower.au.af.mil/apjinternational/apj-s/2009/3tri09/sullivaneng.html> Accessed 11.11.11

¹²¹ Various in *ibid*

actors and indeed, *social classes*, who seek to protect and further those interests. Most crucially, whilst the ‘drug war rationale’ analyses have discussed the entrenched poverty and inequality of Mexico, they have not considered that this situation may itself stem from a political economic arrangement that is disproportionately beneficial to certain actors and classes, and that they would have an interest in maintaining that arrangement. Both in the fight *for* control of drug profits that significantly involves the state, and in Mexico’s economic elite using state institutions as a tool of its continued power, violence is seen to a good extent to be *employed* deliberately by state actors against sections of the population.

It is helpful to briefly illustrate some instances of functional state violence. Cases are presented at multiple levels; from regional and specific incidences with highly localised issues, to country-wide examples of the efficacy of state violence on a national scale. Gibler highlights examples on both the national and local scale. Nationally, the widespread and well-documented use of torture¹²² by various levels of the police, and the Mexican military, is regarded not as an “aberration”, or an irregularity of the Mexican system, but instead as a crucial component of the system that helps ensure political and economic inequality is sustained through repression of elements of society who have the most interest in changing it.¹²³ Gibler also provides examples of localised state violence, including a detailed discussion of the ‘Oaxaca Uprising’, in which protest groups took over the state capital in relation to a teachers strike in 2006. The broad-based protestors were subjected to violence and intimidation that culminated in street executions (a U.S. journalist was amongst the fatalities) by local and state police and paramilitaries related to the police and the state governor. In October 2006 federal police (*federales*) sent by President Fox cleared the protest camps with helicopters and anti-riot tanks, leaving three more dead.¹²⁴

Whilst protests on this scale have not been seen since, state repression is argued to be ongoing across Mexico, but especially in areas with high poverty and inequality, which brings with it agitation for change. Thus military intimidation and abuses continue in Chiapas, home of the EZLN social movement. This intimidatory atmosphere is argued to continue increasingly under the ‘pretext’ of the drug war.¹²⁵ Paterson asserts that Guerrero, which was a hotbed of political activism and insurgency in the 1970s and remains one of Mexico’s poorest states, has returned to a condition of ‘dirty war’ in which political dissidents and activists are intimidated, abused, disappeared and killed, again increasingly under a drug war “cloak.”¹²⁶ For

¹²² For the prevalence of torture in the Mexican justice system see *inter alia* Ana Laura Magaloni ‘Arbitrariness and Inefficiency in the Mexican Criminal Justice System’ in Kenny *et al Mexico’s Security Failure* p.96; Human Rights Watch ‘Neither Rights or Security’; Amnesty International ‘Out of Control’

¹²³ Gibler *Mexico Unconquered* p.63-71

¹²⁴ *ibid* p.139-188; U.S. Embassy Mexico *GOM Intervenes in Oaxaca* Cable Reference 006182 (31st October, 2006) Link:

<https://cablegatesearch.wikileaks.org/cable.php?id=06MEXICO6182&q=fox%20oaxaca> Accessed 28.08.14

¹²⁵ For example, Mercille ‘Violent Narco-Cartels’ p.1647

¹²⁶ Kent Paterson ‘Mexico’s New Dirty War’ *CIP Americas Program* (April, 2010)

<http://www.cipamericas.org/archives/2065> Accessed 17.06.10 & ‘Mexico’s Dirty War Gets Dirtier’ *CIP Americas Program* (December 2011) <http://www.cipamericas.org/archives/5874> Accessed 18.12.11 Also see Kristin Bricker ‘Drug War Meets Dirty War in Guerrero’ *CIP Americas Program*

example, he cites the intimidation and surveillance of Me'Phaa indigenous peoples, some of whom are due to act as witnesses in a case of military rape in the state, and the assassination of four *Partido de Revolución Democrática Democrática* (PRD - Mexico's largest party of the left) leaders in 2010.¹²⁷ In July 2011, gunmen assassinated activists Isabel Ayala Nava and her sister Reyna Ayala Nava. The former was the widow of 70s revolutionary leader Lucio Cabañas, and the murders took place as the Guerrero legislature prepared to look at proposals for a truth commission investigating alleged crimes in the military's COIN operations in the 1970s.¹²⁸ On December 7th 2011, two individuals associated with a *campesino* political group in Guerrero's, Eva Alarcón and Marcial Bautista, were disappeared. "State agents" are alleged to be implicated in the disappearance, and several police officers have been arrested.¹²⁹ The fatal police shooting of two students, also in December 2011, as they protested the lack of education and employment opportunities in the state, has further dramatically highlighted the issues in Guerrero. This is especially pertinent as authorities immediately attempted to implicate "outside elements," (i.e. cartels) for the violence, a claim that has since been challenged by Mexico's National Human Rights Commission.¹³⁰

This kind of violence is ongoing in Mexico. Whole families have been targeted in Ciudad Juárez following activism against military abuses, members of the much publicized anti drug war protest movement *Movimiento por la Paz*¹³¹ have been assassinated, anti-mining protestors have been killed, union leaders and members intimidated, and labor strikes broken with federal forces.¹³² Mexico is currently the

(September 27th, 2011) <http://www.cipamericas.org/archives/5482> Accessed 04.10.11 More on the 'Dirty War' during the 1970s is found in Chapter Four.

¹²⁷ Paterson 'Mexico's New Dirty War'; Inter-American Court on Human Rights 'IACHR Alarmed Over Threat to Indigenous Leaders in Guerrero, Mexico' *Inter-American Court on Human Rights: Press Release* (March 18th, 2010) <http://www.cidh.oas.org/Comunicados/English/2010/32-10eng.html> Accessed 17.10.10 This incident occurred whilst the PRD actually held the state governorship, which it re-took in 2011. Paterson cites the Guerrero daily *El Sur* in pointing out that the change in political leadership has not affected policing structures. Paterson "Mexico's Dirty War Gets Dirtier"

¹²⁸ Bricker 'Drug War Meets Dirty War'; Ezequiel Flores Contreras 'Sin Avance, Investigación por Crimen de Viuda de Lucio Cabañas' *Proceso* (July 6th, 2011) <http://www.proceso.com.mx/?p=275109> Accessed 17.08.13

¹²⁹ Paterson 'Mexico's Dirty War Gets Dirtier'; Proceso 'Cae Jefe Policiaco por Secuestro de Dos Ecologistas en Guerrero' *Proceso* (December 28th, 2011) <http://www.proceso.com.mx/?p=292898> Accessed 12.01.12

¹³⁰ Stevenson, Mark 'Mexican Police: Weapons Found at Protest Site' *Guardian* (December 13th, 2011) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/feedarticle/9994149> Accessed 14.12.11; Associated Press 'Mexican Human Rights Agency Says Police Likely Fired Fatal Shots at Student Protest' *The Washington Post* (January 10th, 2012) http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/americas/mexican-human-rights-agency-says-police-likely-fired-fatal-shots-at-student-protest/2012/01/09/gIQACMjomP_story.html Accessed 10.01.12

¹³¹ Javier Sicilia, a poet who lost his son to drug violence, established the Movement for Peace to pressure Mexican authorities into bringing an end to the drug war.

¹³² Various sources, but see Amnesty *Document* - 'Mexico: Protestors Family at Risk After Killing' *Amnesty International* (December 3rd, 2009) <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AMR41/062/2009/en/6843f8e3-b15a-4bee-a8c4-a92045c0c863/amr410622009en.html> Accessed 05.01.12 & 'Mexico Urged to Protect Targeted Family Following Triple Killing' (February 25th, 2011) <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/mexico-urged-protect-targeted-family-following-triple-killing-2011-02-25> Accessed 26.02.11; Laura Carlsen 'ALERT: Spate of Attacks on Human Rights Defenders and Activists' *CIP Americas Program* (December 13th, 2011) <http://www.cipamericas.org/archives/5797> Accessed 15.12.11;

deadliest country in the world to practice journalism, with ten journalists killed year in 2011 (some of whom had apparently been reporting inconvenient matters for the authorities).¹³³ Thus, critical analysts and human rights organisations have continued to highlight that there is a strand of violence in Mexico that is not *automatically* related to the battle for drug trafficking advantages and profits. However, the lines between drug violence, political violence, economic violence and so on are *extremely* blurry. Cartels may be as interested, if not more, in silencing journalists, intimidating restive indigenous communities and assassinating inconvenient activists and political leaders as a powerful, abusive military or an embattled Governor. This has become especially important with the rise of ‘civilian defence groups’ in Guerrero and Michoacán.¹³⁴ Paterson argues, “Frequently, it is difficult to know where one conflict commences and another finishes, or where the murky underworld starts and the above-ground political system ends.” He goes on to source a report that claimed 15,000 ex-soldiers had been arrested for criminality.¹³⁵ In this complex situation, it seems clear at least that heightened levels of drug violence are intersecting and interacting with older patterns of repression in Mexico associated with its economically unequal history and repressive, autocratic governance.

Interests at Stake: The MI and the U.S.’ Role

However, the pertinent question for the aims of this project is what *U.S. policy is intended to do in this context?* Put simply, much of the ‘drug war pretext’ literature posits that the reason the U.S. provides training and equipment to institutions implicated in both drug trafficking and human rights abuses is that it is not seeking to produce *blanket* security and stability in Mexico, but security and stability for a particular type of political-economic order. That order - a neoliberal, free-trade based regional arrangement ‘locked in’ by NAFTA - is argued to have deeply scarred Mexico’s social fabric, exacerbated already entrenched social, political, and economic inequality, decimated much of Mexico’s rural economy, produced levels of increased unemployment and unstable employment, and generated social movements who directly attempt to reverse these trends. On the flipside, it is argued to have greatly benefitted both domestic and foreign investment capital and multinational corporations, transnational finance capital, the U.S.’ regional economic hegemony,

International Trade Union Confederation ‘2010 Annual Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights: Mexico’ *International Trade Union Confederation* (2010) <http://survey.ituc-csi.org/Mexico.html?edition=247#tabs-1> Accessed 16.10.10 & ‘2011 Annual Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights: Mexico’ *International Trade Union Confederation* (2011) <http://survey.ituc-csi.org/Mexico.html?edition=248> Accessed 04.12.12

¹³³ International Press Institute ‘Deadly Trends for Journalists in 2011; 103 Killed’ *International Press Institute* (January 4th, 2012) <http://www.freemedia.at/home/singleview/article/new-deadly-trends-for-journalists-in-2011-103-killed.html> Accessed 13.12.12; Committee to Protect Journalists ‘Journalists Killed in 2011 - Motive Unconfirmed: Humberto Millán Salazar’ *Committee to Protect Journalists* (December 20th, 2011) <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,...MEX,,4f045a8ac,0.html> Accessed 13.12.12 The example here is Humberto Millán, whose associates assert he is more likely to have been killed for political reasons than for offending cartels. However, as with so many cases in Mexico, the lack of clarity and closure in investigations, and propagation of claim and counter-claims between (and amongst) the authorities and ‘civilians’ makes determining motives in all cases extremely difficult.

¹³⁴ Patricio Asfura-Heim & Ralph Espach ‘The Rise of Mexico’s Self-Defense Forces: Vigilante Justice South of the Border’ *Foreign Affairs* 92, 4 (July August, 2013)

¹³⁵ Paterson ‘Mexico’s New Dirty War’

and the elites of both countries.¹³⁶ Crucially, the stability and security required to protect such an order makes sections of Mexican civil society that seek to challenge or modify the political-economic arrangement *targets*, rather than beneficiaries, of the Mexican security institutions the U.S. is seeking to strengthen.¹³⁷ For many, this means these sections of society are seen as source of instability in U.S. planning. Watt contends that organised resistance to continuing and deepening neoliberalism, “certainly is the fear of those who drafted the Mérida Initiative, who [...], believe the only way of preserving the present order is by investing in military training, Blackhawk helicopters and sophisticated weaponry.” He further argues that U.S. military training should be seen “in the light” of the Mexican state’s, “increasing attacks on organisers and activists of the anti-capitalist Zapatista initiative, *La otra campaña*, in Chiapas and the prolonged assault on inhabitants of Oaxaca in 2006”.¹³⁸ In these accounts, as Delgado-Ramos and María Romana succinctly put it, for the U.S., “It is market security that matters, not the security of the people.”¹³⁹

Thus, we begin to see in these analyses a rationale for the functionality of violence. It is two-tiered and interrelated in nature, having both a domestic, Mexican element, and a U.S.-directed element. Critical analysts place differing emphasis on each element. On the domestic front, both Gibler and Watt have drawn on the concept developed by Mexican sociologist Pablo González Casanova of, “internal colonization” in Mexico, whereby structures of colonial rule have remained in the country, only now they benefit a metropolitan elite demarked by (real) social, economic, political and indeed (perceived) racial ‘advantages’.¹⁴⁰ These elites, along with domestic and foreign capital owners, have most benefitted from a neoliberal project that has been followed in Mexico since the early 1980s as wealth has gravitated to the top sections of society.¹⁴¹ Meanwhile, traditionally marginalised sections of society, such as indigenous peoples and the large number of Mexico’s poor, have seen their lot worsen as rural livelihoods were decimated by cheap U.S agricultural imports encouraged by NAFTA, and state subsidies and social programmes were removed as part of the turn

¹³⁶ For example, Peter Watt ‘NAFTA 15 Years On: The Strange Fruits of Neoliberalism’ *State of Nature* (Winter, 2010) <http://www.stateofnature.org/naftaFifteenYearsOn.html> Accessed 12.09.11; Bill Weinberg *Homage to Chiapas: The New Indigenous Struggles in Mexico* (Verso, 2002); Gibler *Mexico Unconquered*; Timothy A. Wise, Hilda Saalazar, & Laura Carlsen *Confronting Globalization: Economic Integration and Popular Resistance in Mexico* (Kumarian Press, 2003); Doug Stokes & Sam Raphael, *Global Energy Security and American Hegemony* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010) p 204-213.; Mercille ‘Violent Narco-Cartels’

¹³⁷ Stokes and Raphael *Global Energy Security* p.204-213; Laura Carlsen ‘Armoring NAFTA: The Battleground for Mexico’s Future’, *NACLA Report on the Americas* 41,5 (September, October, 2008)

¹³⁸ Watt ‘NAFTA Fifty Years On’

¹³⁹ Gian Carlo Delgado-Ramos & Silvina María Romana ‘Political-Economic Factors in U.S. Foreign Policy: The Colombia Plan, the Mérida Initiative, and the Obama Administration’ *Latin American Perspectives* 38, 93 (2011) p.97

¹⁴⁰ In essence, this group is often made up of those who appear more European or ‘whiter’, which sadly is seen as a desirable trait amongst sections of the Mexican population. Those who appear more ‘indigenous’ are all too often subjected to social exclusion and racism. See Gibler *Mexico Unconquered* p. 278-282

¹⁴¹ Not least due to a bonanza in sectors of the economy formally in public hands being sold off at fire-sale prices, of which the world’s richest man, Carlos Slim, is an infamous beneficiary. See Dag Macleod *Downsizing the State: Privatization and the Limits of Neoliberal Reform in Mexico* (The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004)

to neoliberalism.¹⁴² Watt has argued that this ‘internal colonisation’ has, “deepened post-1982”¹⁴³ Gibler states that through interaction with historical structures of repression and inequality, neoliberalism has ensured, “Mexico contains one of the greatest, most obscene gulfs between its wealthiest and most destitute citizens of all the nations on the planet” and, moreover, “This gulf has both a past and a present populating with specific people making deliberate decisions, those who opened the gulf on purpose and continue to manage its widening reach, and those who rebel against it.”¹⁴⁴ In this light, much of the violence committed by state actors that we briefly detailed above is seen as a repressive tool to maintain the Mexican elite’s *class power* in Mexico and forestall serious political-economic change stemming from civil society.

In sharp contrast to the drug war rationale literature, these critical voices assert that the U.S. also plays an *active* role in sustaining this arrangement within Mexico. This conclusion is shared across the drug war pretext literature, although through a reflection of a wider debate about the role of states within economic globalisation. For Gibler, the U.S. has played a crucial role in fermenting the current situation within Mexico through its economic policies, and now seeks to ensure its *continuance* with military aid. The elites of Mexico and U.S. officials are seen as acting in concert in the imposition of neoliberalism upon the Mexican people, which is seen as benefitting the dual interests of the ruling class and capital in both countries. The state violence now required to ensure the stability of the unequal model against understandable resistance and unintended instability is also seen as mutually beneficial. It is not a case of the U.S.A. dominating Mexico in pursuance purely of its own benefit. Gibler instead contends:

... to reduce state violence in Mexico to a puppet’s moves on behalf of the looming giant is to profoundly misunderstand the nature of both the state and of contemporary imperialism. A tiny elite political class has benefitted tremendously from implementing the mandates of *U.S. economic imperialism* in Mexico. The number of millionaires and billionaires grows with the number of people dispossessed. The Mexican state exercises forms of internal imperialism that overlap entirely with the dictates of the United States.¹⁴⁵

Thus, Gibler’s arguments plug into wider debates about modern imperialism in global politics, the role of the United States as a contemporary imperial power, and, indeed, the nature of the state in contemporary life and a globalising economy. He eschews classic definitions of imperialism that focus on the dominance of one state over another. Instead, he follows (explicitly) the work of Hardt and Negri¹⁴⁶ and (implicitly) that of Robinson,¹⁴⁷ in arguing that despite the continuing importance of the United States as a, “center of imperial power”, the reality of contemporary

¹⁴² Mercille ‘Violent Narco-Cartels’ p. 1642

¹⁴³ Watt ‘NAFTA 15 Years On’

¹⁴⁴ Gibler *Mexico Unconquered* p.94

¹⁴⁵ *ibid* p.275

¹⁴⁶ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri *Empire* (Harvard University Press, 2000)

¹⁴⁷ William I. Robinson *A Theory of Global Capitalism: Production, Class, and State in a Transnational World* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004)

imperialism is that it is significantly decoupled from the nation-state and now resides in capital and *transnational* class power. Empire, “stands above, and the nation-state serves its will.”¹⁴⁸ In this conception, we should view the MI as significantly in support of *class and capital interests*, rather than state interests, and these interests are seen as increasingly borderless or ‘transnational’. Seiler has a slightly differing but related conclusion, in which, “The strategy of the United States, *acting in the interest of its dominant class*, consists of creating a (global) historic bloc conducive to *transnational capital accumulation*.”¹⁴⁹ Again, following Robinson, Seiler argues that an emergent transnational capitalist class and its preferred accumulation regime (neoliberalism) has not achieved a stable hegemony over the mass of the global population, and thus requires a degree of coercion to push through its interests. In this context the drug war serves to allow the U.S. to directly intervene in repressive support of the “Post-Fordist”, or neoliberal, accumulation model as practiced in Mexico.¹⁵⁰

Whilst acknowledging the role and advantages afforded to Mexican elites and transnational capital through the neoliberal turn, other critical analysts still maintain that the U.S. *as a state* has imperial or hegemonic interests in preserving Mexico’s political-economic status quo. Watt argues that it was obvious from the outset that the NAFTA agreement, “would privilege the most powerful of the three economies and was an attempt to bolster economic and hegemonic control by the United States in Mexico and the region.”¹⁵¹ Mercille concurs, arguing that NAFTA and neoliberalism in Mexico represent U.S. “hegemonic projects.”¹⁵² For Delgado-Ramos and María Romana, “The current economic, political, and security model implemented by the United States establishes the conditions for indirect but substantial interference on behalf of *U.S. interests* and the interests of its Mexican associates.” These interests are conceptualised as state-based in that they are grounded substantially in resource extraction, deemed strategically and economically crucial by U.S. planners.¹⁵³ Seeking to offer a conception that is able to pull together the various strands of U.S. imperial interests, class interests, and the interests of transnational capital, Stokes and Raphael contend that the U.S. operates a, “dual logic” approach that allows transnational capital and domestic elites significant accumulative advantages, and helps strengthen U.S. power and influence *vis-à-vis* other states by making the elites in those states, and transnational capital, reliant on U.S. security provision and maintenance of a stable global order.¹⁵⁴ In Mexico, this has involved U.S. provision of military aid that insulates the ‘co-opted’ domestic elite from the social forces unleashed by an unequal neoliberal economy, seeks to ensure a stable environment for transnational capital to operate in, and aims to guarantee safe *United States* access to Mexico’s crucial energy reserves.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁸ Gibler *Mexico Unconquered* p.276

¹⁴⁹ Wolf Seiler *The War on Drugs and the Shaping of Hemispheric Policy: United States Hegemonial Politics, Drug Trade and Social Forces in Colombia and Mexico* (VDM, 2008) p.27 My emphasis

¹⁵⁰ *ibid* p.74-91

¹⁵¹ Watt ‘NAFTA 15 Years On’

¹⁵² Mercille ‘Violent Narco-Cartels’ p.1640

¹⁵³ Delgado-Ramos & Romana ‘Political-Economic Factors in U.S. Foreign Policy’ p.94

¹⁵⁴ Stokes and Raphael *Global Energy Security*

¹⁵⁵ *ibid* p.212

Regardless of the debate surrounding the postulated diminishing significance of the state or U.S. imperialism, these critical analyses share at their heart a conviction that one cannot simply discuss ‘U.S.’ or ‘Mexican’ interests without considering the political-economic interests associated with variegated social classes and capital. In all the critical conceptions we have covered, the elites of the U.S. and Mexico are argued to be benefitting far more than the majority of their domestic populations, (especially in Mexico itself) from the current neoliberal, free trade, political-economic relationship. Again this contrasts with the more optimistic analysis around NAFTA, the MI and wider North American integration. In those takes, the acknowledged problems of NAFTA are often said to require deeper, more thoughtful integration and opening up of trade and investment opportunities.¹⁵⁶ Instead in the ‘drug war pretext’ literature, albeit to varying degrees, the powers of the state (economic, political, and increasingly police/military) are being used to protect and enhance elite interests, and that the unequal effects of NAFTA and neoliberalism are integral to their real purpose. As Watt puts it, the current arrangement, “benefits elites [...] Rendering the population more desperate, reducing services and public spending, aggravating society's vulnerability, rewards the powerful with greater political and economic dominance.”¹⁵⁷ This is a crucial distinction from the literature that posits a ‘drug war rationale’ behind the MI, and more substantively speaking benign motives behind the integrative agenda with Mexico.

Policy Failure? The Drug War, Neoliberalism and Instability

In the critical literature, the drug war in Mexico is relegated to secondary significance for U.S. planners. Given that the political-economic model in Mexico is argued to increase elite political and economic power, and that U.S. and Mexican elites share in the spoils of this arrangement (to the detriment of wider populations), the drug war is often seen in the critical literature as merely a convenient pretext to intervene in pursuit of other goals. However, certain critical analysts have also begun to posit that the very neoliberal model that ensures continuing elite power is also significantly culpable for the rise in drug violence and relative power of cartels, both involving state actors and otherwise. Given that the U.S. is concerned with the ‘instability’ provoked by social movements and popular opposition to economic policies that benefit its interests (or the interests of its elite, or transnational capital), does this literature consider that it may also be concerned by rising drug violence and powerful cartels? How far is the stated CN aim of U.S. policy *only* seen as a pretext within this literature? There is a debate here that is worth looking into to clarify where the literature stands on this issue, to further demarcate it from ‘drug war rationale’ analysis, and, most importantly, to think about how its conclusions on this issue affect its assessment of Mérida’s intentions.

Notwithstanding the state and state-implicated abuses to protect a neoliberal political economy and the connection between state agents and the drug war, a selection of critical arguments also retain a clear sense of the unfolding tragedy in the country that *is* associated with the rise of the cartels. Watt, echoing some of the ‘drug war rationale’ literature above, contends that, “the power and influence of the state have

¹⁵⁶ See Shannon K. O’Neil *Two Nations Indivisible: Mexico, the United States, and the Road Ahead* (Oxford University Press, 2013) for an excellent, expansive example of this argument.

¹⁵⁷ Watt ‘NAFTA 15 Years On’

weakened in the last two and a half decades to the extent that in some areas drug traffickers operate quite freely and are immune to prosecution.¹⁵⁸ Much of the explanation for this power shift echoes the more ‘mainstream’ literature - the suppression of Caribbean trafficking routes, the demise of the major Colombian cartels, Mexico’s democratisation, and the frustrated economic hopes of large numbers of the population. All of these are argued to have played their part in strengthening cartels’ economic power, and therefore their power to influence events, in relation to Mexico’s central state.¹⁵⁹ However, the crucial point for the Critical analysts is how these factors *coalesce with* and *correspond to* Mexico’s U.S. supported neoliberal turn in the 1980s. Neoliberal economic reforms are argued to be increasing cartel strength through their association with increased poverty, the subsequent creation of informal economic sectors, and the increased opportunities they have provided for smuggling and money laundering.¹⁶⁰ The retreat of the state is not only the result of growing cartel power or rampant corruption, but also part of a deliberate neoliberal policy choice. Increased ‘neoliberalisation’, or further free trade commitments and U.S.-Mexican economic collaboration, is argued to be likely to exacerbate, rather than ameliorate, the drug problem.¹⁶¹ Cartels are argued to thrive in the ‘neoliberal’ environment, where the state has pulled back and poverty entrenched.¹⁶² Vulliamy has even argued cartels are a logical outcome of a new globalised, neoliberal economic reality - a chimerical fusion of transnational shipping firm, social organisation, and ruthless private army.¹⁶³ The failure to prevent cartels acting with impunity and increasing their power through continued drug trafficking could be argued to *harm* U.S. interests, stemming from the fact that the neoliberal economy U.S. policy seeks to protect is generating its own security problems.

However, as I have already established, the ‘drug war pretext’ literature does not consider the U.S. to be interested in security and stability in Mexico *per se*, but the security and stability of a *particular political-economic arrangement*. Thus there would need to be a discussion within this literature about how cartels threaten *political-economic stability*, not just the security of citizens. There is not a sense of this assertion in the majority of this literature. Indeed for many the interests of U.S./Mexican elites and the cartels are argued to be complementary, and even if this is not argued to be the case, the cartels still play a useful role for U.S. planners. At the sharp end of the arguments in this spectrum the continuing drug trade and concomitant war is almost perfectly attuned to the interests of powerful class and capital factions in the U.S. Gibler asserts that drug trafficking has a level of usefulness for elites in both the billions in profits that it generates from sales, which inevitably enters the legal economy, and the *pretext* it provides for forms of social control to maintain social inequalities. The failure to tackle illegal drug trafficking in Mexico and to create stability as part of a failed drug war:

¹⁵⁸ *ibid*

¹⁵⁹ *ibid*; Howard Campbell *Drug War Zone: Frontline Dispatches from the Streets of El Paso and Juárez* (University of Texas Press, 2009); Campbell ‘No End in Sight’; Mercille ‘Violent Narco-Cartels’ p.1640-1644

¹⁶⁰ Various in *ibid*

¹⁶¹ For example Mercille ‘Violent Narco-Cartels’ p.1649-1650

¹⁶² Watt ‘NAFTA 15 Years On’

¹⁶³ Ed Vulliamy *Amexica: War Along the Borderline* (The Bodley Head, 2010)

...it is not a failure, of course; illegality increases the value of the commodity, and illegality allows for massive funding of police and military repression and mechanisms of social control. The drug war is a horrid success of state violence and capitalist accumulation, a cash intoxicated marketplace that simply budgets for murder and political graft to keep things running smoothly.¹⁶⁴

There are other similar, if less strident accounts. Mercille cites the head of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime Antonio Maria Costa's claim that drug money had provided vital liquid capital to banks that may otherwise have failed during the credit crisis, and a number of cases of money laundering by major U.S. banks that resulted in little penalty, as evidence of the transfusion of illegal money into the legal economy.¹⁶⁵ Watt frames the issue slightly differently, arguing that, "the US and Mexican governments want control, rather than elimination, of the narcotics trade", not least as the drug trade liquidity is argued to be propping up the Mexican economy.¹⁶⁶

However, even for those who do not cite tangible rewards to be gained by capital interests, there are still advantages for the U.S. in the continued existence of cartels in Mexico. For Delgado-Ramos and María Romana, the escalating drug and associated crime problems across Latin America afford the U.S. a new opportunity to implement, "stabilization-destabilization" programmes in the continent.¹⁶⁷ The MI exemplifies just such a programme; stabilising markets for capital and resource extraction, whilst destabilising civil society and opposition.¹⁶⁸ This is an account reflecting the critical distinction between 'market' and 'human' security. Seiler, who acknowledges the threat posed by cartels in Mexico to U.S. interests, nevertheless summarises that a continuing, "War on Drugs provides the United States as well as the Mexican government the *perfect excuse* for the militarization of society in order to be able to remove destabilizing forces, such as the drug trade or counter-hegemonic groups like the EZLN."¹⁶⁹ Across all of these accounts, no matter whether they treat the drug trade and cartels as a threat, convenient tool, or (as is most often the case) both, the U.S. is argued to be *focused* upon political-economic rather than CN considerations, and the cartels are conceptualised as secondary threats behind the social forces that threaten economic change. As Stokes and Raphael put it, the, "the origins of [the Mérida Initiative] lie less in an escalated sense of threat regarding drugs than in [...] a desire to protect the free trade model in Mexico."¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁴ Gibler *To Die in Mexico* p.203-204

¹⁶⁵ Though Mercille sees this as mostly testament to the, "power of the U.S. financial community to take part in illegal activities to maximise profits while shielding themselves from retribution." Mercille 'Violent Narco-Cartels' p.1648 See Syal for details of this claim. Rajeev Syal 'Drug Money Saved Banks in Global Crisis, Claims UN Advisor' *Guardian* (December 13th, 2009) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global/2009/dec/13/drug-money-banks-saved-un-chief-claims> Accessed 13.12.12

¹⁶⁶ Watt 'NAFTA 15 Years On'

¹⁶⁷ Delgado-Ramos & Romana 'The Colombia Plan, the Mérida Initiative, and the Obama Administration' p.93

¹⁶⁸ *ibid*

¹⁶⁹ Seiler *The War on Drugs* p.90 My emphasis

¹⁷⁰ Stokes and Raphael *Global Energy Security* p.212

Reviewing the Drug War Pretext Literature

When considering what impact actual drug violence in Mexico has on U.S. interests, much of the ‘drug war pretext’ literature effectively ‘doubles down’ on seeing the drug war and CN concerns in Mexico as largely of less importance than, “political-economic factors” in motivating the MI, and even in places suggests drugs are somewhat of a red herring. This understanding of U.S. drug policy is hermetically sealed from the ‘true’ political-economic goals within the MI, only coming into contact as a cover for policies that actually have ‘economic interests’ in mind. Again, I will look a little more closely at these conclusions below before we address one question at the heart of this project. However some small points can again be made preemptively here. Effectively the same gaps exist in this set of literature as did in the ‘drug war rationale’ research. Despite some important insights that we will need to take forward, understanding what ‘U.S.’ interests are in this case still requires theoretical exploration and historical examination of U.S. foreign policy and specifically bilateral policy with Mexico. This literature *also* does not engage in detailed policy analysis, which is a *prerequisite* to properly interrogating U.S. aims.

Outlying Literature

In this very brief section I highlight a couple of pieces of work that are worth looking into in a little more detail outside of the main categories I have delineated above. It is important to do this not to only fully capture the range of work on Mérida and avoid the potential problem of incompleteness, but also to put my own research into this complete picture. These pieces of work also lead us nicely into the final part of this Review as we begin to look at the MI in the wider context of North American integration. Firstly, Kenny and Serrano’s work on what they deem as ‘Mexico’s security failure’ warrants closer interrogation. The thrust of their argument is based around the *interaction* between the Mexican state and cartel activity. Making a deeper argument about the nature of the state, they show the *fundamental, sedimentary and extensive* interrelationship between the Mexican state, drug trafficking, and drug traffickers at all state levels from local to elite, built up in the years of PRI rule, but extending past that and into Mexico’s democratic transition.¹⁷¹ They go on to explore the consequences stemming from the breakdown and continuing, violent transfiguring processes underway in Mexico within these relationships.¹⁷² Thus Mexico’s violence is seen as the product of its particular path of state formation.¹⁷³ Pansters makes a similar theoretically-based argument along similar lines in his edited volume on the relations between violence and state-making in contemporary Mexico, which also contends ‘drug violence’ cannot be easily separated from other forms of violence that trace through Mexican development.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ Paul Kenny and Mónica Serrano ‘The Mexican State and Organized Crime: An Unending Story’ p.29-49

¹⁷² Paul Kenny and Mónica Serrano ‘Transition to Dystopia: 1994-2008’ p.54-80

¹⁷³ Kenny and Serrano ‘Conclusion’ p.218-223

¹⁷⁴ Will G. Pansters ‘Zones of State-Making: Violence, Coercion and Hegemony in Twentieth-Century Mexico’ in Will G. Pansters [ed.] *Violence, Coercion and State-Making in Twentieth-Century Mexico: The Other Half of the Centaur* (Stanford University Press, 2012) p.3-39 The whole volume expands on this theme, but for the state-crime / state-violence nexus see especially Alan Knight ‘Narco-Violence and the State in Modern Mexico’ p.115-134 and Mónica Serrano ‘States of Violence: State-Crime Relations in Mexico’ p.135-p.158

Moreover in terms of my aims, Kenny and Serrano tie Calderón's strategy to 'take on' the cartels to domestic politics and the effort to undercut the Mexican left, whom in 2006 had just lost a highly contentious and charged election (by only 0.58%). This was connected to a longer-term goal of militarising the Mexican state, and 'reconfiguring' it on an, "authoritarian setting", whereby "due process and human rights were seen as obstacles to the elimination of criminals."¹⁷⁵ In this way, when it comes to the *nature* of Mexico's crisis and the *Mexican* administration's response, Kenny and Serrano are more in line with the critical work we saw in the 'Drug War Pretext' section, whilst treating the security crisis within Mexico as associated *directly* with drug trafficking, and offering an explanatory analysis of this that is more rooted in Mexico's state development and its failure to 'correct the mutation' that it grew up with; the envelopment of drug trafficking and organised crime within state structures.¹⁷⁶ It especially focuses on the mistaken policies undertaken in Calderón's 'drug war', which in the account provided by the authors succeeded only in stirring a hornet's nest and increasing violence.¹⁷⁷ Thus whilst their work on U.S. policy is less clear, the implication is the U.S. is supporting, and in some sense guiding, a failed Mexican policy within a failed drug war paradigm.¹⁷⁸ However that paradigm is not opened up particularly in terms of *why* it continues to exist - especially in the face of such an apparent failure of policy to achieve its stated goals.¹⁷⁹

Kilroy, Sumano and Hataley focus more fixedly on the intentions of U.S. policy, and again offer some insights not as easily attuned to the major sections of literature above. For the most part they do focus on Mexico's security crisis within the 'drug war rationale'. However they offer a much broader conception of U.S. aims in this regard. Discussing the U.S. War on Drugs in wider terms, they contend:

Since 9/11, US international drug control and related national security goals have focused on reducing the flow of illicit drugs into the United States; disrupting and dismantling major drug trafficking organizations, strengthening the democratic and law enforcement institutions of partner nations threatened by illegal drugs; and *reducing the underlying financial and other support that drug trafficking provides to international terrorist organizations.*¹⁸⁰

Kilroy *et al* insist the U.S. is genuinely concerned over the intersection of drug trafficking with other transnational threats, not least terrorism.¹⁸¹ The threat of transnational actors and 'narcoterrorists' is present elsewhere in the extant literature, but this study very strongly highlights that that the MI *itself* goes beyond drug-trafficking. It also connects the MI with broader U.S. strategic aims to improve *regional* security in North America after 9/11 in line with the priorities of the SPP, the trilateral initiative to synergise security and deepen economic integration within the

¹⁷⁵ Kenny and Serrano 'Conclusion' p.200, 217

¹⁷⁶ *ibid* p.220

¹⁷⁷ *ibid* p.200-217

¹⁷⁸ Kenny and Serrano 'Introduction' p.17; Kenny and Serrano 'Conclusion' p.216-217

¹⁷⁹ This is also true of Pansters argument and the works in his volume.

¹⁸⁰ Kilroy *et al* *North American Regional Security* p.144 My emphasis

¹⁸¹ *ibid*

NAFTA zone amongst the three North American countries. Kilroy *et al* are concerned with showing how U.S. attempts to bring Mexico into a *wider-ranging security framework* stretched back before Mérida, and that its concerns included potential natural disasters and Mexican domestic terrorism, including political violence from the left (which is *explicitly* linked to the adoption of the MI).¹⁸² They connect this to a U.S. desire to create a new “defense perimeter” in the wake of 9/11 that would better protect the U.S. “homeland” and North America from “external and internal threats”, albeit this aim sat (often uneasily) with a continued U.S. focus on its own border security.¹⁸³ This work provides us with a neat segue into the next section, which looks at how the extant literature on the MI has placed it within its wider continental backdrop: North American integration. There are key differences between the literature here, and the view of Kilroy *et al* is not widely shared.

North American Integration and the MI

The MI is situated within wider bilateral and regional dynamics around U.S. Mexican relations, and the continuing economic integration in North America engendered by NAFTA. There are a number of studies that discuss the prospect of further integration within North America to improve or introduce North American governance over apparently distinct North American issues. The fallout from 9/11, which hugely impacted the NAFTA economy as the usual massive flow of trade was interrupted, has spurred an academic discussion reflective of a policy debate concerning how to ‘secure openness’ - i.e. how to maintain an open and integrated NAFTA economy whilst also ensuring that very economy and national borders are secured from potential threats.¹⁸⁴ This literature was spurred further by the announcement of the SPP, which promised security cooperation between Canada, the U.S., and Mexico. Much of the literature above also drew connections between NAFTA and the generation or deepening of the bilateral drug trafficking problem, for example in the increase in licit trade within which drugs can be smuggled, the empowerment of illicit transnational actors within integrated economies, or the socioeconomic problems still faced by Mexico. The literature on the MI has discussed how NAFTA has thus far failed to tackle these problems sufficiently, or how it has deepened such issues (depending on the interpretation).

Therefore much of the extant literature that discusses the MI within this wider context has included the bilateral aid programme as ‘part of the story’, especially in terms of what *generates* Mexico’s security challenges around drug trafficking. However the most significant section of it has often also *separated* Mérida from wider integrative

¹⁸² *ibid* p.148-156 With regard to the domestic terrorism, the authors refer to the sustained and quite sophisticated attacks on oil and gas pipelines in 2007. We look at these attacks in more detail in the Policy Breakdown chapter.

¹⁸³ *ibid* p.125-156, also see p.103-120

¹⁸⁴ For example Clarkson *Does North America Exist?*; Robert Pastor *The North American Idea: A Vision of a Continental Future* (Oxford University Press, 2011); O’Neil *Two Nations Indivisible*; Jeffrey Ayres & Laura Macdonald *North America in Question: Regional Integration in an Era of Economic Turbulence* (University of Toronto Press, 2012); Edward Alden *The Closing of the American Border: Terrorism, Immigration, and Security Since 9/11* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008); J. Kilroy Jr. *et al* *North American Regional Security*

policy proposals between the NAFTA countries (or lack thereof, again depending on the particular interpretation), and treated it as a *distinct, bilateral* undertaking *specifically* designed to tackle Mexico's drug-related security crisis. This works within or is a part of the 'drug war rationale' position identified above. However, some of this literature has *explicitly* made those links between regionalised security processes, and the wider priorities as expressed in the SPP. Finally some of the 'Pretext' literature has developed these links even further. In these latter readings Mérida is a bilateral *continuation* or *actualisation* of the security integration envisioned by the SPP respectively, *not* (just or principally) a specific policy development to counter Mexico's security crisis by tackling Mexican cartels. It is worth briefly overviewing some of this literature and looking at the MI from the angle of North American integration and its connection to NAFTA.

North American Security Integration: Mérida as Distinct

The majority of the literature that discusses the MI within the 'drug war rationale' literature has separated out discussion of North American security integration to focus on the former as a CN package. Indeed, given that the SPP / security integration is not even mentioned in most of these works, it can be tough to provide a literal overview of this trend.¹⁸⁵ Mérida is often simply discussed as an improvement in bilateral policies against drug trafficking, rather than something more bilaterally (or trilaterally) substantive. There are some examples where wider security logics and Mérida are discussed side by side that provide indicative points. Shirk has suggested that wider regional security drives like the SPP have, "complemented" greater bilateral U.S.-Mexican CN cooperation. However we should be clear that Shirk sees Mérida in terms of it being an U.S. aid programme to assist, "Mexican military and law enforcement in efforts to combat narco-trafficking and organized crime" under the Bush administration. The administration of President Obama has updated the Initiative to include more civil and social elements, but these are still animated by aims to reduce drug violence.¹⁸⁶

Another direct comparison is provided by Clarkson. He argues that the U.S. had effectively extended its security perimeter to Mexico when the Reagan administration made CN a national security issue in 1986.¹⁸⁷ Nevertheless he notes some qualitative change *towards* a deeper, "continental security" and a NAFTA security perimeter post 9/11, albeit one tempered by a continuing focus on the U.S. contiguous 'border security'. He summarises, "Today, the two conceptions coexist in a not necessarily coherent tension in which the North American perimeter is the forward line for American, Canadian, and Mexican security, while the internal borders remain the basic barricade".¹⁸⁸ He seems to suggest some correlation with this wider logic in connecting Mérida to discussions on anti-terrorism cooperation,¹⁸⁹ and even notes

¹⁸⁵ This is precisely one of the gaps in the literature this project seeks to fill, by placing Mérida into its wider context.

¹⁸⁶ David A. Shirk 'States, Borders, and Violence: Lessons from the U.S.-Mexican Experience' in Pansters *The Other Half of the Centaur* p.62-64

¹⁸⁷ Clarkson *Does North America Exist* p. 370

¹⁸⁸ *ibid*

¹⁸⁹ Stephen Clarkson 'Continental Governance, Post-Crisis: Where is North America Going?' in Ayres and Macdonald *North America* p.96-99

(like Kilroy *et al*) that anti-terrorist funding *formed* part of the MI itself.¹⁹⁰ Elsewhere, however, clear distinctions are drawn between the Initiative and wider integration or continental defence. Discussing U.S. Northern Command¹⁹¹ and what Clarkson sees as its tentative efforts to bring Mexico into trilateral continental security arrangements, he suggests its creation was, “conceived as an administrative change; coordinating the continent’s defence with Canada and Mexico was only a secondary priority”. Moreover, in line with the ‘drug war rationale literature, Clarkson states, ‘the Plan Merida for security cooperation [...] suggests [...] the war on drugs will remain the US priority for security on its southern border.’¹⁹² More definitively still, in his conclusions Clarkson sums up that, “Notwithstanding the much-heralded SPP’s three-way approach to many issues of North American governance, the United States’ proposal to reinforce Mexican efforts to suppress its narco-traffic cartels was negotiated bilaterally as the *completely separate* Merida Plan”.¹⁹³

These direct comparisons are few and far between. Thus it is more often in the *calling* for more joined up policies that we best tease out the distinction drawn between integrative trends more widely and bilateral CN policies as represented in the MI. In a critique of the Mérida policy under Bush and Obama, Pastor proposes tying the ‘CN plan’ to his vision for governance in North America, and suggests “If *all three* governments can commit to a broader strategy on drug trafficking and violence, the new relationship *could* be extended to a *wider security agenda* that includes more systematic coordination against terrorism and management of the border”.¹⁹⁴ Pastor’s argument is that the overall benefits of economic integration are being eroded in part by a wrong-headed focus on unilateral security, especially at the border, and thereby Mérida is an isolated CN aid package does not tackle this wider problem. O’Neil calls for a more thorough and joined up “partnership” with Mexico,¹⁹⁵ and for trilateral solutions to North America’s security issues.¹⁹⁶ The MI is implicitly separated from the *overall* and *connected* priorities of the now defunct SPP. Bailey and Guillén López contend, “Whereas security and law enforcement issues have found a home in the Mérida framework, and border issues have found a home within the 21st Century Border Initiative framework, economic issues lack a clear venue for discussion.”¹⁹⁷ They also suggest that contemporary border initiatives that are officially tied to the MI operate under a, “separate logic that is less tied to the Mérida process”, not least because of civil society pressure to either secure (political concerns of large section of the population represented by official political bloc) or open (private economic interests and border regions themselves) the border.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁰ Clarkson *Does North America Exist?* p.392

¹⁹¹ USNORTHCOM, the military command charged with HS within North America created through the expansive bureaucratic overhaul post 9/11 We look at it in a lot more detail in upcoming chapters.

¹⁹² Clarkson *Does North America Exist?* p.400

¹⁹³ *ibid* p.462 My emphasis

¹⁹⁴ Pastor *North American Idea* p.178-180

¹⁹⁵ O’Neil *Two Nations Indivisible* p.155-168

¹⁹⁶ Shannon K O’Neil ‘Good Neighbors’ *Foreign Policy* (February 17th, 2014)

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/02/17/good_neighbors Accessed 31.07.14

¹⁹⁷ John Bailey and Tonatiuh Guillén-López, ‘Making and Managing Policy’ in Peter H. Smith, & Andrew Selee [eds.] *Mexico and the United States: The Politics of Partnership* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013) p.78 On the 21st Century border effort of the Obama administration. See later chapters

¹⁹⁸ *ibid* p.79

North American Security Integration: Mérida as Connected

As we already saw, Kilroy *et al* have suggested a deeper connection between the MI and a sustained (but patchy and complicated) drive to regionalise security in post 9/11 North America. They build a chronological case that attempts to show how Mérida is an outgrowth of wider policy moves in and between the NAFTA partners (with the U.S. as the key arbiter) to ‘trilateralise’ security amongst themselves, or at least improve bilateral security. Again this wider context is part of the reaction to the impact 9/11 had on ‘North America’,¹⁹⁹ and an effort to ‘square the circle’ by securing borders within NAFTA from illicit transit, whilst facilitating licit interactions. The SPP is important here. Kilroy *et al* see the SPP as seeking to, “protect, prevent, and respond to *external and internal* threats to North America” as well as improving the internal borders within NAFTA through smarter security and expedited licit exchange.²⁰⁰ They contend that on its ‘Security’ branch the SPP can be associated with “an all hazards approach” that seeks to prepare for and mitigate myriad security threats from pandemics to terror attacks to natural disasters to illegal trafficking.²⁰¹ Further, as Mexican proximity to the U.S. self-evidently pulls it into the “US security perimeter”, they assert:

...changes in the international system after 9/11 [...] have allowed a regional convergence towards collaboration and cooperation beyond terrorism and natural disasters The SPP created the possibility for this collaboration and cooperation [...] The Mérida Initiative was *yet another step* in the process of building Mexico’s confidence that identity and sovereignty could be maintained within this cooperative atmosphere, despite the fact that resistance to coming under the US security umbrella [...] still existed...²⁰²

In this sense the MI can at least be associated with the discussions around the creation of a North American or NAFTA “security perimeter”, albeit this effort has proved controversial and extremely difficult to achieve in practice, not least in overcoming sovereignty concerns and coordination three very different countries with often differing priorities.²⁰³

Cadena-Roa takes these connections further still.²⁰⁴ His argument is clear and worth quoting at length:

¹⁹⁹ However this is an older policy problem and subsequent debate that really dates back to NAFTA’s signing (and incorporates dynamics, like immigration from Mexico to the U.S., that predate that too). It was given energy and urgency by the 9/11 attacks, as I cover in Chapter Five.

²⁰⁰ Kilroy *et al* North American Regional Security p.128-129

²⁰¹ *ibid* p.125 As much as 9/11 and the SPP drove U.S. policy, and in turn North America in this direction, the authors state trilateral cooperation in Hurricanes Rita and Katrina was key in improving security partnerships. *ibid* p. 132-140

²⁰² *ibid* p.148-149 My emphasis

²⁰³ *ibid* p.169-170

²⁰⁴ Indeed I could have included this work in the ‘Mérida as the Vehicle’ sub-section below. However Cadena-Roa is not as explicit in making the argument that the Initiative operates under a pretext, or at least sees CN as a secondary goal, which is partly how I have divided these sections, as becomes clear below.

Arguably, the Mérida Initiative is the SPP *under another name and in bilateral form*. Its unstated objective is to incorporate Mexico into the US security perimeter, thereby gaining Mexico's cooperation and *pulling Mexico's national security into the U.S. orbit* through the sharing of information and collaboration in security and military operations.²⁰⁵

Therefore rather than “separate” efforts, the SPP and MI are intimately linked, “stages in a long-term project to draw Mexico into the U.S. security perimeter as a reliable partner”.²⁰⁶ As part of a “harmonization” of U.S.-Mexican institutional approaches towards security issues and especially CN, Cadena-Roa contends the connections between the state and drug traffickers needs to be severed. Going further, he argues that as NAFTA ‘locked in’ market liberalisation and insulated it from democratic changes in *Los Pinos*, the MI attempts to solidify U.S.-orientated security approaches that are in line with the goals he outlines above. These in turn weaken Mexican sovereignty and favour military solutions over developmental ones within Mexico's political economy.²⁰⁷ Cadena-Roa therefore offers some tentative connection between economics and security in recent U.S.-Mexico relations.

This brings us to a final point I wanted to highlight in terms of how the literature on North American integration handles this issue more widely, as Cadena-Roa is somewhat of an exception. There is a tendency to split ‘security imperatives’ from ‘economic imperatives’ in the literatures that see Mérida as distinct from wider North American integration, or only connected to it in genealogical terms. This is in fact a trend visible in much of the wider work on North American issues. We have seen that those who seek to promote the economic integration of NAFTA have bemoaned the harmful focus on unilateralist border security.²⁰⁸ Clearly a distinction between security and economic interests is being made here. For Andreas, “the imperatives of security and economic integration appear to be on a collision course”.²⁰⁹ The impact of 9/11 is crucial here. Díez is quite typical of this academia in assessing that after the attacks the U.S. subordinated, “economic and political relations” with its NAFTA partners to its own security needs, including increased border control and surveillance, in the context of the GWOT.²¹⁰ Serrano speculates as to whether security would then provide the integrative dynamo for North America that was initially

²⁰⁵ Jorge Cadena-Roa ‘The Mexican Political Security Crisis: Implications for the North American Community’ in Ayres and Macdonald *North America* p.132 My emphasis

²⁰⁶ *ibid*

²⁰⁷ *ibid* p.132-133

²⁰⁸ Pastor *North American Idea*

²⁰⁹ Peter Andreas ‘A Tale of Two Borders: The U.S.-Canada and U.S.-Mexico Lines after 9/11’ in Peter Andreas and Thomas J.Bierstecker [eds.] *The Rebordering of North America: Integration and Exclusion in a New Security Context* (London: Routledge, 2003) p.19 However Andreas’ thoughts on border security and economic interests are a little harder to pin down. In 2003 he also wrote that, “Rather than giving up any pretence of controlling borders, or simply shutting down borders in the name of security and accepting the astronomical costs, Washington is ambitiously trying to have it both ways: Create borders that perform as better security barriers and as efficient economic bridges at the same time.” Peter Andreas ‘Redrawing the Line: Borders and Security in the 21st Century’ *International Security* 28, 2 (Fall, 2003) p.96 I pick this theme up in the following chapter.

²¹⁰ Jordi Díez ‘Mexico and North American Security’ in Daniel Drache [ed.] *Big Picture Realities: Canada and Mexico at the Crossroads* (Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2008)

provided by economics in the designs for NAFTA.²¹¹ Hussain *et al* suggest that the NAFTA countries face trade-offs in the aftermath of 9/11 between, for example, “security- economy” and, “a post-9/11 security regime confronting pre-9/11 trade integration”.²¹² The sense is of two policy directives colliding, or in the language of Bailey and Guillén López the separation of issues into “policy baskets”.²¹³ Hussain *et al* ask whether a, “security regime can be built upon pre-9/11 U.S. interests in economic regimes”.²¹⁴ Even in arguing that security and economic considerations do not *have* to clash, an implicit sense of distinctiveness between ‘economics’ and ‘security’ is maintained in their conception.

Economic issues were undoubtedly in the forefront of all binational deliberations before 9/11 while security issues are dominant in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. But in recent years, a bundling of the security and economic issues has been emphasized. [...] Over time, it is entirely possible to have security and economic considerations reinforce, not mutually exclude, each other.²¹⁵

There are conclusions, therefore, that see the MI as security based. The U.S.-Mexico Chamber of Commerce relate Mérida to the SPP, stating that as the latter “became irrelevant” in the light of security challenges on the Southwest border, a “new plan was developed where *security was the number one priority*” - the Mérida Initiative.²¹⁶ This distinction between ‘economics’ and ‘security’ is present in much of the literature on trends within North America after 9/11, as I explore a little more in Chapter Three. Often too ‘security’ in this context means *U.S. HS*, rather than wider security for NAFTA or North America, or U.S. interests within that space.²¹⁷

North American Security Integration: Mérida as the Vehicle

Much of the ‘drug war pretext’ literature has distinguished itself again by making the case that in fact the MI is not merely an outgrowth of the SPP, but a *direct* policy programme designed to achieve *its* aims when it comes to U.S.-Mexico security relations. Again, in line with the idea that drug interdiction is a ‘pretext’ or only a secondary or composite concern - a, “guise” in the words of Carlsen²¹⁸ - the integration of security between the U.S. and Mexico, or more accurately in fact the exporting of U.S. security concepts and interests to its neighbour, is the strategic underpinning for the MI, as it was for the SPP. Again the motivations for improving Mexico’s security capabilities and interoperability with the U.S. (on U.S. terms) is seen as having a logic that goes way beyond CN, and / or uses CN to justify itself. In much of this literature, as we saw above, civil society and potential politically

²¹¹ Monica Serrano ‘Integration and Security in North America: Do Good Neighbours Need Good Fences?’ *International Journal* 61, 3 (Summer, 2006) p.621

²¹² Imtiaz Hussain, Satya R. Pattanayak & Anil Hira *North American Homeland Security: Back to Bilateralism?* (Preager Security International, 2008) p.2

²¹³ Bailey and Guillén López ‘Making and Managing Policy’

²¹⁴ Hussain *et al* *Back to Bilateralism* p.2

²¹⁵ *ibid* p.53

²¹⁶ United States-Mexico Chamber of Commerce ‘Issue Paper 1 - U.S.-Mexico Security Cooperation’ *U.S.-Mexico Chamber of Commerce* (August, 2011) p.1 My emphasis

²¹⁷ Also see Pastor *North American Idea* for the most powerful expression of this argument.

²¹⁸ Carlsen ‘Plan Mexico’

motivated violent *and* non-violent groups agitating for social and economic change from the neoliberal NAFTA model are often seen as the primary targets of the U.S. and Mexican state.²¹⁹ It is in this context that Mercille and Carlsen quote former Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA) Thomas A. Shannon, who in discussing the SPP claimed it, “understands North America as a shared economic space and that as a shared economic space we need to protect it . . . To a certain extent, we’re armoring NAFTA.”²²⁰ They, and others, directly link this quote to the actual policies of the MI.²²¹

Grandin widens this argument still further, not only connecting the SPP and the MI, but also including security initiatives in Central America and the continuing ‘Plan Colombia’ to assert that the U.S is creating a security corridor running from the U.S. border to Colombia. According to Grandin, the “objective is to integrate the region’s transportation and communications infrastructure, energy production and distribution networks, and, most importantly, its military capacities.”²²² He suggests this is a rearguard strategy designed to shore up what the U.S. ‘has left’ in Latin America in terms of political-economic allies after the rise of the new left, and in the wider context of U.S. decline. Carlsen makes a similar point arguing that U.S. officials recognised shoring up security ties with Mexico would help in, “Washington’s bid to recover its influence in a slipping geopolitical context.”²²³ Stokes and Raphael connect Mérida and its forebear the SPP to ‘armoring NAFTA’ in terms of ensuring stability for investment from transnational corporations, especially important due to the (then) nascent moves towards opening up Mexico’s petroleum and wider energy markets to foreign capital.²²⁴

Clearly in this understanding economics and security are very much seen as complementary rather than separate policy elements. Again the *overriding* aim is to protect or “armor” NAFTA through a regionalised, integrated security framework that seeks to protect it from a variety of threats, but especially political or socioeconomic change from below. In this reading the MI has provided the vehicle for achieving this aim through increasing U.S. control of Mexican security policies in line with U.S. priorities. Therefore whilst, “the drug war is an obvious concern for US and Mexican officials” as Stokes and Raphael put it, “this aid can be, and is designed to be, used for more than simple CN missions”.²²⁵ There are obviously some differences in how these analysts see the focus of U.S. strategies here. For example, Stokes and Raphael point to an “across the board” security approach.²²⁶ Carlsen states that, “The goals are twofold”. Firstly, upon inception Mérida sought, “to apply the Bush counterterrorism model throughout North America and bring Canadian and Mexican national security apparatus under closer U.S. control and surveillance”. Secondly the aim was, “to

²¹⁹ Carlsen ‘Armoring NAFTA’; Carlsen ‘Plan Mexico’; Watt & Zepeda’ *Drug War Mexico* p.193-210

²²⁰ Mercille ‘Violent Narco-Cartels’ p.1645; Carlsen ‘Armoring NAFTA’ p. 17

²²¹ For example Stokes and Raphael *Global Energy Security* p.212; Watt and Zepeda *Drug War Mexico* p.210

²²² Greg Grandin ‘Empire’s Senescence: U.S. Policy in Latin America’ *New Labor Forum* 19, 1 (Winter, 2010) p. 21

²²³ Carlsen ‘Plan Mexico’

²²⁴ Stokes and Raphael *Global Energy Security* p.209-212

²²⁵ *ibid* p. 211

²²⁶ *ibid* p.212

protect investment and business throughout the region.”²²⁷ What links these accounts, however, is the insistence that instead of seeing Mérida as distinct from the SPP and its priorities, or just an appurtenance of them, we should see it as a direct successor.

Conclusion: Gaps in the Extant Literature

This Literature Review has covered the debate on the MI. There is no doubt that the literature covered here offers us unique and useful insights into U.S. policy and its aims. However, there are some gaps we can identify, and a space for the work in this project to enter into the debate. Firstly, an in-depth study involving an extensive policy analysis has not been undertaken with regards to the detail of MI policy. This is a clear area where further analysis should be pursued. As I go on to show, a policy analysis takes us in some interesting directions, and affords me a greater purchase of the expansive, interconnected nature of the Initiative, and how it plugs into wider bilateral policy. One thing is immediately clear once we interrogate the detail; Mérida goes way beyond CN in its aims to resemble something much more akin to the literature that has connected it (however strongly) to the post-9/11 priorities as represented by the SPP, *but* CN is a crucial component *within* its wider goals. In *not* offering this sort of detailed analysis, much of the extant literature underplays or misses key aspects of the aid programme. In this project I will put ‘the meat on the bones’ of the argument that Mérida is a multi-purpose security paradigm *intimately* associated with the U.S. effort to project its security around the NAFTA zone, by empirically showing *the policy detail* that supports this conclusion.

However, prior to this effort, I will consider the context of the MI. I will situate it within wider U.S. policy and interaction with Mexico, and in turn place that discussion in the broader set of policies that make up U.S. strategies in its foreign relations.²²⁸ Through this I build the context for the argument that the MI has a strong familial relationship with the SPP and the integrative push for North American security and a NAFTA security perimeter. I draw out just how deep these connections are in my policy analysis in Chapters Five and Six. I will show that they are of significant depth indeed, amounting to the active construction of NAFTA-land Security. Prior event to this, though, we need to understand *why* these connections can - and should - be made. I argue that not only did 9/11 motivate a response that sought to deepen North American (and thereby U.S.-Mexican) security ties (contingency), but also that the Initiative reflects U.S. interests in its bilateral, regional and global foreign policies and grand strategy in seeking to maintain the *openness* and *stability* of Mexico’s political economy to U.S. (and wider) economic interaction and penetration (continuity). The extant literature has missed the complex interplay between continuity and regional contingency here.

²²⁷ Laura Carlsen ‘NAFTA’s Dangerous Security Agenda’ *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice* 20, 4 (2008) p.443

²²⁸ There are existing focused studies that attempt this. Watt & Zepeda’s *Drug War Mexico* is probably the best example of a holistic approach that tackles Mexico’s drug related security crisis and U.S. foreign policy directly as its main themes. Much of the other work in this Literature Review is - quite simply - shorter. Otherwise it not focused on either elements solidly, or talks about the issues tangentially as part of arguments with a different focus.

Making this argument means dispensing with the distinctions between economics and security present in much of the literature on North American integration. Whilst these distinctions may at times be in the service of conceptual clarity, they give an impression of interests neatly compartmentalised as discrete, differentiated aims. This denudes the crucial fused nature of economic-security interests, in which economic activity requires continued stability and openness that is often girded by forms of power. Meanwhile for its part, the ‘drug war pretext’ literature has *underplayed* the level of threat to U.S. interests from drug trafficking and, moreover, its associated violence. As much of the ‘drug war rationale’ literature *has* contended, Mexican stability is at stake in some areas, and the Mexican state is both challenged and compromised. I show how this threatens U.S. interests in Mexico. Crucially the level of violence associated with drug trafficking in the country is both threatening Mexican political-economic stability, and, relatedly, represents a transnational threat to the political economy of the NAFTA zone. Thus it is key that we do not think of the CN element of Mérida as merely a ‘pretext’, and thereby underplay this crucial motivating factor for U.S. policy. I now go onto show where and how this policy is at once bilateral and trilateral, regional and more global, contemporary and historically rooted, in aims, scope and origin.

Chapter Three

Theorising U.S. Interests and the Projection of Security in Mexico

“...the state has a variety of tasks whose organization domestically create a whole host of international externalities...”¹

Introduction

This chapter seeks to offer a theoretical backdrop to this project’s central argument: that the MI and its associated programs should be understood as a U.S.-led attempt to improve Mexico’s security capabilities in a number of areas, as part of a drive to create a regional security framework across (and around) the NAFTA-zone. The chapter shows that we can draw connections between this specific regional policy aim, driven by the compounding of regional economic interests engendered by NAFTA, and wider historically rooted U.S. strategies. The latter are based on equally durable U.S. interests, to *spread*, *secure*, and *stabilise* particular political economies that are open to global markets, U.S. (and wider foreign) investment, the effective exploitation and transportation of primary commodities, and (relatedly of course) free trade. In broad terms, this overarching U.S. strategy is what underpins Mérida and the ‘NAFTA-land Security’ project. Thus, U.S. foreign policy towards Mexico is rooted in securing U.S. strategic interests through the maintenance of an open bilateral economic relationship. This continues to require that the U.S. helps to ensure the *security* and *stability* of its southern neighbour. I make an argument that the international political economy, which has itself been significantly historically moulded by U.S policies seeking to obtain U.S. interests, is the key conditioning structure and explanatory tool in understanding why these core interests guide U.S. policies over time in both global strategic terms, and in the specific case we are studying here.

I therefore focus my argument initially on how these foreign policy interests are formed and how they go on to motivate particular actions. This necessarily has to be a ‘first-cut’ attempt, to borrow Zakaria’s phrase,² as we try to establish some core working concepts around the difficult task of conceptualising the U.S. state and its interests. However I make the case for an intimate connection between ‘economic interests’ and ‘security interests’ (the quotation marks pre-empt my argument that we must see them as coeval rather than distinct) within international structures significantly of U.S. design. Once these key concepts are established, I move onto a general theory of contemporary U.S. foreign policy and grand strategy. This discussion draws on established work to make its case. Having taken some time to explore meta-theoretical issues and wider U.S. strategies, we can discuss U.S. interests in Mexico specifically. Whilst U.S. involvement in Mexico is long-standing and quite consistent, based around the stability of Mexico’s political economy, I show how the economic integration the U.S. has sought and gained with Mexico as part of

¹ Friedrich Kratochwil ‘The Embarrassment of Changes: Neo-Realism as the Science of Realpolitik without Politics’ *Review of International Studies* 19,1 (1993) p. 79

² Fareed Zakaria *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America’s World Role* (Princeton University Press, 1998) p.8

wider North American economic integration has led to the concentration and proliferation of economic ties. This has occurred through increased bilateral interconnectedness in trade, investment and even cross-border production, and in turn it has increased the need for the U.S to protect those economic interests with security policies designed to maintain stability.

However, alongside more traditional concerns with Mexican stability writ large, the U.S is increasingly confronting more novel threats. There are increased fears within the U.S. state about the potential increased likelihood and impact of terrorism, and this has been a key driver for a policy of security projection and *North American security regionalisation*, or 'NAFTA-land Security'. In addition, NAFTA has also increased opportunities for illicit smuggling of a number of 'commodities' across and between NAFTA's borders, not least drugs, but also *inter alia* weapons, counterfeit goods, and, tragically, even people. Violence and instability is associated with these illicit markets and this further motivates the U.S. policy response. Thus there is regional specificity to both the threats within the NAFTA zone, and the U.S. policy response to project security to NAFTA's borders. I attempt to unpack these dynamics in U.S. policy here. What is concerning U.S. planners is the potential impact transnational threats will have on *core* U.S. interests in the security and stability of the Mexican political economy, and by extension NAFTA's economy. The MI is part of a wider policy response reacting to this concern, partly in line with established U.S. strategy to spread and *stabilise* open market economies in other states in the international system, but *also* intersecting with more regional priorities and the attempt to mitigate the threats within Mexico, and thereby within the NAFTA economy, by creating a regional 'NAFTA-land Security' framework.

Chapter Outline & Aims

In making this argument, this chapter will proceed in three broad stages. Firstly, I will deal with the meta-theoretical issues, and I aim especially to make clear how I understand the formulation of U.S. state interests. Through a wide-ranging discussion that takes in insights from across IR's theoretical field, but with an especial focus on constructivism, neoclassical realism, and Marxian approaches, I aim to define the U.S. state as an emergent actor that possesses interests stemming largely from (but not reducible to) the structures of production in both domestic and international political economy (IPE). It is important to do this in some detail as much of the discussion thereafter in this project revolves around core, durable interests as motivators of U.S. policy towards Mexico. In the final part of this section, I bolster the macro-theoretical discussion by showing how strategic interests were formed in U.S. economic expansion in the 19th Century, and how the U.S. state sought to protect these interests, and took it upon itself to further this expansion. Layne's revitalisation of Appleman Williams 'Open Door' thesis is useful in outlining the method that the U.S. has adopted to realise this aim, but it is important to stress that keeping with a historical-materialist framework, I emphasise that the Open Door is *significantly* structurally conditioned by interests contoured by the *material* logics of capitalism and U.S. power within them.

Secondly, I demonstrate the existence and power of these structurally informed interests in shaping U.S. strategy and policy by entering into a discussion of the broad sweeps of U.S. foreign policy, drawing on a range of theoretical work on U.S. foreign

policy. I hold that the interests of the U.S., and the foreign policy responding to but not *wholly* determined by those interests, are traceable for much of the history of U.S. foreign relations. However from the end of the Second World War through to the present (including, crucially, the current period defined as globalisation) we can clearly also recognise a more consistent grand strategy based on U.S. liberal order building in the capitalist core, and modernised ‘Open Door’ policies in the South. Through this strategy U.S. policymakers have sought to achieve U.S. primacy in the international system and within the global capitalist economy, and thereby maintain relative levels of power within (and to some extent) over those structures. An important aspect of this is understanding ‘globalisation’ as not only a blind process of expanding capitalism, but also in large part as a U.S. *state project* pursued for both U.S. national interests, and the interests of other “core” powers and transnational capital; this is what Stokes coins as the “dual logic” of U.S. foreign policy and grand strategy.³ The role of the U.S. state is considered carefully here.

After this general interrogation of interests and U.S. foreign policy more broadly, I consider U.S. interests in Mexico itself more closely. These are multi-scalar and we need to tease them out whilst maintaining their fundamental interconnectedness. Firstly the border with Mexico means the U.S. has geographic security interests in ensuring Mexican stability to prevent security threats from crossing that border. In the contemporary era this is a controversial and over-hyped threat, but nonetheless remains a motivator of policy.⁴ Secondly, the U.S. has core, direct strategic interests *in* Mexico that it seeks to secure. These are based around trade, investment, and access to raw materials (including oil), and are thus in keeping with wider U.S. strategies to open up and secure access to markets and materials around the globe. Thirdly, NAFTA has *hugely* increased the importance of the bilateral relationship to the U.S. in terms of overall levels of investment and trade, to the point where it plays an important role in U.S. *global* competitiveness, based on the creation of a regional North American economy developed through the economic forces unleashed by NAFTA. This economic importance necessitates security, a fact brought brutally home to U.S. policymakers⁵ by the adverse economic impact of 9/11 on the North American economy. Finally, but related to all of the above, policy is now being formulated to directly tackle the instability associated with the incredible levels of drug violence in Mexico. From the perspective of the U.S. state the regional ‘NAFTA-land security’ framework being pushed through Mérida and wider U.S. assistance thus makes sense as a response to Mexican instability directly, and to protect the NAFTA economy more generally.

The overall aim of this chapter within the project is to discuss *why* the U.S. seeks security integration with Mexico, and aims to bolster Mexican state security

³ Doug Stokes ‘The Heart of Empire: Theorising U.S. Empire in an Era of Transnational Capitalism’ *Third World Quarterly* 26, 2 (2005) p.230; Doug Stokes and Sam Raphael *Global Energy Security and American Hegemony* (The John Hopkins University Press, 2010) p.15,

⁴ I discuss this a little more below, but I am thinking here of the keenness on the part of some U.S. politicians, civil society groups and media outlets to promulgate a kind of border security that makes anything other than trade crossing the south-west border a grave national security threat, including ‘migrants’ whose only crime is the seeking of a better life.

⁵ And indeed Mexican and Canadian ones, reacting both to events and the U.S. response to those events.

capabilities across a number of spectrums. To do this it justifies a macro-theoretical position that holds that states are actors with interests, links U.S. aims in Mexico to wider U.S. strategy and those interests, and then discusses the specifics of the North American context and the relative importance of new or enhanced (or newly focused upon) security threats associated with the increased focus on terrorism, drug violence and the negative consequences of increased integration. This provides the theoretical framework within which to place subsequent chapters that show *how* the U.S. has sought, and is seeking, to protect its interests in Mexico through security projection to and around NAFTA's borders through greatly increased levels of aid and the MI, as well as leaving us sufficient analytical and theoretical space to consider whether the current policies can be considered to be working.

Macro-Theoretical Issues

The (U.S.) State and the Reality of Interests

Some Basics: Defining the State, and State Agency

When discussing the state, it helps to begin with some basics, and some fundamental questions. First, we should make clear we are discussing the modern state here, as it exists contemporaneously. In terms of actually 'defining' the modern state, Weber's classic designation is still a useful starting point. A state is, "a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory. Note that 'territory' is one of the characteristics of the state".⁶ We can be clear in stating that this involves an institutional apparatus able to exercise that monopoly, which of course requires coercive power, and, arguably, some form of legitimacy, consent, or recognition with a significant enough portion of the population within the territory.⁷ Also, as Taliaferro *et al* (drawing on Desch) add, the monopoly

⁶ Weber quoted in Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Steven E. Lobell & Norrin M. Ripsman 'Introduction: Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy' in Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman & Jeffrey W. Taliaferro *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge University Press, 2009) p.24-25

⁷ Michael Walzer 'The Moral Standing of States: A Response to Four Critics' *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 9, 3 (Spring, 1980) This of course is a debatable concept. My point here is not that states are automatically 'morally' legitimate by virtue of their existence. Instead for a state to *exist* there is at least some legitimacy, consent and / or recognition conferred upon it in the vast majority of cases, albeit to wildly varying degrees. This legitimacy and / or consent may come, for example, from a powerful elite section of the population, be backed up by severe repression based on that power, and be actively resented (but still recognised as a state to struggle against, or fear) by large portions of the population. Borrowing from Gramsci, a state's power and legitimacy is never absolute, and a successful, fully autonomous state cannot be built on total coercive power over the total population it exists within alone. Of course a state may claim to be in control or legitimate whilst actually facing an existential crisis (witness the Assad regime in Syria in 2012 and 2013), but internationally that state still enjoys *de jure* sovereignty even whilst that crisis rages. Indeed international legitimacy, especially in a legal sense, has traditionally been more sure than domestic legitimacy, with important absolute sovereign rights afforded to states and the groups that wield state power, "regardless of how that group came to power, of how it exercises power, and of the extent to which it may be supported or opposed by the population it rules". Thomas Pogge 'Priorities of Global Justice' *Metaphilosophy* 32, 1/2 (January, 2001) p.19-20 However, there have been some exceptions to this (indeed there are some interesting cases in the Mexican revolutionary period itself), and the traditional legal recognition for states in all circumstances is arguably more in flux than ever previously with the advent of the Responsibility to Protect doctrine.

of violence may only be *claimed* rather than fully realised.⁸ It is also uncontroversial to note that on a domestic level states have an important role to play in both regulating a state's economy and mediating between, or acting for, what are now commonly termed differentiated interest groups (we may more controversially call them economic or social classes). Finally, internationally states have been tasked with representing 'national interests', and as part of that role, ensuring security *vis-à-vis* external threats. From there though, things get more difficult, especially in terms of a state's foreign policies (and I have even probably inspired some dissenting voices already). How much autonomy does the state have from the society it exists within? *Does it*, as a matter of fact, exist within that society, or is it separate from it? How much connection is there between a state's domestic and international role, *especially* in terms of the mediation between or action on behalf of interest groups inside the state? Does 'the state' *act* internationally? What are 'state interests'? Can 'a state' *have* them? These are important questions to consider, especially as I argue that U.S. policies in Mexico can be greatly explained by the conclusion that the *U.S. state* is acting in *its* interests.

Much traditional analysis in IR talks of the state unproblematically in terms of its *agency*. That the state is seen as the principal actor in IR is most explicitly proffered in IR Realism and Liberalism, but in truth the *discipline* resorts to discussing the state as an actor. As Wendt points out, it even often gives the state personhood - it talks of it as if it has not only agency, but also, crucially *interests*. Indicative of the discipline's approach to discussing the state, it even gives states the ability to engage in rational deliberation and possess feelings.⁹ Examples of this abound. In a classic neo-Realist text, Mearsheimer tells us that states (or at least great power ones) "*fear*" one another, that they "*aim* to guarantee their own survival" and that therefore they "*pursue*" strategies to gain power to ensure that survival.¹⁰ IR neo-Liberals have also talked of the state in this way. Taking another indicative classic of the genre, Keohane argues, "states are crucial actors, not only *seeking* wealth and power directly but *striving to construct* frameworks of rules and practices that will enable them to secure those objectives [...] in the future".¹¹ Finnemore, writing from a constructivist position, contends, "States *do want* power, security, and wealth".¹² In truth, I could have pulled any number of similar quotations regarding the state from any number of analysts across IR's theoretical spectrum.

Discussing the state in such terms is often useful shorthand designed to simplify analysis and prose, but it does in fact provoke an interesting debate. Is it analytically accurate or useful to think of the state in this way? For many, such a conception would wrongly give agency to what is in fact a, "fiction" or a, "theoretical

⁸ Talliaferro *et al* 'Introduction' p.25

⁹ Alexander Wendt 'The State as a Person in International Theory' *Review of International Studies* 30, 2 (2004) p.289

¹⁰ John Mearsheimer *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2001) p.13, 32-33, 42 My emphasis

¹¹ Robert O. Keohane *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton University Press, 2005 [1984]) p.25 My emphasis

¹² Martha Finnemore *National Interests in International Society* (Cornell University, 1996) p.1 'Do' is emphasised in the original, I have emphasised 'want' to make clear the linguistic assignment of desires upon the state.

abstraction”.¹³ Gilpin has suggested that in fact the state, “does not really exist,” and that the traditional IR Realist only talks, “as if” it does as, “a matter of convenience and economy”.¹⁴ Gilpin makes the important point that states can only act *on the basis of decisions and actions made by the human actors within them*. Although he doesn’t tackle the question of the state as an actor as directly as Gilpin, and would perhaps balk at the suggestion that the state is only an abstract, Mearsheimer tacitly acknowledges the human element of state agency by stating, “the elites *who make national security policy* speak mostly the language of power [...] and the United States acts in the international system according to the dictates of realist logic”.¹⁵ He also contends that his brand of offensive Realism is, “prescriptive” in that ‘states’ *should* act according to the logic of an offensive Realist.¹⁶ Thus it is accepted that it always requires human actors to ‘make the state act’.

This characterisation of the state as an exercise in abstractive brevity is insufficient. The ‘state as useful abstraction’ concept simply does not fully justify the near ubiquitous use of language that gives the state agency, and, relatedly, does not fully explore *why* this language is, “so useful”.¹⁷ As Wendt and Wight argue, in contending the state does not really exist Gilpin is guilty of reducing what is real to mere physicality, or empirically limiting it to what we can see.¹⁸ Both argue, correctly, that in fact the state is *real* in an ontological sense. For both, despite the fact that states have undoubtedly come into being and act through social processes and human interactions, this does not make them any less ‘real’.¹⁹ As Wight contends, it is a false distinction to suggest otherwise, as, “Socially constructed entities are real irrespective of how they came to be; unless, of course, we accept the empiricist’s narrow definition of real”.²⁰ To accept a strict empiricism with regards to the state would leave us with a very unsatisfactory account of the *material* affect states have on human lives; why, “real people with guns and batons will enforce decisions attributed to this nonphysical reality”.²¹

Moreover, talking of the state as if it were a ‘real’ actor is also useful because in foreign policy ‘state behaviour’ does show significant consistency over time. We cannot, even based on collective everyday experience, reduce the state to the actions of human agents, as if each set of policymakers and leaders remade the state anew.

¹³ Colin Wight ‘State Agency: Social Action without Human Activity?’ *Review of International Studies* 30, 2 (2004) p.269

¹⁴ Robert G. Gilpin ‘The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism’ in Robert O. Keohane [ed] *Neorealism and its Critics* (Columbia University Press, 1986) p.318; Wendt ‘State as a Person’ p.289; Wight ‘State Agency’ p.270

¹⁵ Mearsheimer *Tragedy of Great Power Politics* p.25 My emphasis

¹⁶ *ibid* p.12 i.e. seek power and security through hegemony.

¹⁷ Wendt ‘State as a Person’ p. 290

¹⁸ *ibid*; Wight ‘State Agency’ p.271-273

¹⁹ Wendt and Wight are both arguing from a scientific or critical realist perspective that the strictly empirical or observable does not exhaust ‘the real’, and that social structures should be understood as having a real ontological status.

²⁰ Wight ‘State Agency’ p.272

²¹ Robert W. Cox ‘Towards a Posthegemonic Conceptualization of World Order: Reflections on the Relevancy of Ibn Khaldun [1992]’ in Robert W. Cox with Timothy J. Sinclair, *Approaches to World Order* (Cambridge University Press, 1996) p.145 Wight contends that the empiricist or positivist “get out of jail free card” over this is a move to nominalism, whereby again the state is an abstraction with no basis in ‘reality’ Wight ‘State Agency’ p.271

With regard to the object of our study, US policymakers and state leaders have consistently sought global primacy through hegemony as a grand strategy since WWII, have used international institutions, aid, normative leadership and security support to bolster and justify this hegemony, have opened up new markets to spread global capital, have intervened in Mexico and elsewhere consistently to support political and economic stability or install new regimes to secure U.S. strategic interests, and have shown cohesiveness across the state apparatus in pursuit of these goals. There is a strong case to be made that contemporary (post '45) U.S. grand strategy has been largely based on, and in sum secured, the *interests* of the U.S. state in securing and maintaining global primacy through hegemony in a liberal, capitalist global order.²² The subsequent chapters will show that despite contextual contingencies and the real effects of bureaucratic politics and political contestation and change, U.S. policy towards Mexico has been historically consistent in seeking Mexican political economic openness and stability. With regard to this *and* the policies associated with MI, we can empirically observe policy coherence and continuity *across* a number of state institutions. Therefore, despite the inescapable fact that it is human beings who make the state act, I contend we should follow Joseph and consider *the state* to act coherently in the emergent sense that we also use to speak of, “organisations and other collective bodies” acting coherently, as long as we bear in mind that, “their actions are expressions of agency by various groups”.²³

Some Deeper Questions: International Structures, Domestic Contexts and ‘Actual’ Foreign Policies

These conclusions, however, prompt deeper questions. *Why* is there such durability of U.S. state behaviour across time, contexts and administrations? The IR structural neo-Realist (and, though with slightly different conclusions, neo-Liberal)²⁴ explanation pivots around the anarchic *structure* of international relations. With no overarching sovereign or Hobbesian authority above the collection of world sovereign states, each state fears that another, or alliance of others, will use their inherent military capability to attack it in hopes of increasing their own chances of security and survival.²⁵ States, which crucially within *many* structural neo-Realist (and neo-Liberal) accounts are strategically minded rational egoists, do and *should* seek to guarantee their own survival through the accrual of military (and concurrently, economic) power.²⁶ This

²² Of course the U.S. state may be the *par exemplar* of consistent state behaviour in this sense. It would be hard to assign such consistency to some of the less powerful states in the international system.

²³ Jonathan Joseph *The Social in the Global: Social Theory, Governmentality and Global Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 2012) p.7, 36

²⁴ To differing degrees, neoliberal institutionalists share the assumptions of neorealism about the international structure, but contend states can cooperate even given anarchy. For example see Robert Axelrod and Robert O. Keohane ‘Achieving Cooperation under Anarchy: Strategies and Institutions’ *World Politics* 38, 1 (October 1985); Robert O. Keohane and Lisa L. Martin, ‘The Promise of Institutional Theory’ *International Security* 20, 1 (Summer, 1995)

²⁵ This may be, depending on the neorealist you ask, to defensively maintain the balance of power in the system (or a miscalculation that will adversely affect that balance), or to offensively fundamentally change it and maximize the power and positional advantage of the aggressive state. See John J. Mearsheimer ‘Realists as Idealists’ *Security Studies* 20, 3 (2011a)

²⁶ For the classic example see Kenneth Waltz *Theory of International Politics* (Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1979) Mearsheimer has recently argued, convincingly, that Waltz was actually rather skeptical of the idea of state rationalism, based on their tendency to act recklessly and not how his own theory prescribes. See John J. Mearsheimer, ‘Reckless States and Realism’ *International*

structurally determined drive to security is a state's *primary interest*, which other, related interests emerge from, and foreign policy is based on. This tends to 'wash out', to use Dueck's nice phrase, "domestic level differences" between variegated state cultures, politics, and histories.²⁷ As Keohane neatly summarises, "pressures exerted on all states by the [security] competition among them" is *the* most important determinant of 'state' behaviour.²⁸ The structure of the international system effectively straightjackets the human actors within state apparatuses into certain rationally strategic, interest-driven behaviours. Mearsheimer refers to this as an, "iron cage" that state foreign policymakers cannot escape.²⁹ In this conception it is useful to conceptualise states as agents, because, "state leaders tend to conform to systemic pressures over time" with a high degree of autonomy from other influences from the domestic level.³⁰ Human actors make the state act in a consistent, strategic, interest-based manner in reaction to structural compulsions.

This neo-neo account is a pleasingly parsimonious explanation for consistent state behaviour, and the practical applicability of assigning agency to states. However this parsimony is achieved through serious shortcomings. As Finnemore notes, these explanations of state behaviour, based on rather vague notions of state interests in an anarchic structure, tell us little about *how states actually pursue* goals such as security.³¹ This matters not only in terms of explanatory completeness, but also, and relatedly, because it opens up the potential for *agency* and *discontinuity* within the state's apparatus once again. If the U.S. can take multiple routes in its grand strategy, *why* has it chosen to seek hegemony rather than becoming an offshore balancer?³² Neoclassical Realists have recognised that the international structure of anarchy and subsequent security competition does not *exclusively* determine the *detail* of state foreign policy. Instead they posit that it is the *interaction* between structure and domestic or unit-level that determines state behaviour as, "systemic pressures [i.e. structure] must be translated through intervening variables" at that unit-level.³³ In an introduction to the neoclassical approach Taliaferro *et al* provide a good (but not

Relations 23, 2 (June, 2009) Also see Taliaferro *et al* 'Introduction' for a brief discussion of the mistaken notion that IR realism should be automatically equated with state rationalism (p.22).

²⁷ Colin Dueck *Reluctant Crusaders: Power, Culture, and Change in American Grand Strategy* (Princeton University Press, 2006) p.16

²⁸ Keohane *After Hegemony* p.25-26

²⁹ Mearsheimer *Tragedy of Great Power Politics* p.12

³⁰ David Skidmore & Valerie M. Hudson 'Establishing the Limits of State Autonomy: Contending Approaches to the Study of State-Society Relations and Foreign Policy-Making' in David Skidmore & Valerie M. Hudson *The Limits of State Autonomy: Societal Groups and Foreign Policy Formulation* (Westview Press, 1993)p.7 This is not to say that structural neo-neo accounts insist that 'states' or their policymaking elites are utterly removed from effects springing from the 'domestic' level, or that this structural straightjacket is all-determinative. This is of course a theory and thus it is accepted it will *occasionally* miss other important elements and anomalous cases. However it doesn't assign all that much importance to what is missed.

³¹ Finnemore *National Interests* p.2

³² For example see the critiques of contemporary U.S. foreign policy in John J. Mearsheimer 'Imperial by Design' *The National Interest* 111 (Jan/Feb, 2011); Christopher Layne *The Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present* (Cornell University Press, 2006); Christopher Layne 'America's Middle East Grand Strategy After Iraq: The Moment for Offshore Balancing has Arrived' *Review of International Studies* 35, 1 (2009)

³³ Gideon Rose 'Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy' *World Politics* 51, 1 (Oct, 1998) p.146

exhaustive) list of the important questions underplayed in neo-neo approaches, and reintroduced by considering the unit-level:

How do states, *or more specifically the decision-makers and institutions that act on their behalf*, assess international threats and opportunities? What happens when there is disagreement about the nature of foreign threats? *Who* ultimately decides the range of acceptable and unacceptable foreign policy alternatives? To what extent, and under what conditions, can domestic actors bargain with state leaders and influence foreign or security policies? How and under what circumstances will domestic factors impede states from pursuing the types of strategies predicted by balance of power theory and balance of threat theory? Finally, how do states go about extracting and mobilizing resources necessary to implement foreign and security policies?³⁴

Where, then, does this reemphasis on domestic elements, with the unavoidable conclusion that we cannot assume rational agency on the part of states, leave the notion of the state as a unified actor? How do we explain continuities in policy? What are the ordering principles in neoclassical Realism? Without wishing to homogenise a variegated theoretical approach,³⁵ there are some identifiable connecting points. First of all, it is important to note that the structural constraints set out in Waltzian theories of IR remain important here. States still strive above all for security in the anarchic structure, and there are structural relations of power in the inter-state system. “Parameters” and inducements³⁶ are thus set for state behaviour. Of course this returns us to the problem with neo-neo approaches (perhaps especially neo-Realism) in that the anarchic ‘structure’ dictates that a state should seek security, whilst the relative power structure defines the state’s relative ability to do that, with pretty much everything else in terms of the *actual content* of foreign policy ‘up for grabs’.³⁷ Thus as we go on to explore further below, if we define structure as an enabling or constraining force on action - which we most certainly should³⁸ - the structure proffered by neo-neo accounts, and indeed in neoclassical Realism, is not all that much of a (powerful) structure at all. As Donnelly has argued, the classic neo-Realist definition of structure innovated by Waltz tells us that it should include an ordering principle, yet the anarchy Waltz offers as the fundamental international structure is not even an ordering principle.³⁹ Also, as Finnemore and Joseph have separately argued, the ‘structure’ in realist accounts is a strange one, with, “no underlying causal mechanism”⁴⁰ and, “no independent ontological status”.⁴¹ Waltz himself admitted as

³⁴ Talliaferro *et al* ‘Introduction’ p.1 My emphasis

³⁵ *ibid* p.10

³⁶ *ibid* p.3

³⁷ Waltz of course claimed that his theory of international politics should be complemented by a separate theory of foreign policy for this very reason.

³⁸ For example Margaret S. Archer *Structure, Agency, and the Internal Conversation* (Cambridge University Press, 2003) p.4

³⁹ Jack Donnelly ‘Rethinking Political Structures: From “Ordering Principles” to “Vertical Differentiation” - and Beyond’ *International Theory* 1, 1 (March, 2009) p.49-54

⁴⁰ Joseph *Social in the Global* p.54

⁴¹ Finnemore *National Interests* p.12 An indicative example helps reinforce this point. Consider the ability of a small clique of neoconservative and hawkish administration officials, influential experts, and aides to shift official perceptions, and therefore policy, regarding the Soviet Union’s relative

much, calling his structure a “permissive cause” with no *reality* in an ontological sense.⁴²

Thus, despite claiming its innovation is the focus on the interaction of structure and domestic politics, neoclassical Realist theory has in fact differentiated itself from neo-Realism by placing *more* importance on the internal or unit-level workings of the state, in the U.S. case at least. Firstly, as introduced above, the theory highlights what Rose and Taliaferro *et al* call an, “imperfect ‘transmission belt’” between the parameters and inducements of, ‘international structure’ and the international environment, and *actual* foreign policy responses. Policy responses are filtered through the domestic workings of the state,⁴³ and the *interpretations* (including, crucially, potential *misinterpretations*) of reality that inform the foreign policy decisions of “flesh and blood officials”.⁴⁴ This is true even though neoclassical Realists tend to give state policymaking elites a high (but never total) degree of autonomy from the domestic society in which they exist in the setting and direction of foreign policy.⁴⁵ Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, many emphasise that the current structure is unique in world history, as the U.S. has achieved a genuine first in terms of relative power and influence in the modern state-centred anarchic system: unipolarity and global hegemony.⁴⁶ For some, this has *increased* the importance of domestic variables, such as ideology, ideas and elite interests, in the formation of U.S. foreign policy and strategies. Structural power preponderance has also afforded U.S.

power, capability and danger towards the U.S in the late 1970s. This was achieved through *intentional* threat inflation by the politically motivated ‘Team B’ intelligence inquiry and Committee on the Present Danger, in spite of internal administrative opposition and contravening intelligence facts on Soviet abilities and declining economic power provided by the CIA. See Adam Curtis ‘The Power of Nightmares’ T.V. Mini-Series (2004) Information here: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0430484/> Accessed 14.07.14; Gordon R. Mitchell ‘Team B Intelligence Coups’ *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 92, 2 (May, 2006) p.148-150 If misperceptions, ideas, normative preferences, strategic cultures, ideologies and so on can have such important effects in foreign policy, especially for the U.S., what structural, causal role is ‘international structure’ as defined by Realists actually playing?

⁴² Milja Kurki *Causation in International Relations: Reclaiming Causal Analysis* (Cambridge University Press, 2008) p. 111-112

⁴³ *ibid* p.4, 7; Rose ‘Neoclassical Realism’ p.147

⁴⁴ Rose ‘Neoclassical Realism’ p.158; Zakaria *From Wealth to Power* p.24

⁴⁵ Taliaferro *et al* ‘Introduction’ p.25; Zakaria *From Wealth to Power* p.24 Zakaria writes, “‘central decision-makers’ have the authority to conduct a nation’s foreign policy. Clearly, many factors enter into a state’s foreign policy, but since statesman are ultimately responsible for all such decisions, any domestic pressures are reflected in their discussions and actions.”

⁴⁶ For example see William C. Wohlforth ‘The Stability of a Unipolar World’ *International Security* 24, 1 (Summer, 1999); Layne *Peace of Illusions* p.4-6; Randall L. Schweller & Xiaoyu Pu ‘After Unipolarity: China’s Visions of International Order in an Era of U.S. Decline’ *International Security* 36, 1 (2011) p.46 Thus neoclassical Realist work plugs into other debates concerning hegemonic stability theory (e.g. Peter. J.Katzenstein, Robert O. Keohane & Stephen D. Krasner ‘*International Organization and the Study of World Politics*’ *International Organization* 52, 4 (1998) p.660-661; Colin Dueck ‘Ideas and Alternatives in American Grand Strategy, 2000-2004’ *Review of International Studies* 30, 4 (Oct, 2004)) and U.S. decline. Layne now argues that the “‘unipolar moment’ is over” as the U.S. declines and China rises. Christopher Layne ‘This Time it’s Real: The End of Unipolarity and the *Pax Americana*’ *International Studies Quarterly* 56,1 (March 2012) Other neoclassical Realists disagree with Layne’s premises e.g. William C. Wohlforth ‘How not to Evaluate Theories’ *International Studies Quarterly* 56,1 (March 2012)

Of course for neoclassical Realists the propensity for unipolarity to end is itself a result of the structural tendency of other powers to seek to balance or challenge within the system, and poor strategic choices or other spoiling elements from the domestic level.

policymakers the opportunity and ability to *pursue* ideas and policies not afforded to others in the system.⁴⁷ In the U.S. case⁴⁸ many neoclassical Realists conclude the structural inducements of anarchy to seek security as an overriding national interest, (as simplistically as that is defined and as weak a structure that is) has been tamed by its relative material power.⁴⁹ This means that other ‘unit-level’ forces are the *real* propelling elements in U.S. foreign policy. It is worth exploring some neoclassical work to explore this further, focusing on Dueck and Layne, before offering analysis of it in terms of my own theoretical claims.

The U.S. State and Neoclassical Realism

Given that structure is not determinative for foreign policy and does not tell us much about what policies will be actually pursued, “understanding the links between power [structure] and policy requires close examination of the contexts within which foreign policies are formulated and implemented”.⁵⁰ Several neoclassical Realists have done this in our case. Zakaria offers a, “first-cut theory” he calls “state centered realism”, which builds on his reading of “classical realism” in explaining how powerful, economically expanding states concomitantly expand their, “political interests” *not only* in automatic response to their own growing relative capabilities in the anarchic international system (the structural factors),⁵¹ but also as a result of increased *state strength* within domestic society afforded by the expanding bureaucratic capacities of a central state apparatus (domestic factors). In conjunction this forms *state power*. Thus, despite material and economic power increases from 1865, the U.S. did not expand its interests proportionate to these increases until the 1890s and the development of a strong, autonomous, executive state that could both *define* and *pursue* foreign policies based on the extension of foreign interests.⁵² Importantly, policymakers have to, “perceive” the increase in state strength and national capability combined in state power.⁵³

⁴⁷ Dueck *Reluctant Crusaders* p.34

⁴⁸ This does not mean unit-level variables are only important in U.S. state behaviour *across* neoclassical realist theory. Discussing the response to and impact of purported U.S. relative decline, subsequent multipolarity and increased international disorder, Schweller and Pu contend that developments will, “largely depend on what roles the emerging powers, especially China, *decide* to play”. Schweller and Pu ‘After Unipolarity’ p. 42 (My emphasis). Taliaferro *et al* argue that, “Unit-level variables constrain or facilitate the ability of all types of states – great powers as well as lesser states – to respond to systemic imperatives” (Taliaferro *et al* ‘Introduction’ p.4)

⁴⁹ This is of course not absolute, and the U.S. does not control the international system. For example see Layne *Peace of Illusions* p.4.

⁵⁰ Rose ‘Neoclassical Realism’ p.147

⁵¹ Just for clarification, I treat Zakaria’s treatment of “classical realism” as ‘structural’ in the IR neo-realist sense. Rather than seeing capability induced power maximization in a ‘will to power’ or innate compulsion in man (*a la* some of the classical realist work of Morgenthau or Neibuhr), Zakaria sees expansion as the product of the anarchic system. “The best solution to the perennial problem of the *uncertainty of international life* is for a state to increase its control over its environment through the persistent expansion of its political interests abroad” Zakaria *From Wealth to Power* p.20 (My emphasis). The resultant relative power imbalances are also thus structurally determined to a good degree, and are themselves part of the international structure.

⁵² *ibid* p.5-12, 32, 35-43

⁵³ *ibid* p. 32, 38 I assume that the word, “perceive” pre-supposes that this perception is the correct one; recognition of state power seems the more correct term here, although Zakaria, in line with neoclassical Realist theory, does place a good deal of emphasis on the possibility of misperceptions of power by policymakers.

Despite the useful insights of this work, not least the importance of recognising the prerequisite of necessary domestic state power in defining and achieving interests, Zakaria's account is still largely 'structural'. States expand their interests due to the inducement of the international system of anarchy, and this effect snowballs for powerful states as the result of the, "classical" realist dictum that, "relative capabilities determine [...] intentions".⁵⁴ Zakaria adds the crucial caveat that the pursuit of maximisation requires a state that is both 'strong' relative to the society it exists within, and recognised by policymakers as such,⁵⁵ but he doesn't answer Finnemore's question of *how* these 'strong states' actually go about pursuing those expanded interests, and *why* they do so in *particular* ways with particular policies and strategies. Interests are not defined much beyond the need for security and the capability to achieve it through further increases in influence and relative power. However, Dueck and Layne *do* offer neoclassical Realist accounts of U.S. foreign policy that purport to retain the importance of structure in limiting and selecting foreign policy interests and therefore actions, whilst also both emphasising the particularities of those policies *and* offering extended explanations for the U.S.' broadly consistent hegemony-seeking grand strategy. They do this through including a serious engagement with the ideational aspects of U.S. foreign policy within their theoretical frameworks and understanding of states and state behaviour.

Thus, in Dueck's work, there is an explicit use of theoretical features normally associated with constructivism in IR: the impact of national cultures, security cultures, ideas and norms on state behaviour. Focusing on grand strategy, Dueck contends that whilst the international system remains, "the single most important overall cause of strategic behavior" (in terms less about anarchy than about the balance of power and the emergence of potential threats),⁵⁶ we should also pay attention to how "country-specific cultural variables can influence the preferences and perceptions of a state's foreign policymakers" and consider, "that culture can predispose a state toward certain strategic choices rather than others; and that culture can delimit the range of

⁵⁴ *ibid*

⁵⁵ Indeed, Zakaria's argument here is almost tautological. As a state's capabilities increase, so do its interests, though they cannot be acted upon without the emergence of a strong state. However, in Zakaria's account the U.S. state acquires relative strength largely due to the role it undertakes in the expanding economy that increases U.S. relative capabilities in the first place. The impression is of U.S. statesman having to wait patiently for the capabilities of the state having to catch up with structurally given interests. Zakaria does give some weight to the emergent disconnect between state capabilities and structural incentives and the complicating division of powers in the U.S. political system (e.g. p.94), but *how* and *why specific* policies are *chosen* in the expansion of interests *and* the creation of state power is rather left out. Hence the critique of those who posit the importance of specific domestic variables (p.50-55) seems premature. Structure is ill-defined in keeping with the neo-realist realist tradition, whilst the role of *agency* is theoretically underplayed.

⁵⁶ Anarchy may still conceivably lie as a deeper structure, but Dueck does not emphasise it here. Elsewhere he has stressed the, "extent to which the United States dominates today's international system". Dueck 'Ideas and Alternatives in American Grand Strategy' p.519 However whilst the world may longer be anarchic, Dueck argues it makes sense for the U.S. to prefer to preserve unipolarity rather than a return to something less hierarchical, but considering 'fear of anarchy' as an anarchic structure would to my mind be stretching the concept (*ibid*, p.520). Causally speaking, Dueck posits, in a mixture of offensive (powerful states further maximize power) and defensive (states facing threats maximize power) realism, that, "When a given state becomes more powerful, or when it faces greater threats from abroad, it tends to adopt a more costly and expansive grand strategy. Conversely, when a state becomes less powerful, or when it faces fewer foreign threats, it tends to adopt a less costly and less expansive grand strategy" Dueck *Reluctant Crusaders* p.19

acceptable alternatives in a given situation”.⁵⁷ Concerning the strategic choices of the most recent Bush administration, he argues that, “international structural pressures actually explain very little” and, “a more useful explanatory framework points to the influence of policy ideas in shaping strategic outcomes”.⁵⁸ Indeed, in line with neoclassical work on the U.S.’ overwhelming structural power, Dueck suggests, “Precisely because the United States is so powerful today, structural pressures may actually be relatively unimportant in explaining US strategic adjustment”.⁵⁹

For Dueck, the prevailing strategic culture in the U.S. is significantly reflective of a broad-based “liberalism”, and U.S. strategy has been largely comprised of the ambitious attempt to construct a liberal international order, which policymakers see as not only a ‘good’ for its own sake, but also because they believe it serves, “American interests, in that it will make the United States more influential, prosperous, and secure”.⁶⁰ This liberal tradition is not all determinative of course, Dueck sees it as more of a, “permissive cause” that makes “some grand strategies more likely than others” and can occasion overcome systemic pressures and compulsions.⁶¹ For example, the W. Bush administration exhibited two sub-set traditions both competing with, and existing within the liberal tradition - an *ideational* Realism, and a turn to seeking U.S. primacy imbued with an assertive Wilsonianism that, “had more to do with the recurring power of classical liberal ideas in American grand strategy, resurrected in a particularly muscular form” than any international structural pressure.⁶² Also, importantly, the large-scale (and often expansive) interests suggested by the creation and maintenance of liberal order have been tempered by “limited liability”, defined as “a culturally shaped preference for avoiding costs and commitments in grand strategy, to an extent that is actually inconsistent with stated and established international goals”.⁶³ What is important here is that domestic cultural factors mean there are additional interests *defined* by policymakers as opposed to them being *solely* provided by international structures, which whilst encouraging change also helps explain why the U.S. state still acts consistently.

⁵⁷ *ibid* p.18-19

⁵⁸ Dueck ‘Ideas and Alternatives’ p.511

⁵⁹ *ibid*. p.535 At earlier points in history, specifically following the world wars, Dueck makes more of a case for the interaction of structural and cultural factors in explaining U.S. strategy. Colin Dueck ‘Realism, Culture and Grand Strategy: Explaining America’s Peculiar Path to World Power’ *Security Studies* 14, 1 (April-June, 2005)

⁶⁰ Dueck *Reluctant Crusaders* p.21-24 My emphasis

⁶¹ *ibid* p.26 There is also room within the tradition for significant policy debate and shift about how to act within it and best create and secure a liberal world order. *ibid* p.23 Dueck identifies “crusaders” - who aim to spread liberal ideals forcefully (the Bush administration after 9/11 is seen in this light) - and “exemplarists” - who think of the U.S. as Winthrop’s shining city on a hill, encouraging others to liberalism themselves. H.W. Brands and Michael Hunt use similar distinctions (see Layne *Peace of Illusions* p.202). Dueck also discusses internationalists, progressives, nationalists and realists, who all have various levels of commitment to versions of liberalism and limited liability. Of these, Dueck sees internationalists committed to open markets, international institutions and the spread and support of democratic governance as most prevalent in the U.S. state structure historically. *Reluctant Crusaders* p.23, 31

⁶² *ibid* p.147; Dueck ‘Realism, Culture and Grand Strategy’ p.511

⁶³ Dueck *Reluctant Crusaders* p. 26-30 In contrast to Zakaria, Dueck locates the lack of expansionist behaviour (all the way up to the bombing of Pearl Harbor) on the part of the U.S. on this tendency, rather than the absence of recognised state power. Lots of factors play into this tendency for Dueck, including U.S. geographic isolationism, and a division of powers political system, “created to resist dramatic policy changes” *ibid* p.29

Layne's conception is similar to Dueck's, without the explicit nod to constructivist thought. If anything however, the ordering principle for (U.S.) state behaviour in Layne's conception is even more strongly based on domestic 'cultural' factors. He argues that the U.S.' prime objective interest, security, has been pursued through the *choice* of U.S. policymakers to seek, "extraregional hegemony" through "Open Door" economic and ideological policies based on liberal or Wilsonian ideas.⁶⁴ Building on revisionists like Appleman Williams and La Faber, Layne contends 'the Open Door' rests on the *idea* that U.S. interests are best served by securing open access to markets by ensuring states have 'open doors' to both U.S. and wider economic integration (economic element), and democratic ideals (ideological element). These two are mutually reinforcing, in theory, through "a virtuous circle" whereby greater economic interdependence and openness symbiotically induces greater commitments to democracy and to peace, and vice versa.⁶⁵ The guiding framework for U.S. grand strategy is thus similar to the one proposed by Dueck; self-interested liberalism. In contrast to Dueck, Layne suggests that the continued grand strategic commitment to global hegemony through the Open Door is *almost entirely not* the product of systemic pressures. Whilst the U.S. drive to, "extraregional hegemony" is based on an *attempt* to achieve international dominance, and thereby security, this phenomenon is not a structurally determined one. Instead "[T]he Open Door, *not objective security considerations*, explains why the United States has pursued extraregional hegemony".⁶⁶ Layne seems strangely close to what some constructivists claim about the social world, that it is, "ideas all the way down".⁶⁷ Layne even claims that successive U.S. policymakers have, "defined security ideationally".⁶⁸

Even the economic aspects of the Open Door are conceptualised as idealist. "U.S. policymakers have *believed* that prosperity is the key to domestic political stability and have *perceived* that America's prosperity depends on access to overseas markets, investment opportunities, and raw materials".⁶⁹ Layne at points appears sceptical of any economic imperatives in the Open Door. In a footnote, he cites Appleman Williams' contention that it was a *belief* that, "America's economic well-being and its domestic political stability" depended on economic expansion on the part of U.S. companies into overseas markets and the prerequisite maintenance of the openness of those markets this entailed, rather than any "*objective* condition of U.S. dependency" upon international economic activity.⁷⁰ Layne rather belittles the importance of international trade to the U.S. economy as evidence of this 'non-dependency', stating that, "only 6-10% of U.S. GDP" was made up of imports / exports up to the 1970s, and that the more contemporary figure of 16-22% is still, "among the lowest of the major advanced industrial countries".⁷¹ These arguments are part of a thesis that seeks

⁶⁴ Layne *Peace of Illusions* p.6-10

⁶⁵ *ibid* p.34-35

⁶⁶ *ibid* p.37

⁶⁷ Alexander Wendt 'Constructing International Politics' *International Security* 20, 1 (1995) p.74 Of course Wendt is putting this in a certain context, and its not quite all the way down as we get to "biology and natural resources" Nonetheless much constructivist work sees ideas as the most important element in IR.

⁶⁸ Layne *Peace of Illusions* p.194

⁶⁹ *ibid* p.32 Second emphasis in original

⁷⁰ *ibid* p.216 Note 83 My emphasis

⁷¹ *ibid*

to establish that the maintenance of U.S. hegemony through the Open Door is *objectively* strategically dangerous and anachronistic in a world of structural change and rising powers.⁷² Layne seeks to establish that a grand strategy based on sustaining U.S. hegemony has for some considerable time been based on an *ideational* rather than a structurally informed and strategically sound edifice.⁷³

However the ideational-material aspects sit uneasily. Firstly, Layne suggests that the Open Door's insistence on the importance of overseas markets leads to a situation where the U.S. state must ensure the stability of those markets, with military means if necessary. Indeed, the Open Door leads to the creation of "new interests abroad that *had* to be defended" and therefore, "pulled U.S. military power along in its wake".⁷⁴ Thus despite the fact that the Open Door is at root ideational for Layne, it would seem to inculcate an *underlying economic expansionary logic* for U.S. foreign policy in its power to spawn new interests that *have* to be defended through parallel military expansion. This indicates a nexus, albeit an ill-defined one, between ideational *and* material aspects within the Open Door. Layne deals with this nexus very briefly, through his conception of the state. Arguing that the state *is* the dominant elites who control it, Layne suggests that elite foreign policymakers formed a coalition with other elite groups such as, "capital-intensive corporations that looked to overseas markets and outward-looking investment banks" (as well as the media, think tanks, and Wall Street law firms). Statesmen and women have pursued policies that have, "served the interests of [these] dominant elites that have formed the core of the U.S. foreign policy establishment since at least the late 1930s".⁷⁵ The material interests within the Open Door accrue to these elites, rather than being in the (security) interests of the U.S. In this reading, and despite Layne's earlier theoretical claims, the state appears to be an instrument of elite power and *its* interests. Thus the Open Door is seemingly both ideational *and* instrumental.

Neo-classical Realism: Where did the Structure Go?

Neoclassical Realist theory is useful to our understanding of the state and its interests in several ways. On one theoretical level it gives us some basic tools in terms of how we understand state behaviour. In its attempt to meld structural and domestic elements it offers convincing accounts based on theories of state *foreign policy* that crucially seeks to avoid both structural determinism and voluntarism. This makes for rich analysis of U.S. foreign policy. There is a strong link between the theoretical basics and the empirical arguments of the neoclassical Realists, and the empirical evidence of consistent U.S. state behaviour based on its construction of an international liberal order that secures its primacy and constituent economic / strategic interests. However whilst Layne and Dueck provide analytical detail through engagement with domestic

⁷² *ibid* p.198-205

⁷³ *ibid* p.201 Layne accepts that the move to hegemony in Europe made strategic sense in its contemporary context, even though there would have been some inevitable costs to eventually pay for even that strategic manoeuvre. *ibid* p.200

⁷⁴ *ibid* p.36 My emphasis

⁷⁵ *ibid* p.200-201 It should be noted that Layne's ideas here are sketches dealing with what he admits is a complex topic "worthy of a book in its own right" *ibid* p.200 As Gowan has pointed out these 'sketched ideas' are in fact crucial to the argument, and are sadly missing from the rest of Layne's analysis. Peter Gowan 'A Radical Realist' *New Left Review* 41 (Sept / Oct, 2006) This makes it difficult to pin Layne down as he spends much of the analysis seeing the Open Door as 'ideational', before concluding by adding an instrumentalist logic to it. More on this below.

‘variables’, the sense of an orderly state actor acting consistently through time is established not through ‘structure’ (as it is understood by neo-Realists), and ‘unit-level’ interaction, but through a largely autonomous policy making body acting within the largely ideationally defined strategic ‘culture/s’ of U.S. foreign policy. In short even the weak structures of neo-neo accounts - anarchy and power capabilities - have been largely stripped away here in terms of explanations of U.S. foreign policy both in terms of analytical focus on dominant ideas within U.S. foreign policy making, and due to the particular power of the U.S. in the international system. I contend we need a clearer idea of *what* structures mediate U.S. foreign policy. We need to understand structure beyond the neo-Realist informed understandings of it still so prevalent in IR.

Putting Structure Back In: Constructivism

As we have seen, some neoclassical Realists have engaged directly with more ideational approaches in IR more traditionally associated with constructivism. Whilst Dueck has done this on a surface level with regard to an engagement with the importance of a policy culture of liberalism and limited liability, Sterling-Folker has attempted to build a bridge between the two theoretical disciplines of Realism and constructivism writ large based on a discussion of their respective ontologies. The argument is interesting in terms of our purposes here for its treatment of constructivism itself. It largely deals in the view that constructivism treats the social as, ‘ideas all the way down’. In contrast to IR Realist ontology, which sets *pre-existing* parameters on social action (in her argument mainly based on biology in a zero-sum environment), Sterling-Folker claims constructivism has traditionally employed an ontology whereby only human activity causes human activity, and extra-ideational boundaries are essentially non-existent for that activity.⁷⁶ With limitless opportunities and avenues for social construction, “there is no reason to anticipate any stasis or isomorphism to human social practices.”⁷⁷ In an inversion of a traditional critique of IR realism,⁷⁸ the challenge in constructivism, for Sterling-Folker, is how to explain *consistency* of social behaviour, rather than rapid change.⁷⁹

However Sterling-Folker’s Realist-constructivist dialogue is indicative of a limited and skeptical engagement with the concept of *social* structure on the part of IR Realists.⁸⁰ As we have noted ‘structure’ in neo-Realist, neo-Liberal and neoclassical work is the anarchic international system and / or the power differentials amongst the states that make it up.⁸¹ What is implicit in much of this work is a definitional distinction between the anarchic / power *structure* outside the state and prior to state actors, and the ideas, cultures, norms and institutions *within* the state *made up* by state actors. Ideas and strategic cultures are in the realm of agency, not structure, in this

⁷⁶ Jennifer Sterling-Folker ‘Realism and the Constructivist Challenge: Rejecting, Reconstructing, or Rereading’ *International Studies Review* 4, 1 (Spring, 2002) p.92-94

⁷⁷ *ibid* p.94

⁷⁸ Of course based on its theoretical failure both foreseeing the end of the Cold War and analysing its aftermath. For example see Kratochwil ‘The Embarrassment of Changes’; Gowan ‘A Radical Realist’

⁷⁹ Sterling-Folker ‘Realism and the Constructivist Challenge’ p.94

⁸⁰ For example, Milja Kurki & Adriana Sinclair ‘Hidden in Plain Sight: Constructivist Treatment of Social Context and its Limitations’ *International Politics* 47,1 (2010) p.6

⁸¹ Sterling-Folker goes a little deeper in positing that group formation is an inherent part of human behaviour in response to biological imperatives to survive, and group resource competition (which includes emulation of other groups) springs inevitably from this. This means there are some interesting parallels with her work and classical realism, although she is more biologically deterministic.

understanding. Strangely then, some of the neoclassical conclusions are rather voluntarist.⁸² More importantly for our purposes, it is clear that the U.S. state's policy or security culture, and the *ideas* that influence it, are *not* conceptualised structurally. This seems rather odd, given how the neoclassical Realists I have looked at in the most detail set up the strategic culture of the U.S. or the preeminence of 'Open Door' ideas as highly influential and delimiting / enabling in U.S. foreign policy choices. Dueck gives culture a "permissive" causal power,⁸³ contending that, "it is simply historically inaccurate to suggest that classical liberal cultural assumptions [i.e. ideational factors] have had no impact on American grand strategy. The more interesting question is: what sort of impact have they had?"⁸⁴ However *he does not define this impact as a structural one*. This implicit IR Realist distinction between extra-ideational 'structure' and ideational domestic 'culture' is a false one. It ignores the emphasis in much constructivist work on *ideationally constituted* but nevertheless *real* social structures.

The ontological distinction between Realism and constructivism is therefore not just whether there are any extra-ideational limits to human action, but whether ideas have independent, real, *structural*, and, therefore *causal* power in IR. The ontological debate between Realism and what we may term 'structural constructivism'⁸⁵ is in fact more about the distinction between *what structures* make up international politics, what those structures are *themselves* made up of, and what is their relative importance. In a shortened answer to those questions, Finnemore and Sikkink explain, "From a constructivist perspective, international structure is determined by the international distribution of ideas" and those ideas, "give the world structure order

⁸² However it is not just voluntarism informing neoclassical conclusions, and the move away from structural determinism in the U.S. case it not limited to self-avowed neoclassical realists. Much of the rationalist neoliberal and neorealist work of the 1980s and 1990s hinged on positivist, nomothetic covering law models; when would the independent variable - international anarchic structure - cause dependent variables - war, balancing, cooperation? As Katzenstein *et al* have recognised (with regard to IPE) the complexity of social reality has meant that although some important insights were gleaned through these efforts, "well documented, causal arguments are rare" '*International Organization and the Study of World Politics*' p.682-683 I would argue they are not possible given the thin understanding of structure in this work, lacking in detail on causal mechanisms. Perhaps partially in response to this, as well as the ideational turn in IR theory and an apparent ideological disaffection with contemporary U.S. leadership, much current Realist work on U.S. foreign policy - both neoclassical and those traditionally called neo-Realist - is emphasising the *misinterpretation* of international structural forces by policymakers and / or the causal prevalence of domestic, cultural factors in its analysis of U.S. state behaviour (e.g. Layne *Peace of Illusions*; John J. Mearsheimer & Stephen M. Walt 'Keeping Saddam in a Box' *New York Times* (February 2nd, 2003) <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/02/opinion/02MEAR.html?scp=11&sq=walt%20john%20iraq&st=cse&pagewanted=2> Accessed 13.05.13

John. J. Mearsheimer, 'Hans Morgenthau and the Iraq War: Realism versus Neo-Conservatism' *OpenDemocracy* (May 18th, 2005) http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-americanpower/morgenthau_2522.jsp Accessed 13.05.13; 'Imperial by Design' *The National Interest* 111 (Jan/Feb, 2011)

). This would seem to further undermine any claims about a simple or generalisable independent/dependent variable covering law causal relationships in IR between structure and state action.

⁸³ Dueck *Reluctant Crusaders* p.24-26; 36

⁸⁴ *ibid* p.25

⁸⁵ As Kurki and Sinclair note, "Constructivism is not a singular or unified approach" 'Hidden in Plain Sight' p.3 I have focused here on more 'structurally-minded' constructivists.

and stability”. Thus, on this reading, “the problem for constructivists” is *not* voluntarism, or explaining why the world is not in constant flux, but instead is, “the *same* problem faced by [IR] realists - explaining change”.⁸⁶ Therefore a number of constructivists posit that an historical sedimentary build up of ideas concerning how the world works and how (emergent) state actors should behave within it *prefigures* those very state actors, and enables and constrains their behaviour. As Finnemore puts it:

Socially constructed rules, principles, norms of behaviour, and shared beliefs may provide states, individuals, and other actors with understandings of what is important or valuable and what are effective and / or legitimate means of obtaining those valued goods. These social structures may supply states with both *preferences* and *strategies* for pursuing those preferences.⁸⁷

The fundamental importance of the U.S.’ ideational commitment to a liberal international order is a collection of ideas and shared understandings (including subsets of ideas within the wider structure) that prefigure actors and set, “preferences and strategies” - or put another way, interests - for a state. Such a conception would better explain or define these ‘cultures’ or ‘ideas’ *causal* power in their ability to define and reproduce actions ostensibly in favour of U.S. interests over time.⁸⁸ As we have seen already Dueck discusses the liberal tradition that has dominated U.S. contemporary grand strategy in terms that could easily be recognised as structural, not least in the sense that he understands that tradition as a causal filtration system that makes some strategies more likely to be employed than others. The liberal strategic tradition in Dueck’s work bears some resemblance to Weldes’ “security imaginary”. It is essentially, “a [social] structure of well-established meanings and social relations out of which representations of the world of international relations are created”.⁸⁹

We have already seen that for Layne the *decision* to pursue extra-regional hegemony, and the edifice this is built upon (the ‘Open Door’), is almost *exclusively* ideational. The U.S. policymaking elite is afforded huge leeway in how it defines and pursues *ideationally set* interests, which also perniciously accrue material interests to that elite. As we saw above Layne’s ideas here are self-confessedly under-developed, but he does not countenance this development as in any way structural, and thereby reinforces the distinction between ‘structural’ and agential ‘ideas’ within U.S. grand strategy. Again though, I argue we would be better served retaining much of Layne’s empirical insight, but considering the Open Door and U.S. commitment to primacy (through a liberal order) as having its own structural causal power *prior and independent to actors, including policymakers*, in line with structurally-minded constructivism. This avoids some of the voluntarism and instrumentalism that is present in his analysis. However, considering the grand strategy or overall direction of U.S. foreign policy in the contemporary era to be mainly ideational in inspiration,

⁸⁶ Martha Finnemore & Kathryn Sikkink, ‘International Norm Dynamics and Political Change’ *International Organization* 52, 4 (1998) p.894 My emphasis

⁸⁷ Finnemore *National Interests* p.15 My emphasis

⁸⁸ *ibid* p.12-13

⁸⁹ Jutta Weldes *Constructing National Interests: The United States and the Cuban Missile Crisis* (University of Minnesota Press, 1999) p.10

design and propulsion, *whether we consider ideational social structures to be at work or otherwise*, simply cannot be sustained. We also need to consider the *material* elements that make up those structures, and how complex structural interaction, in tandem with agency, drives foreign policy.

Putting Structure Back In: Critical Realism and Historical-Materialism

The U.S.' 'strategic culture' and the Open Door, once understood structurally, *do* help our understanding and explanatory purchase of motivations in U.S. foreign policy. Ideational 'Liberal' traditions *are important* in U.S. foreign policymaking, and the Open Door is both a good fit in explaining U.S. behaviour in expanding its interests and seeking to secure them through hegemony, *and*, when seen as a social structure, a useful way to consider the established policy preferences of the U.S. state and the consistency of its behaviour.⁹⁰ However they must be placed firstly in their structural context, as must the actors within them. Layne hints that policymaking elites have a positional structural power in arguing that it would take a, "Damascene-like intellectual conversion" or wholesale 'changing of the policy guard' to force a substantive change in U.S. strategy.⁹¹ However we need to be clear that they can only hold this power due to their position *within* a social structure - the state itself. The elites are not 'the state' - it *preexists* the numerous human actors that enter into it and has a causal (*not finally* determinative) effect upon them. The ideational factors identified by Layne and Dueck, themselves structural, are bounded up in the wider U.S. state structure. In short, the state is a structure that guides, but does not determine, the behaviour of human actors into "patterns of regularity". Thus, to conclude the point, and as Wight argues, the state itself has its own socio-structural causal power. We need to insist on this to understand regularities in U.S. foreign policy.⁹²

In addition Layne and Dueck are essentially committing novel versions of the error of constructivist ontology: *over-emphasising* the ideational within social structures.⁹³ Constructivist ontology has been criticised for effectively cauterising the ideational from any *material* or *economic* elements within it, which detrimentally effects subsequent explanations of the social.⁹⁴ Specifically with regard to interests, which should be identified as key drivers of consistent state behaviour, the constructivist emphasis is on how, "security interests are defined by actors who respond to cultural

⁹⁰ There is no clash to seeing a Liberal tradition in U.S. foreign policy in terms of building a liberal order and the Open Door as co-existing. As Dueck argues and we more explicitly state below, U.S. interests in primacy are served by building a liberal order.

⁹¹ Layne *Peace of Illusions* p.201

⁹² Wight 'State Agency' p.204

⁹³ This is even more curious in Layne's case considering that the thesis he draws upon most readily in his argument, Appleman Williams' interpretation of the 'Open Door', explicitly went beyond the classical IR realist critique of U.S. foreign policy being at risk of demonstrating too much idealism and moralism, instead showing the political economic factors that underpinned U.S. strategies. See the Foreword by Lloyd C. Gardner in the 50th Anniversary edition of William Appleman Williams *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (W.W. Norton and Company, 2009 [1959]) p.ix

⁹⁴ For example see Doug Stokes 'Ideas and Avocados: Ontologising Critical Terrorism Studies' *International Relations* 23, 85 (2009); Douglas V. Porpora 'Critical Terrorism Studies: A Political Economic Approach Grounded in Critical Realism' *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 4, 1 (April, 2011); Jonathan Joseph 'Critical of What? Terrorism and its Study' *International Relations* 23, 1 (2009)

factors”⁹⁵ and the claim that, “Interests are not just ‘out there’ waiting to be discovered” but are instead, “constructed through social interaction”.⁹⁶ This work is based on an ontology that gives the ideational constitutive *primacy* in social life, and thereby elides or underplays extra-ideational factors. Thus, “ideas, norms, and culture generate structures” and, “[State] [b]ehavior flows from structures, but these are given content and meaning by the ideational precursors”.⁹⁷ The ontological error (or perhaps omission) of constructivism is not that there are no parameters for social action; it is that those parameters are conceptualised as at root ideational, and ideas are detached from their material contexts. In refocusing on ideational or ‘unit-level’ factors, the neoclassical Realist work of Layne and Dueck is, oddly, making this same error.⁹⁸

This is of course where it gets very murky. Interests *are* ‘out there’ for neoclassical Realists, given in large part by the structural reality of the international. This is why Layne critiques the continued pursuit of extra-regional hegemony;⁹⁹ he states *objective* U.S. security interests are *not* achieved due to the ideational / elite interest commitment to Open Door inspired hegemony. States have the same problem as other human actors; getting to objective interests through a subjective process of interpretation. This is compounded by other difficulties arising out of state-society relations.¹⁰⁰ The real problem for Layne and Dueck in explaining U.S. foreign policy (and in Layne’s case its obstinate refusal to recognise the structural ‘facts’) is that once we remove the ‘international structure’ as a driving force (whether we do so due to the game-changing reality of U.S. structural power or because of the macro-theoretical problems with IR Realists’ conceptions of international structure, or better yet both) we are in the same territory as the constructivists: ideas are given a distinct, hermetic and primary role in explaining behaviour. This is simply an untenable position. We cannot explain social action through an ideational lens alone (even if it makes our critique of foreign policy we don’t like stronger). To do so would be to greatly oversimplify it, and would be unsatisfactory in terms of understanding how (U.S.) state behaviour is significantly explained by what are in some senses *objective* interests. The key is to explain *why* there *are* interests ‘out there’.

⁹⁵ Peter J. Katzenstein, ‘Introduction: Alternative Perspectives on International Security’ in Peter J. Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (Columbia University Press, 1996) p.2

⁹⁶ Finnemore *National Interests* p.2

⁹⁷ Alistair Iain Johnston ‘Cultural Realism and Strategy in Maoist China’ in Katzenstein *Culture of National Security* p.265

⁹⁸ In an effective demonstration of the elasticity of IR theories (and the quixotic folly in trying to neatly taxonomise them) Miller has critiqued Dueck and Layne in arguing that neoclassical Realism should advocate that structural factors make the selection of certain ideational strategies more likely, reestablishing international structure’s primacy as the independent variable whereby the, “material international environment selects the dominant ideational approach to security or great power grand strategy” Benjamin Miller ‘Explaining Changes in U.S. Grand Strategy: 9/11, the Rise of Offensive Liberalism, and the War in Iraq’ *Security Studies* 19,1 (2010) p.30

⁹⁹ It is also why ‘illiberal’ practices exist within the liberal tradition of U.S. strategy for Dueck.

¹⁰⁰ For the constructivist this is not so much of an issue because Layne’s proposed solutions are themselves normative and therefore mostly reflective of other sets of shared ideas and shared meanings (mainly within the school of IR Realism), rather than representing a pure discovery interests ‘out there’. However that is an unsatisfactory critique.

In Layne's argument, material factors are subordinated to ideas. In constructivist ontology, they are only given meaning by ideational social structures,¹⁰¹ or "material and economic" structures will be seen as distinct from those 'social structures', as if economic relations and material exploitation and manipulation are somehow not social.¹⁰² Thus in both theoretical positions there is a tendency to *remove ideas* from their material contexts, and / or offer a detrimentally limited view of social structure. Ideas undoubtedly may acquire an existence that prefigures human actions, but they do not, "fall, unbidden, from the sky".¹⁰³ Instead they are the result of human actions and are enveloped within wider social conditions. As Kurki and Sinclair contend, "social structures cannot be reduced to the beliefs of individuals, nor equated with the 'ideational' or normative contexts of social action." Instead, in line with a critical realist philosophy of science, they should be, "seen as materially embodied ontological realities that are (simultaneously) both materially and ideationally constraining on agents positioned within them".¹⁰⁴ Thus ideas cannot have *purely* independent causal power; their power exists in conjunction with how they relate to and co-exist with material realities within *deeper* social structures. We also need to be clear *why* certain sets of ideas gain prominence, and this means placing ideas in wider structural contexts, including thinking about *power* within structures.¹⁰⁵ This is part of the historical materialist concern to identify underlying structures which can help explain social behaviour, with of course social structures of production being key generators of phenomenon at the, "level of appearances".¹⁰⁶ As Kurki and Sinclair point out, it is hard to see how social structures that are purely ideational can help us explain a social structure like *capitalism*, which is a complexly constituted inter-relational mixture of material prerogatives, social relations affected by distinct hierarchical and materially based power positions, *and* ideational factors.¹⁰⁷ Material and ideational elements are *bounded up together* within social structures. Ideas do not, "float free of the material contexts in which those ideas are embedded and emerge"¹⁰⁸ but are intimately related to those contexts.

What I am arguing for here is a historical-materialist focus on the social structures of production as the *missing element* that can help us explain the consistency of U.S. state behaviour as mediated by its interests. It is accurate to think of the structures of production as underlying that state's structure, and feeding into and partially determining its constitution.¹⁰⁹ The structure of production on a global level amongst

¹⁰¹ For example, see Wendt 'Constructing International Politics' and Wight's discussion of his move to idealism. Colin Wight *Agents, Structures and International Relations* (Cambridge University Press, 2006) p.155-157

¹⁰² Finnemore *National Interests* p.15

¹⁰³ Kurki and Sinclair 'Hidden in Plain Sight' p.18

¹⁰⁴ *ibid* p.7

¹⁰⁵ Andreas Bieler and Adam David Morton 'The Deficits of Discourse in IPE: Turning Base Metal into Gold?' *International Studies Quarterly* 52, 1 (March, 2008) p.104-105

¹⁰⁶ Erik Olin Wright *Class Crisis and the State* (Verso, 1979) p.11-12

¹⁰⁷ Kurki and Sinclair 'Hidden in Plain Sight' p.7-8

¹⁰⁸ Wight *Agents, Structures and International Relations* p.158

¹⁰⁹ I have presented what is a complex interaction quite simply here. The state itself, or more accurately the actors within it, also of course affects the underlying structure of production. However I do not wish to, or necessarily need to, get drawn into deeper meta-theoretical debates given the purposes of this project. See Wright for a helpful discussion of structural relations between the economic structure and the state *Class, Crisis and the State* p. 15-26

and within states is, almost uniformly since the end of the Cold War, capitalist. As Wood notes, “Capitalist economies are all ‘capitalist’” as they are all, “subject to capitalist imperatives of competition, capital accumulation and profit maximization”.¹¹⁰ These imperatives are simultaneously extremely creative and destructive in catalysing social change. As recent history has borne out, capitalist modes of production and associated social relations have accelerated the creation, destruction, or partial solidification of ways of life, economic class formations, and subsequent interests. This has inexorably led to social conflict. In addition, and to a good extent symbiotically, the capitalist mode of production has proven extremely susceptible to cyclical crises and regulatory / coordination problems. The modern state has a crucial and complex *role* to play within this, “broader environment” as both a maintainer of the, “cohesion of the social formation” that capitalist relations of production exist in, and as a regulatory body and integral fail-safe mechanism for the continued opportune conditions for successful capital accumulation and the wider mode of production.¹¹¹ Indeed, historical materialists have tended to see the state as entirely *necessary* to the reproduction of capitalism, and it has even been postulated that the nexus between political powers within the state and “top-level” capitalists is what *defines* capitalism.¹¹²

Crucially, the phenomena of competition, capital accumulation and profit maximisation have driven capitalists outside of the borders of their respective nation-states, recalling Marx and Engel’s evocative phrasing that the, “need of a constantly expanding market chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe”.¹¹³ This expansionary logic,¹¹⁴ combined with concomitant accelerated social change and fractiousness, means there is an extremely important connection between a nation-state’s economy and its foreign policy, as capitalists seek markets and materials outside of the domestic sphere, and therefore events and economic processes both inside and outside of its geographical territory can affect its success and development. This is increasingly *more* important and complex as global interconnections proliferate in the modern era. Therefore, in fulfilment of its functional role, the state, as far as it is able, has sought to bulwark its domestic economic success through its dealings with the outside world. This can be attempted in a number of ways of course - the *literal* protection of the domestic economy through tariffs discouraging cheaper imports, the construction of empires, encouraging domestic firms into foreign markets, the construction of open international or global trade and capital markets, or competing to both attract and project financial capital and investment. All of these and more, often obviously in combination, have been attempted by states. However the most successful exponents have also been the most successful capitalist states -

¹¹⁰ Ellen Meiksins Wood ‘Global Capital, National States’ in Mark Rupert Hazel Smith *Historical Materialism and Globalization* (Routledge, 2002) p.17 Wood does not accept the existence of a, “global economy abstracted from the particular local, national, and regional economies that constitute it, or from the relations among them”

¹¹¹ Bob Jessop *State Power: A Strategic-Relational Approach* (Polity Press, 2008) p.28, 79

¹¹² For example Wright *Class, Crisis and the State* p.18-19; Braudel quoted in Giovanni Arrighi *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power and the Origins of our Times* (Verso, 2010 [1994]) p.12

¹¹³ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels *The Communist Manifesto* (Penguin Books, 2004 [1848]) p.7

¹¹⁴ It’s important to avoid reductionism here. State forms significantly pre-date what we could legitimately call capitalist social relations, and territorial expansion also prefigures the triumph of capital. Myriad reasons for these storied social phenomena exist, but of course what may be termed economic or material imperatives are an important part of the picture.

Great Britain and the U.S. The initial catalyst for expansion, and the success, ability to pursue, and to a degree *necessity* of these states' subsequent expansionist strategies was underpinned by expansionary logics of capital and their associated domestic economic strength. Let's now begin to look at the U.S. case to reinforce this point.

A Theory of U.S. Foreign Policy and Grand Strategy

U.S. Expansionism and the Creation of Interests

As U.S. economic success snowballed over the latter half of the 19th Century and into the 20th, U.S. capitalism and capitalists spread their activities and influence far beyond their domestic borders. The dynamo of U.S. economic success provided the *need* for export markets and the *ability* to reach them profitably. It necessitated access to raw materials, and produced the capital necessary for foreign investment. Moreover for students of IR, it generated and sustained the material foundations for U.S. power, and the material means to project and propagate that power on a regional and then global level. As U.S. 'foreign' economic markets fused with its 'domestic' ones, the importance of the former to the latter for continued economic success increased. U.S. foreign policy coalesced around the opening up, maintenance and protection of these foreign investments and markets, and ensuring their overall stability. This was of course bound up with a cultural and political expansionary tendency whereby American thinkers, politicians and businessmen (overwhelmingly men of course) proclaimed U.S. exceptionalism and leadership, seeking to spread the reach of the U.S. political economic model of democratic government detached in many ways from economic management, increased free(r) trade, and private enterprise; broadly summarised as liberalism.¹¹⁵ Overall this expansive strategy, a compound of material and ideological impulses, represents the liberal Open Door foreign policy discussed previously.

The connections between political liberalism and the growth of global capital are complicated. As Hobsbawm notes it is an open question whether the first is, "cause, concomitant, or consequence" of the latter.¹¹⁶ What we can say with certainty however is that the liberalism coursing through U.S. foreign policy is not a distinct and detached ideational construct, but has its roots fused within processes of the capitalist means of production. Despite politicians and statesmen's oft-stated desires for global influence and regional dominance via the superior 'American way',¹¹⁷ it was, as Rosenberg argues, "private impulses, more than government policies" that

¹¹⁵ This is not to say this was what the U.S. practiced in actuality either at home or abroad. As we go onto briefly draw out more below, the state played a major role in creating the conditions for private enterprise to flourish, democracy promotion can be often trumped by political-economic interests in 'stability' in U.S. foreign policy, and free trade is more relative than pure doctrine, especially earlier in the 19th Century as the U.S. vigorously protected its dynamic domestic market. Also whilst there were unique features to the U.S. experience this was part of a more global trend in economic expansion. See Eric Hobsbawm *The Age of Capital: 1848-1875* (Abacus, 1975) p.43-54

¹¹⁶ *ibid*

¹¹⁷ Political dreams of a hemispheric United States of America and frustrated, racist laments about the need for U.S. intervention to cure the 'inherent' instability within Latin America borne of its 'inferior' people are well covered in the early chapters of Lars Schoultz's *Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy Toward Latin America* (Harvard University Press, 1998)

provided the mechanical impetus for this expansion.¹¹⁸ We should add that these “private impulses” were connected to and guided (but not determined) by the expansionary structural logic of capital, and created within and part of a wider political-economic environment within which even the less interventionist state of this period played a key role.¹¹⁹ However individualist dreams of profit and power *did* motivate financiers, investors, and speculators, and all manner of capitalists were effectively the vanguard of U.S. expansionism in the latter half of the 19th Century. As the level of expansion gathered pace, U.S. statesmen increasingly began to perceive both a political economic necessity in finding and maintaining favourable access to external markets to cope with the increasing U.S. production (both in markets for exports, and increasingly raw materials for import), and a process by which relative U.S. power and influence could be augmented on a global level, which accrued material benefits to the U.S.

Whilst capital led the way in *actually* expanding U.S. influence overseas, economic expansionism soon fused with U.S. foreign policy in Open Door principles. The developing state actively aimed to further economic expansion and *increase* U.S. economic penetration (often to ensure access for exports, financial capital and investment), and by extension U.S. wealth, power, and ability to project that power. This is what Rosenberg calls “the promotional state”, as the U.S.’ political bureaucracy that had been growing at a domestic level¹²⁰ turned its attention to this task in foreign affairs.¹²¹ However the commitment to this policy, whilst of course symbiotic with an ideological structure based around U.S. exceptionalism (and upon a dominant reading of what U.S. foreign policy interests were and how best to attain and secure them) was not *purely* based upon a subjective perception of the Open Door’s importance. Economic expansion *did* help increase relative U.S. affluence, material power, and global authority. The importance of U.S. exports (and therefore their markets) grew, becoming crucial in certain sectors. The hyper-productive U.S. industrial economy required raw materials from foreign sources. Greater material power was borne of greater economic success, and the ability of the U.S. to promote, protect and project that power was itself increased by that economic success, and vice versa. As Mabee puts it, “Much of the development of state power in the early part of the twentieth century relied on the interactions with economic power.”¹²² Economic interests here are therefore ‘real’ in two important, inseparable senses. Foreign profit-seeking was a real interest for U.S. capitalists and industries, and their influence upon and within the state increased. However the U.S. state also perceived the real strategic interest in opening up foreign markets to the U.S., protecting them, and thereby ensuring the continued profit-making for U.S. capitalists, and increasing the material benefits to the U.S. in relative economic success and international power.

¹¹⁸ Emily S. Rosenberg *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion 1890-1945* (Hill and Wang, 1982) p.38

¹¹⁹ The expansionary potential was rooted in the industrial success of previous decades and the stable political environment within the U.S., as well as some of the political-economic decisions in and outcomes of the U.S. Civil War. See Walter LaFeber *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion 1860-1898* (Cornell University Press, 1963) p.6-7

¹²⁰ Zakaria *From Wealth to Power*

¹²¹ Rosenberg *Spreading the American Dream* p.38-62

¹²² Bryan Mabee *Understanding American Power: The Changing World of US Foreign Policy* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) p.55; Also as we saw above Zakaria makes this case in *From Wealth to Power*

It is in the insistence that the interests created in these processes, involving both structural compulsions, constraints and enablers to the (still key) agential power of U.S. policymakers and capitalists (as well of course as the less lofty but entirely crucial actions of people who actually did the work this economic success was built on) that we depart from the analysis we have covered thus far. Indeed we saw that Layne has also described a process of interest creation through ‘Open Door’ grand strategy, whereby foreign economic interests inspire protection of those economic interests by the state.¹²³ However, Layne considers this an ideationally informed strategy, which only serves the interests of the U.S. policymaking and commercial elite. As Gowan states, this is rather indistinct.¹²⁴ Moreover, it misses the fact that the ‘Open Door’ is neither an ideational construct nor a convenient pretext serving elite interests. The U.S. commitment to the Open Door through the spread of open economies and market democracies¹²⁵ is a structural edifice within U.S. foreign policy, enmeshed within wider structures of the U.S. state, the logics of capital accumulation, and the associated drive to primacy through hegemony within a global, liberal, capitalist order significantly of U.S. design. This grand strategy, whilst by no means infallible, *has* helped create and serve U.S. interests in augmenting U.S. economic power, and thereby increasing U.S. power to influence events in the international system relative to other states. The ideational aspects of U.S. policy are not completely divorced from these material realities.

Therefore we should not belittle the importance of foreign economic interactions and integration to the continued domestic economic success of the U.S. Layne cites trade figures to make the point that they make up a relatively small percentage of U.S. GDP. However, taking contemporary figures of 16-22%, trade still represents a *very significant* portion of a *huge* economy.¹²⁶ We should also consider the importance of trade within particular key industries (consider the continuing importance of U.S. agricultural subsidies to maintain relative export strength, key - for example - to U.S. agricultural export success to Mexico within NAFTA, and driver for the genesis of the original Open Door).¹²⁷ Moreover, however, ‘trade’ in the general sense does not exhaust U.S. interests overseas. On one level, the U.S. economy itself continues to rely on imports of key raw materials, not least crude oil and petroleum products, but

¹²³ Layne *Peace of Illusions* p.36 Also see above. Layne comes pretty close to discussing both the materiality of interests achieved by the Open Door and supported by U.S. hegemony on other occasions, especially where he discusses the connections between “liberal ideology” and grand strategy, discussing how economic interests abroad act magnetically to pull in, “U.S. military power to defend those economic stakes”, and how power underpins the stability and security required for successful investment. See *ibid* p.124-128 However this uneasily bookended by his claims about the ideational roots of the Open Door and how these interests are only elite interests. He also considers the commitments involved to be ultimately self-defeating, which is a more challenging thesis that we can’t involve ourselves with here, but bears resemblance to some Marxian arguments.

¹²⁴ Gowan ‘A Radical Realist’ Gowan draws on Kolko to suggest U.S. expansionism was not a product of capitalist logics but a “social-power” project to spread U.S. influence within “other capitalist centres” through increased political power. In underplaying the structural compulsions of capital in the early phases of U.S. economic and then political - military expansion, I consider Gowan to be a little too instrumentalist in his thinking about the U.S. state.

¹²⁵ Or what Dueck refers to as the liberal strategic culture.

¹²⁶ Appleman Williams provides a pretty definitive critique of this kind of thinking himself. *Tragedy of American Diplomacy* p.52-55

¹²⁷ Appleman Williams *Tragedy of American Diplomacy* p.24-27

also spanning minerals and metals that remain key to production.¹²⁸ The role of some of these raw materials or natural resources to the functioning of the U.S. economy in terms of production and transportation / communication is almost immeasurable in importance. On a more profound level though, the U.S. has *built* a system that is based on its primacy within a liberal, capitalist *global* order, and the U.S. state acts as a hegemonic guarantor of that order. This means promoting the Open Door to maintain widespread openness for U.S. economic penetration, but it has also involved the *construction* and *maintenance* of *global* capitalism. This is built around multilateral institutions, and *was* built and *is* managed largely through U.S. power.¹²⁹ It seeks to benefit both ‘capital’ in a general sense, other core states within that order, and the U.S. itself.

Crucially, *real, relative, material* benefits flow to the U.S. through this arrangement. As Ikenberry puts it, the U.S. has, “become the ‘owner and operator’ of the liberal capitalist political system - supporting the rules and institutions of liberal internationalism but also enjoying *special rights and privileges*”.¹³⁰ As Stokes and Raphael make clear, by maintaining the current order, the U.S. helps ensure *its position* at its apex through an historically unique set of methods.¹³¹ The U.S. found itself as the dominant power in 1945 as a result of the war-time degradations elsewhere and the cumulative effects of general long-term economic growth,¹³² which was based on relative sanctuary from the war (provided by two major oceans that also put the U.S. in a privileged position trade-wise), massive importation of worldwide labour (including in the early stages slave labour) and therefore skills, a natural resources endowment, managed openness to financial capital alongside protection of domestic production markets, and strengthening involvement in, and domination of, its ‘backyard’ as a regional hegemon in the Western Hemisphere.¹³³ At the end of the WWII it immediately set about rooting, solidifying and then maintaining this position. It did this by pulling in Europe and the defeated powers into an open, capitalist aegis, whilst continuing to actively open up the global South to market penetration and the installation and insulation of capitalist social relations, often coercively and with quite brutal methods, especially in Latin America.¹³⁴ Military power is key to undergirding

¹²⁸ For information on this, see U.S. Census Bureau *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2012* p.559-580 Available here <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2012edition.html> Accessed 16.07.14; U.S. Department of Interior U.S. Geological Survey *Mineral Commodities Summaries 2013* (Virginia, 2013) p.6; U.S. Energy Administration *How Dependent are we on Foreign Oil?* (May 10th, 2013) http://www.eia.gov/energy_in_brief/article/foreign_oil_dependence.cfm Accessed 16.07.14 Also see Stokes and Raphael *Global Energy Security*

¹²⁹ Not entirely of course. Consider the impact of Great Britain on the creation of the Bretton Woods institutions (although they came to be more U.S. dominated after the systemic crisis of the 1970s), or Germany within the European Union, as just two examples of other power poles and key actors in liberal global order. We can also see in this extremely brief overview the validity of Mabee’s point that whilst many observers of U.S. foreign policy look at its hegemonic strategy from World War II onwards, there are deeper historical roots and continuities at work. Mabee *Understanding American Power* p.16

¹³⁰ G. John Ikenberry *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order* (Princeton University Press, 2011) p.2 My emphasis.

¹³¹ Stokes and Raphael *Global Energy Security* p.20-38

¹³² Speaking in terms of general trends, marked of course by often huge cyclical crises.

¹³³ Stokes and Raphael *Global Energy Security* p.20; Arrighi *Long Twentieth Century* p.62-63

¹³⁴ For example Eduardo Galeano *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of the Continent* (Serpents Tail, 1971); Walter LaFeber *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central*

this system. The U.S. rearranged but *deepened* this framework (albeit with a good deal of contingent innovation rather than prescient planning) following the systemic crisis and dissolution of the Soviet Union.¹³⁵ However, whilst other national poles in the liberal capitalist core (and increasingly beyond)¹³⁶ gain from the current order, its most meaningful advantages are enjoyed by the U.S. as the dominant global economic power, able to most benefit from and shape an open global market system.¹³⁷

There is therefore a mutual reinforcement between unipolar military preponderance and economic ascendancy, and continued U.S. structural power within international system, and the sustainment of that system itself. Given the economic imperatives of profit making and improved welfare and standards of living, *intersecting* with the logics of anarchy and power-seeking on the international stage *and* the concomitant ideational beliefs in U.S. exceptionalism, U.S. hegemonic strategy ‘makes sense’ beyond ideational structures or persistent ideology and domestic economic factors. There are interests that confront the U.S. state as *external compulsions* and *constraints*, arising largely from complex, variegated social structures comprised of *inter-related* material and ideational components. Whilst they are *part* ideational, they are also *part material*. Whilst they can only be accessed through subjective processes and therefore may be missed, there will be costs involved in missing them. Whilst structures evolve and interests can shift, they have ‘staying power’ precisely because they are *structural*, and interests to a good degree arise *from* them and actors places within them. Thus interests have an emergent causal power in U.S. foreign policy (as they do across the social world) acting mechanistically between structure and agency.

To summarise, U.S.’ power is sustained in large part by the *continuance* of the order it has created, based around Open Door economic principles, and concomitant institutional, military and economic involvement around the globe. There is a structural compulsion to *secure* U.S. primacy through and within widespread economic openness and competition from instability or change, and one eminently strategic solution to achieve this is to manage it within institutions and to spread and back it up with far-flung U.S. military power. There are also likely to be severe costs

America 2nd edn. (W.W. Norton & Company, 1993); Ruth Blakeley *State Terrorism and Neoliberalism: The North in the South* (Routledge, 2009); Doug Stokes *America’s Other War: Terrorizing Colombia* (Zed Books, 2005); William Blum *Killing Hope: US Military & CIA Interventions since World War II* (Zed Books, 2003); Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism: The Political Economy of Human Rights: Volume I* (South End Press, 1979); Michael McClintock, *Instruments of Statecraft: U.S. Guerrilla Warfare, Counter-Insurgency, and Counter-Terrorism 1940-1990* (Random House, 1992)

¹³⁵ Stokes and Raphael *Global Energy Security* p.20-38

¹³⁶ Here I am thinking of the BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India and China) and other rising economies, often assumed to be challengers to the U.S. order, but also fundamentally tied to it.

¹³⁷ Stokes and Raphael *Global Energy Security* p.35-38 Carla Norloff *America’s Global Advantage: US Hegemony and International Cooperation* (Cambridge University Press, 2010) In this way the U.S. is following other dominant powers who have shaped and managed international economic orders historically, such as the Dutch and the U.K. These powers, especially the U.K and U.S., have benefitted from ruthlessly protecting their domestic markets, before then seeking to open up others to ‘free trade’ (on the powerful state’s terms). The U.S. has been more successful at avoiding capitalist competition spilling into national conflict (thus far) than the U.K., and does not rely on direct imperialism in the South (in fact it successfully undermined the British Empire at the end of World War II to end British privileges within it). Also see Ha-Joon Chang *Kicking Away the Ladder: Development Strategy in Historical Perspective* (Anthem Press, 2002); Arrighi *Long Twentieth Century*

in *not* achieving this end, or drawing back from those commitments and frameworks. Thus, utilising Porpora's helpful definition of structure, interests present themselves to the U.S. as *externalities*: they are in some sense 'out there' waiting to be achieved, and are given by both domestic *and* international social structures, associated with capitalist social relations and forms of production, and the U.S.' long-standing position within those structures as the most successful and powerful capitalist state. Importantly "[T]his does not mean that actors always with necessity act in their interests" - the complexity of the social world and the role of interpretation preclude that, as the neoclassical Realists recognise - "but if they don't they are likely to suffer".¹³⁸

This is not to suggest that this is an infallible arrangement, which it most certainly is not.¹³⁹ I also do not suggest alternative grand strategies or foreign policies are not available or, moreover, possible. It does not claim this broad direction in U.S. foreign relations and global strategy and its continuance was or is an inevitability, and therefore certainly does not suggest that the broad thrusts of U.S. strategy are not open to change, not least due to contingencies and human agency. However it *does* assert that we cannot claim the Open Door and U.S. hegemony are *only* ideational constructs. To put it simply, there are good strategic reasons the U.S. has sought to create and maintain hegemony beyond the designs of a wrong-headed policy-making elite, ideational or cultural social structures, or domestic economic interests. These are significantly based in *inducements* towards hegemony as a strategy given by a multiple-determining¹⁴⁰ structural conglomeration based in logics of anarchy, U.S. power capabilities, liberal and exceptionalist ideological currents and, moreover, their inter-relation with stronger structural forces provided by economic, material imperatives. These are activated of course by policy-making agents within the state's structure itself who have considerable leeway to strategise and innovate, but who do so in pre-existing structural conditions that privilege certain courses of actions tied to certain interests. It's important to quickly flesh out how the U.S. state works in practice here.

The U.S. State, Interests and Hegemonic Grand Strategy

Up to now we have discussed some of the contemporary theories in IR and moved through them to show how the U.S. state has interests mediated by complex social structures. I now want to examine further how the U.S. foreign policy and grand strategy have proceeded in practise with regard to the U.S. state. There are however still some important questions and debates within the broad overview of U.S. foreign relations and interests above. Firstly we should consider how much the U.S. state 'makes' this grand strategy in terms of the origins of interests. Using Marxian theories obliges us to think about Marxian debates *on* the state, and specifically in this case what interests are represented by the state. I have argued that the U.S. state's foreign

¹³⁸ Douglas V. Porpora 'The Four Concepts of Social Structure' in Margaret Archer, Roy Bhaskar, Andrew Collier, Tony Lawson and Alan Norrie [eds.] *Critical Realism: Essential Readings* (Routledge, 1998) p.353

¹³⁹ We look at some of the tensions within it briefly below.

¹⁴⁰ A concept borrowed from Bhaskar. In reality of course, as I established in the Introduction, the *intensely* complex sources of U.S. foreign policy are given scant justice by the broad-brush used here. However I contend we have hit on the key constitutive elements and can make justifiable and strong claims based on them.

policy interests followed commercial interests driven by capital's expansionary logic, transmuting in the process to become a more general aim of the U.S. state. How much, then, do we separate 'U.S. interests' from the interests of its capital or capitalists? Is the state instrumental for capital? Here we need to assert the state's *relative autonomy*, its *structural nature* and the fact it is both a strategic terrain but *strategically selective* to answer that with a qualified 'only in part'. We can in fact look at the state's *dysfunctionality* as evidence of its non-instrumentalism and its existence as a strategic terrain. One need only witness the contemporary regular farces that pass for Washington attempting to raise debt-ceiling limits (or avoid sequestration, or pass a budget, or how it is influenced by the Tea Party...) to realise even the most powerful state is not uniformly functional for the smooth running of capitalist economies, cannot be easily ascribed as a tool for a homogenous 'capitalist class' or interest group, *and* is subject to the wider ideological and political contestation amongst 'intra-elite' political groups as well as (varying levels of) influence from wider society.

How then do we explain consistency? Firstly, we should recall that the state is itself a social structure (as well as being an "institutional complex")¹⁴¹ that prefigures actors, but is made to act only by them. Interests, again as described above, significantly motivate those actors. However this is *severely* complicated by the fact that the state is also a *social relation* and reflects and is influenced by the wider society of which it is part. Taking us further down the rabbit hole, despite being a social relation the state *still* has a functional role within the capitalist economy and in capitalist social relations; underwriting, securing, and directing economic activity (to differing degrees), and in seeking to maintain the social formation of which it is part, all the while being "called upon by diverse social forces" to intervene in societal issues and problems.¹⁴² Given this, we *must* simplify somewhat to understand the consistency of U.S. grand strategy over time. The work of Jessop can help us cut through the complexity here. Whilst the state may be relational, it is also *strategic*. It is a strategic terrain where social forces and groups contest politically, but it is also *strategically selective* in that it preferences specific strategies and specific actors or groups of actors.¹⁴³ In capitalist social relations this means the relative economic power of certain groups or actors is crucial of course, *but not all determinative*. We can, and should, avoid crude instrumentalism by keeping in mind that other influences (and strategies) *still* bear out on the state and temper its selectivity (for example the influence of a working class, which is still important in the U.S. and other capitalist states despite its relative loss of influence in neoliberalism) and, moreover for our purposes, the state itself is *relatively autonomous*.

When we combine these insights with the discussion of structures above we can better understand the consistency of the U.S. state's overarching strategy. The U.S. state itself is a social structure that favours - or better yet strategically selects - expansive foreign policies, and this is in large part because it is enmeshed in wider social structures that provide ideological-material compulsions and constraints to achieve

¹⁴¹ Colin Hay and Michael Lister 'Introduction: Theories of the State' in Colin Hay, Michael Lister and David Marsh [eds.] *The State: Theories and Issues* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) p.5

¹⁴² Bob Jessop *State Power* p.6-9

¹⁴³ Hay and Lister 'Introduction' p.10-11; Bob Jessop *State Theory: Putting Capitalist States in their Place* (Polity Press, 1990) p.9-10

economic and power primacy. As I have already argued, the *related* predilection for an expansive global grand strategy that seeks to ensure primacy through hegemony is itself structurally bounded up in the U.S. state. Within this complex context of course there is still *significant* room for agency, both on the part of the actors within the state's institutions and bureaucracies, and in terms of the state's relational nature and the fact it constitutes a wider social strategic terrain upon which different actors participate. However despite this elasticity the pushers and pullers towards a continuation of the hegemonic grand strategy based around spreading and maintaining an open liberal-capitalist order remain strong. In the following two chapters we will see *empirically* the U.S. state acting relatively autonomously in its actions within U.S.-Mexican bilateral relations, and in how it constructs policy towards its neighbour. We can also definitively place U.S. policies within its wider strategy both in terms of the historical effort to maintain Mexico's openness to U.S. capital alongside the associated desire to ensure Mexican stability, and in the effort to further spread and entrench global capitalism on U.S. terms.

U.S. Strategic Interests in Mexico

With a working conception of U.S. interests and major trends in foreign policy and grand strategy in place, we can better illuminate and understand its interests in Mexico itself. U.S. policy documentation gives us a clear insight into a number of the key concerns for the U.S.' foreign policy and interests when it comes to their southern neighbour. Just prior to the launch of the MI, the U.S. DoS' Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations outlined that:

The United States has enormous interests in Mexico -- politically, economically and with regard to our own national security. Its very proximity inexorably intertwines our everyday life, as well as our futures. Mexico shares a 2000 mile border with the U.S., is our thirdlargest trading partner, and, within NAFTA, is a trade and security partner with the U.S. and Canada and a major recipient of direct foreign investment.¹⁴⁴

This seemingly simple overview is useful in establishing key U.S. concerns in Mexico, but these "enormous interests" have a complex history. Geography ensures the U.S. and Mexico have deeply intertwined stories of development, and as the U.S. emerged as the more powerful economic and political actor over the course of the 19th and 20th Century its influence on Mexico was profound. It included war and the conquest of huge swathes of Mexican territory (including Texas and California, both of which would further catalyse U.S. economic success) sealed by the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848.¹⁴⁵ As U.S. investors sought new markets, raw materials, and economic opportunities further afield in the late 19th Century, their investments and influence in Mexico grew, creating economic interests *within* Mexico and between Mexico and the U.S. Where interests grew, foreign policy followed. The

¹⁴⁴ U.S. Department of State *Congressional Budget Justification: Foreign Operations Fiscal Year 2008* (Washington D.C. 2007) p.651

¹⁴⁵ Amy S. Greenberg *A Wicked War: Polk, Clay, Lincoln, and the 1846 U.S. Invasion of Mexico* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2012)

Open Door led to U.S. support (both ‘private’ and ‘public’) for the regime of Porfirio Díaz, who was extremely open to U.S. investment and brought the stability required for its continued success for some thirty years. However Díaz’s increasingly authoritarian rule, combined with unprecedented levels of growth, the creation of differentiated political and economic interests of particular classes, and the heavy influence of U.S. economic power in Mexico created a febrile and explosive mix that combusted in revolutionary fervour in Mexico in 1910. The U.S. attempted to influence events in their favour in terms of restoring political stability throughout the Revolutionary period.

As the forces unleashed by the Revolution were tamed by and congealed around the one party state created by the PRI,¹⁴⁶ U.S. interests in Mexico’s political-economic stability and economic openness were largely met, in a qualified sense. After World War II, and despite the continued nationalistic development course undertaken by the PRI, a fairly benign and mutually beneficial political-economic relationship proceeded between the two neighbours. U.S. interests in Mexico significantly deepened in 1976 when a fisherman in the Bay of Campeche stumbled upon what turned out to be a huge oil field. Shortly after this apparent boon, Mexico’s economy was plunged into severe crisis. The U.S. seized the opportunity to restructure Mexico’s political economy more in line with openness to U.S. investment and trade. These processes culminated in NAFTA, which effectively “locked in” Mexico’s macro-economic changes.¹⁴⁷ With the signing of NAFTA U.S. interests in Mexico’s political economic stability were hugely increased. Military aid began to increase from relatively low levels from this point, partly in response to a short-lived but influential insurgency and resistance campaign launched in Chiapas by the EZLN as NAFTA came into effect. Thus, we can start to connect the U.S.’ policies in Mexico to its long-traceable and generalisable efforts to secure the stable economic openness of key nation-states and markets. As I show in the following chapter the jump in security aid received by Mexico coincided with NAFTA, and was aimed in part at securing it from potentially destabilising political threats.

However, the increase in U.S. assistance that has itself culminated in the MI part of something much more holistic. Due to the *regionality* of economic integration that NAFTA has inculcated in trade, production, and investment, it has become pressing to protect the North American economic space itself. Almost immediately after 9/11 exposed U.S. vulnerability, *and* the U.S. response in hardened border security measures had extremely painful costs on the North American economy, initiatives were undertaken to try and ‘secure the openness’ of the North American economy. The policy response to this became centered on the SPP, whereby the NAFTA zone was conceptualised as a shared economic space that should be protected mutually amongst its members. The same logic underpins the MI, and both are part of a nascent NAFTA-land Security project. The U.S. has put a renewed premium on its own HS in the wake of 9/11, and is actively trying to ‘project out’ its borders beyond the contiguous ones to meet or neuter threats and illicit activity before they reach the

¹⁴⁶ See Adam David Morton *Revolution and State in Modern Mexico: The Political Economy of Uneven Development* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2011) for a Gramscian take on this process.

¹⁴⁷ G. John Ikenberry *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000) p.239-242 I discuss this further in the upcoming chapter.

Homeland. The trafficking of cartels and associated corruption and violence became increasingly seen as a threat to the NAFTA zone and its political economy through its destabilising effect within Mexico. The MI has become a vehicle for all of these concerns, not just ‘CN’ in simple terms. It is part of wider effort to secure U.S. interests at multiple levels. This is the key claim of the project, and is backed up with a weight of evidence in its empirical sections to follow. At this point, I want to flesh it out a little more theoretically.

North America as an Economic Space, Strategic Interests, and NAFTA-land Security

The *National Security Strategy* for 2010 actually spells out the interests within NAFTA, and the need to protect them, succinctly:

The strategic partnerships and unique relationships we maintain with Canada and Mexico are critical to U.S. national security and have a direct effect on the security of our homeland. With billions of dollars in trade, shared critical infrastructure, and millions of our citizens moving across our common borders, no two countries are more directly connected to our daily lives. We must change the way we think about our shared borders, in order to secure and expedite the lawful and legitimate flow of people and goods while interdicting transnational threats that threaten our open societies.¹⁴⁸

It goes on to discuss Mexico specifically:

With Mexico, in addition to trade cooperation, we are working together to identify and interdict threats at the earliest opportunity, even before they reach North America.¹⁴⁹ *Stability and security* in Mexico are indispensable to building a strong economic partnership, fighting the illicit drug and arms trade, and promoting sound immigration policy.¹⁵⁰

However, what underpins these core concerns for U.S. policymakers? First of all, lets deal with stability and security *in* Mexico itself. What interests would be threatened by instability?¹⁵¹ Of course, the relationship between the U.S. and Mexico has always been a significant one, and this has included political-economic ties in areas like factory production,¹⁵² ‘flexible’ labour importation,¹⁵³ and energy.¹⁵⁴ Nonetheless, the

¹⁴⁸ U.S. White House *National Security Strategy 2010* (Washington D.C., May 2010) p.42

¹⁴⁹ This reflects the wider push by the U.S. in Central America that also informed the early Mérida Initiative. As discussed in the Introduction and Conclusions, this aspect of U.S. policy requires further research.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid* p.43

¹⁵¹ The argument in this section draws upon my work elsewhere, see Paul Ashby ‘Solving the Border Paradox? Border Security, Economic Integration, and the Mérida Initiative’ *Global Society* 28, 4 (2014)

¹⁵² The *maquiladora* cross-border factory initiative was started in 1965, partially in response to the end of the Bracero programme that had allowed Mexican workers temporary work visas in the U.S.

¹⁵³ Through various official and unofficial means, including the aforementioned Bracero programme that ran from 1943 to 1964, Mexican workers have made up a shortfall of labour in the U.S., especially

passage of NAFTA in 1994 has in many ways rendered Mexico *crucial* to contemporary U.S. economic success (and, in a albeit different and more profound manner, vice versa).¹⁵⁵ Thus, Mexico was the U.S.' third largest trading partner in 2012 behind fellow NAFTA member Canada and (far higher imports but lower exports) China.¹⁵⁶ U.S. interests in Mexico are now deeper than ever before, and thus require insulation from internal instability. Drug violence has increasingly come to be seen as a direct threat to Mexico's stability.

U.S. Interests in Mexico, and Destabilising Drug Violence

The increase in trade between the U.S. and Mexico since NAFTA went into effect has been huge. Total trade (imports and exports) increased 522% based on 1993 and 2013 figures (with imports from Mexico up 603%).¹⁵⁷ U.S. investment in Mexico jumped over 495% between 1994 and 2012.¹⁵⁸ Much of this trade is accounted for by *maquiladora* processing plants, export assembly businesses that receive duty free U.S. components for much cheaper assembly by Mexican labour, with final products exported back into the U.S. at comparatively lower tariffs.¹⁵⁹ Despite experiencing significant economic pressures from an increasingly competitive China in the 21st Century, and shocks from the downturn associated with financial crisis in 2007-2009, several large border complexes integral in the North American supply chain now exist, such as El Paso-Ciudad Juárez and San Diego-Tijuana (and their immediately surrounding areas). These hubs are not just based around trade, but also cross-border production and then transportation elsewhere in several key industries. Looking at the El Paso - Ciudad Juárez alone region gives us some more insight here. In 2012 almost 725,000 trucks and over 33,000 loaded rail containers crossed the border at El Paso Points of Entry (POEs).¹⁶⁰ Over \$65 billion in transborder freight moved through El

in the agriculture and service industries. This has also provided a valve for Mexican unemployment pressures.

¹⁵⁴ Through the 1980s and 1990s Mexican crude oil exports to the U.S. rose and it is now consistently a top-three exporter to the U.S. market. Despite declining production and exploration difficulties that have resulted in falling exports since 2004, 972,000 barrels per day arrived from Mexico in 2012, around 11.5% of total U.S. crude imports. See U.S. Energy Information Administration 'Mexico: Country Analysis' <http://www.eia.gov/countries/cab.cfm?fips=MX> and 'Petroleum and Other Liquids: Data: Crude Oil: U.S. imports by Country of Origin' http://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/pet_move_impcus_a2_nus_epc0_im0_mbbldpd_a.htm Accessed 30.06.13

¹⁵⁵ This is illustrated by the deep economic slump in Mexico in 2009, reflecting the profound but shallower recession in the U.S.

¹⁵⁶ United States Census Bureau 'Trade in Goods with Mexico' <http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c2010.html#1993> Accessed 20.05.13

¹⁵⁷ Figures from United States Census Bureau 'Trade in Goods with Mexico' <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c2010.html> Accessed 29.08.14; Office of the United States Trade Representative 'Mexico' <http://www.ustr.gov/countries-regions/americas/mexico> Accessed 29.08.14

¹⁵⁸ Using figures from M. Angeles Villarreal *U.S.-Mexico Economic Relations: Trends, Issues, and Implications* (Congressional Research Service, July 2014) p.6

¹⁵⁹ Although the *maquila* program was started in the 1960s, it received a huge boost through NAFTA, and between 1970 and 2006 the number of plants operating in Mexico increased from 120 to 2,810. César M. Fuentes and Sergio Peña 'Globalization, Transborder Networks, and U.S.-Mexico Border Cities' in Kathleen Staudt, César M. Fuentes & Julia E. Monárrez Fragoso [eds.] *Cities and Citizenship at the U.S.-Mexico Border: The Paso del Norte Metropolitan Region* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) p.10

¹⁶⁰ United States Department of Transportation: Research and Innovative Technology Administration Bureau of Transportation Statistics 'Border Crossing Entry Data: El Paso 2012'

Paso-Ciudad Juárez in 2012, including \$43 billion in trade groups that include parts and components for assembly in the *maquilas* and factories that straddle the two major cities and surrounding areas.¹⁶¹ Further, cross-border economic impacts are not just limited to trade figures. Almost 10 million cars crossed the border alongside over 6 million pedestrians,¹⁶² generating and sustaining a cross-border retail economy and reflecting a cross-border lifestyle in terms of work, family life, and leisure.¹⁶³

In addition, Mexico has become increasingly important for *North American* competitiveness within more globalised economic processes and trends, and that has large implications for the U.S.' comparative global economic success and wider grand strategy. Across the NAFTA-zone, 'just-in-time' processes (whereby the smaller components of a larger product are delivered 'just-in-time' for final assembly, giving greater flexibility for customers, saving on inventory costs and problems),¹⁶⁴ advantageous use of labour 'flexibility' (wage inequalities) and innovative tariff arrangements have revolutionised areas of North American production and are responsible for a significant chunk of the increase in North American trade, both in the parts traded for assembly in cross-border *maquila* plants and factories, and in final products.¹⁶⁵ Looking at figures for trade gives us an insight into this phenomenon, as some of the top items (outside oil and associated products) are similar for both imports and exports, including electronic equipment (parts and products) and auto (parts and products).¹⁶⁶ For example, 'American' automotive manufacture can now be increasingly said to be 'North American', given the integral role Mexico and Canada play in the truly trilateral production process.¹⁶⁷ O'Neil states that it is estimated that for every item imported *from* Mexico, 40% of its value is actually 'American' (as in U.S. labour inputted that amount into the production of the imported product).¹⁶⁸

http://transborder.bts.gov/programs/international/transborder/TBDR_BC/TBDR_BCQ.html Accessed 30.07.13

¹⁶¹ United States Department of Transportation: Research and Innovative Technology Administration Bureau of Transportation Statistics 'North American Transborder Freight Data: Port and Commodity Data El Paso 2012'

http://transborder.bts.gov/programs/international/transborder/TBDR_QAPC07.html Accessed 30.07.13 July, 2013)

¹⁶² U.S. Department of Transportation 'Border Crossing Entry Data'

¹⁶³ See, for example, Tony Payan *The Three U.S.-Mexico Border Wars: Drugs, Immigration, and Homeland Security* (Praeger Security International, 2006) p.2-3, 5

¹⁶⁴ For a discussion of the 'just in time' process in the auto industry see Thomas Klier and James Rubenstein *Who Really Made Your Car? Restructuring and Geographic Change in the Auto Industry* (Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 2008) p.135-141

¹⁶⁵ Shannon K. O'Neil *Two Nations Indivisible: Mexico, the United States, and the Road Ahead* (Oxford University Press, 2013) p.113-116; Robert A. Pastor *The North American Idea: A Vision of a Continental Future* (Oxford University Press, 2011) p.100-101

¹⁶⁶ See International Trade Centre 'Trade Map: Mexico & United States'

http://www.trademap.org/countrymap/Bilateral_TS.aspx Accessed 22.07.13

¹⁶⁷ Krista Hughes 'Mexican Manufacturing: From Sweatshops to High-Tech Motors' *Reuters* (April 9th, 2013) <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/04/09/us-mexico-economy-manufacturing-idUSBRE9380TN20130409> Accessed 09.05.13 Thomas H. Klier & James M. Rubenstein 'The Growing Importance of Mexico in North America's Auto Production' *The Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago* Chicago Fed Letter No. 310 (May 2013)

¹⁶⁸ Shannon K. O'Neil 'Good Neighbors' *Foreign Policy* (February 17th, 2014)

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/02/17/good_neighbors Accessed 31.07.14

These overall North American productive trends are summarised in further detail by Wilson.¹⁶⁹

Beyond North American cross-production, several important key economic areas for U.S. interests exist. Mexico remains a key agricultural trading partner.¹⁷⁰ Mexico has steadily increased its agricultural exports to the U.S. at a rate of almost 10% year-on-year since NAFTA, albeit through the decline of small-scale farming and the increased dominance of agribusiness.¹⁷¹ Mexico also remains an important supplier of raw materials to the U.S. and global markets, but whilst Mexico's trade portfolio in goods remains heavily made up by oil and associated products (14% exports and 9% imports in 2012), and Mexico is an important source of other key resources (notably silver and gold), in terms of percentages products tied to bi-national and North American assembly processes (and the subsequent final products) dominate U.S.-Mexican trade. Thus, the argument that Delgado Ramos and María Romano make suggesting that Mexico is important to the U.S. as chiefly a raw materials exporter is rather outdated. Its political economic importance now goes far beyond that.¹⁷² As I will show in the following chapters, the U.S. has attempted to recognise this reality through policy undertakings, and the MI is very much connected to these wider developments.

We can also see this 'North American logic' in energy production and security, itself also increasingly 'North American' in scope. Whilst Mexico's crude oil exports to the U.S. currently retain their importance, the U.S. supplied Mexico with over 82% of non-crude refined petroleum products in 2012, and is set to take advantage of its shale gas boom by partnering with *Petróleos Mexicanos* (PEMEX) in creating pipelines that will stretch across the border and deep into Mexico's territory.¹⁷³ Mexico itself has very large prospective deposits of technically recoverable shale gas in deposits in the East and especially North-East of its territory, a potentially very tempting resource for large foreign investment and important contributor to North American energy security.¹⁷⁴ The depletion of Mexico's oil reserves, especially at the huge Cantarell oil field,¹⁷⁵ and PEMEX's lack of experience in deepwater drilling has potentially significant implications for the U.S. and wider North American energy security, given that 11.5% of the U.S. crude imports came from Mexico in 2012 (an already decreasing figure from previous years). The impact on Mexico's overall political economic stability also concerned the U.S. according to diplomatic cables, given the

¹⁶⁹ Christopher Wilson *Working Together: Economic Ties Between the United States and Mexico* (Woodrow Wilson Center Mexico Institute, 2011)

¹⁷⁰ Although given the huge subsidies that allow overproducing U.S. farms to use Mexico as an uncompetitive market the concept of 'partnership' may be stretched here

¹⁷¹ Trade figures U.S. Department of Agriculture *Strengthening NAFTA Through U.S.-Mexican Cooperation in Agriculture* (Washington D.C., March 2007) p.2

¹⁷² Gian Carlo Delgado-Ramos and Silvina María Romano 'Political-Economic Factors in U.S. Foreign Policy: The Colombia Plan, the Mérida Initiative, and the Obama Administration' *Latin American Perspectives* 38, 4 (2011) p.101-103. Trade figures from International Trade Centre 'Trade Map'

¹⁷³ Reuters 'Mexico's Pemex opens contract bids for Ramones gas pipeline project' *Reuters* (May 13th, 2013) <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/13/mexico-gas-idUSL2N0DU2KR20130513> Accessed 14.05.13

¹⁷⁴ See Chapter Five for a discussion of this.

¹⁷⁵ See Michael T. Klare *The Race for What's Left: The Global Scramble for the World's Last Resources* (New York: Picador, 2012) p.19-22

huge input PEMEX provides to Mexico's federal and therefore national budgets.¹⁷⁶ Peña Nieto's administration has finally pushed through reforms along these lines. Should they meet the hopes of several commentators, and Mexico's oil production open up successfully to private investment, energy integration is likely to go further.¹⁷⁷ The importance of Mexico to U.S. *strategic* interests is underlined in these energy issues and beyond.

As we have seen, U.S. drug policy is often viewed in critical examinations through its efficacy in securing foreign policy goals not directly related to CN, or how drug policy stems from *domestic drivers* and U.S. political pressures, as well as bureaucratic inertia.¹⁷⁸ This remains a valid point more generally. However, *in this case* I contest we would be better placed to understand a significant portion of the drug-related violence in Mexico as *directly and increasingly contradictory to U.S. strategic interests in Mexico itself*. This allows me to understand drug violence from a historical-materialist perspective that *still* considers U.S. political economic interests as key to the MI. Crucially, this threat is seen holistically in terms of the challenge it poses to *economic integration and the NAFTA space*. Although not as intense, widespread, or ideological as 'traditional' political violence, in areas of Michoacán, Tamaulipas, Nuevo León and Guerrero the violence in Mexico *is* akin to low-level insurgency, with attacks on the state, and business interests commonplace.¹⁷⁹ Whilst perhaps alarmist in its overall claims,¹⁸⁰ much of the military-based extant literature builds on real evidence to suggest the existence of a 'criminal insurgency'. Whilst the designation maybe clumsy, it does capture the level of the security challenge. Critical accounts also present alarming accounts of the level of violence and state complicity inside Mexico.¹⁸¹ The evidence points to drug violence being a direct challenge to U.S. interests in Mexico. Mexico witnesses sustained firefights in urban areas, the use of roadblocks, and the deployment of (improvised and genuine) military weapons. There are significant police and military casualties. Whilst it is hard to confirm whether police officers especially are killed for being police officers or for being aligned with the wrong cartel, the corruption of police forces themselves represents an

¹⁷⁶ U.S. Embassy Mexico *Economic Conditions in Mexico* Cable Reference 000033 (7th January, 2009) Link: <http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=09MEXICO33&q=china%20mexico> Accessed 13.10.12)

¹⁷⁷ Again, discussed a little more in Chapter Five.

¹⁷⁸ For an example in my case, see Emily Gilbert 'Borders and Security in North America' in Jeffrey Ayres and Laura Macdonald [eds.] *North America in Question: Regional Integration in an Era of Economic Turbulence* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012) p.204-205

¹⁷⁹ For academic / journalistic cases that outline the existence of this phenomenon, see Ioan Grillo *El Narco: Inside Mexico's Criminal Insurgency* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2012); Robert Killebrew 'Criminal Insurgency in the Americas and Beyond' *NDU Prism* 2, 3 (June, 2011); John P. Sullivan & Robert J. Bunker (ed.) *Mexico's Criminal Insurgency* (iUniverse Books / Small Wars Foundation, 2012) More below

¹⁸⁰ Bunker and Sullivan's futurist speculations of a failed state seem wide of the mark, and I contend Mexico's violence is much more localised than they treat it. Robert J. Bunker and John P. Sullivan 'Cartel Evolution Revisited: Third Phase Cartel Potentials and Alternative Futures in Mexico' in Robert J. Bunker [ed.] *Narcos Over the Border: Gangs, Cartels and Mercenaries* (Routledge, 2011) p.30-54 Nonetheless there is no doubting the capability and brazenness of the cartels in some areas of Mexico. Also see Lisa J. Campbell, 'Los Zetas: Operational Assessment' in *ibid* p.55-80

¹⁸¹ See Chapter Two, but Gibler offers a particularly gripping and shocking account of the depths of corruption and violence in the Mexican state and the country's drug war. John Gibler *To Die in Mexico: Dispatches from Inside the Drug War* (City Lights Books, 2011)

alarming reality in terms of the Mexican state's capabilities to maintain the monopoly of violence and rule of law. Several diplomatic cables have discussed at least the potential for instability related to drug trafficking violence to impact upon economic investment and wider business and trade *inside* Mexico itself.¹⁸² Some academic studies have also made this case (although the effects are very complex).¹⁸³ To summarise, whilst we may quibble over a precise definition of Mexico's current crisis, the instability generated by the violence is a genuine strategic concern. This further links the MI to established traits in U.S. foreign policy in shoring up political economies to help ensure their stability in the service of its interests, *without* having to underplay the CN elements.

The Mérida Initiative, Border Security, and NAFTA-land Security

The bid to help tackle Mexico's drug-related instability within the MI is enveloped by its *primary* rationale - the integration of security relations between the U.S. and Mexico as part of the regionalisation of security and *across* and *around* the NAFTA sphere. Whilst the strategic importance of North America and Mexico grew over the NAFTA period, presenting a strategic compulsion to secure its political economy, it took the events of 9/11 to catalyse the NAFTA-land Security response. The impacts of those terrorist attacks went far beyond the tragic loss of life. Subsequent border closures and heightened security imposed high costs North American business, individuals, and, more broadly, U.S. interests that are *rooted* in regional trilateral economic openness.¹⁸⁴ The disruptive potential for a further attack within or emanating from North America has become a key animator for policy. As the Department for Homeland Security (DHS) put it, "the systems that provide the functions essential for a thriving society are increasingly intricate and interconnected. This means that potential disruptions to a system are not fully understood and can have large and unanticipated cascading effects throughout American security."¹⁸⁵ Another successful terrorist attack from within or without of North America is likely to have similar or even more detrimental results on trilateral integration.¹⁸⁶ The

¹⁸² For evidence of both U.S. concern in this area, and descriptions about how former President Calderón explained his own security crackdown in these terms, see U.S. Embassy Mexico *Scene Setter for President's Trip to Mexico, March 12-14th, 2007* Cable Reference: 001102 (March 5th, 2007) available <<http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=07MEXICO1102&q=merida%20mexico>> (accessed October 3rd, 2012); U.S. Embassy Mexico *Effect of Violence on Mexican Investment* Cable Reference: 001536 (March 22nd, 2006) available <<http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=06MEXICO1536&q=investment%20mexico%20security>> (accessed 4th October, 2012)

¹⁸³ Miguel A. Ramos and Nathan J. Ashby 'Heterogeneous Firm Response to Organized Crime: Evidence from FDI in Mexico' *Journal of International Management* 19 (2013); Nathan J. Ashby and Miguel A. Ramos 'Foreign Direct Investment and Industry Response to Organized Crime: The Mexican Case' *European Journal of Political Economy* 30 (2013); Steven Samford and Priscila Ortega Gómez 'Subnational Politics and Foreign Direct Investment in Mexico' *Review of International Political Economy* 21, 2 (2014) Interestingly and confoundingly, these authors find that investment is highest in some of the areas where investment is highest. This may not be so surprising in terms of the fact that the northern states of Mexico receive a lot of FDI, and also are where drugs cross the border. However it is an area that deserves further research.

¹⁸⁴ I discuss this in Chapter Five

¹⁸⁵ U.S. Department of Homeland Security *Risk Management Fundamentals: Homeland Security Risk Management Doctrine* (Washington D.C., April, 2011) p.7

¹⁸⁶ Considering the political and economic ramifications had the 'Millennium bomber' Ahmed Ressaam had not been stopped by a vigilant Customs inspector at the U.S. Canadian border en route to bomb

conundrum for U.S. policymakers is therefore not just how to maintain the advantages of economic integration and openness within the NAFTA-zone but to *secure that very economic openness*. 9/11 highlighted that security risks to North American economic integration that were in some part inherent in North American economic integration. The U.S. aim therefore has been to *secure openness*.

This argument sets me apart from some of the other theories on North American security integration. There is, within that literature, a recognised trend towards ‘harder’ border security regimes and border space securitisation (even militarisation) as a response to immigration, illicit trafficking, and (especially after 9/11) terrorism in North America and much of the global North, even as these states seek maintain the open political and economic systems they have invested in.¹⁸⁷ However, I have shown previously that ‘economic’ and ‘security’ issues have been dissected into distinct policy subsets in much of the extant literature.¹⁸⁸ As an indicative example, d’Appollonia and Reich see the challenge to Western states in border secure as citizen security issue, discussing how in both the U.S. and Europe, there exists, “a new challenge in reconciling the requisites of public safety with the foundations of the ‘open society’ upon which political and social relations have been constructed”.¹⁸⁹ There is no focus on the importance of *open political economies* to states in the Global North and their protection here. In the North American context, there are instances of analysts suggesting (or decrying) that in the wake of 9/11, ‘security *trumps* trade’ and that therefore economic liberalisation has taken a back seat to security concerns.¹⁹⁰ One is often left with the impression of a back and forth between two policy poles.

I contend differently. Whilst there is no doubt that a security agenda has emerged in North America, the reasons for this are *absolutely and fundamentally connected to the region’s economic integration*. It is crucial to note from a theoretical standpoint that there is not a shifting, competing tussle between *distinct* policy aims, but instead an inherently difficult challenge presented by *deeply intertwined* coeval economic-security interests, marked by the need to achieve the *security* of an open economic system. The debate is *internal* to achievement of this complex interest, not *between* ‘economics’ and ‘security’. Indeed, this is a good example of the fact that whilst interests may be fairly clear, discerning how to achieve them is not.¹⁹¹ The economic effect of NAFTA (as a singular regional example of a far wider reality) underlines the importance of a certain kind of openness - to trade, talent, labour and ideas - to the U.S. economy. The U.S. has pursued the construction of deeper economic integration

Los Angeles International Airport should give us pause regarding the threat to continued integration from potential cross-border incidents.

¹⁸⁷ Ariane Chebel d’Appollonia and Simon Reich’s [eds.] *Immigration, Integration, and Security: America and Europe in Comparative Perspective* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008) explores this development in Europe and the U.S.

¹⁸⁸ See the Literature Review.

¹⁸⁹ Ariane Chebel d’Appollonia and Simon Reich ‘The Securitization of Immigration: Multiple Countries, Multiple Dimensions’ in d’Appollonia and Reich *Immigration, Integration, and Security*: p.1

¹⁹⁰ See Literature Review

¹⁹¹ Matthew Coleman makes an argument on complexity of interests at the border in Matthew Coleman ‘U.S. Statecraft and the U.S.–Mexico Border as Security/Economy Nexus’ *Political Geography* 24 (2005)

on a global scale, and needs to be able to accept the benefits that flow to it as result of being the prime actor in that system. However, it is also a recognised trend more widely within economic globalisation that illicit actors have been able to take advantage of the same globalised ‘space-time compression’¹⁹² that has been promoted by the U.S. and so invigorated licit transnational flows. As *par exemplar* of an integrated region NAFTA provides a microcosm of these wider phenomena, albeit of course a highly specific one. President Bush summarised the overall and regional challenge to the U.S. succinctly when in the aftermath of 9/11 he told his then head of Customs Robert Bonner, “You’ve got to secure our borders against the terrorist threat. But you have to do it without shutting down the U.S. economy”.¹⁹³ Part of the damage of 9/11 was to globalised and regionalised economic flows, and this (in part) was why border security was ramped up, and security solutions were sought to protect those flows from further disruptive events.¹⁹⁴

Thus, those analysts that or posit that security interests have trumped or clash with economic ones underplay that the U.S. policy response is in large part about ensuring that such attacks do not threaten *strategic* U.S. interests in *securing the openness* of the North American economic space.¹⁹⁵ Nonetheless, ‘hardening’ U.S. borders has proved ineffective and counterproductive, perhaps not surprising given the impact on highly integrated systems. Whilst it is perhaps to be expected that borders have received renewed security focus,¹⁹⁶ increasing security arrangements *at* the border has had pernicious effects in harming trade (and relatedly, so the argument goes, investment, competitiveness and prosperity).¹⁹⁷ There is also a strong case that it has *increased* the capabilities of various illicit actors through the honing of skills in avoiding interdiction. It is therefore essentially a paradoxical undertaking.¹⁹⁸ Some policy analysts have noted that in response the U.S. has tried to ‘have it both ways’ - securing the border against illicit actors, loosening it up for licit trade.¹⁹⁹ Others have *encouraged* trilateral thinking in the NAFTA context to solve mutual security issues around drugs, terrorism and migration, and / or *bemoaned* the lack of movement in this direction.²⁰⁰ Especially important here is the idea of projecting borders outwards

¹⁹² David Harvey *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Wiley Blackwell, 1991)

¹⁹³ Edward Alden *The Closing of the American Border: Terrorism, Immigration, and Security Since 9/11* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008) p.52

¹⁹⁴ Of course border security within U.S. politics is a wider and more storied affair. ‘Domestic’ issues thus complicate matters a little here. I deal with this below.

¹⁹⁵ As noted in the Literature Review, Pastor’s *North American Idea* is a good example here, as is the work of O’Neil. They have also underplayed the debate *within* U.S. administrations. In the Bush era this revolves around the very question of securing economic openness, rather than being based on diametrically opposed positions on ‘economics’ or ‘security’. See Alden *Closing of the American Border* for a fascinating account.

¹⁹⁶ As transnational flows have increased within globalisation it is no surprise, that borders have become increasingly Janus-faced ‘securitised’ and ‘liberalised’ spaces, serving as they do as territorial boundaries to the political and social space the state is meant to protect as well as interchange zones,

¹⁹⁷ Ashby ‘Solving the Border Paradox’

¹⁹⁸ Ashby ‘Solving the Border Paradox?’; Stephen E. Flynn ‘The False Conundrum: Continental Integration versus Homeland Security’ in Peter Andreas & Thomas J. Biersteker *The Rebordering of North America: Integration and Exclusion in a New Security Context* (Routledge, 2003) p.110 - 127

¹⁹⁹ Peter Andreas ‘Redrawing the Line: Borders and Security in the 21st Century’ *International Security* 28, 2 (Fall, 2003)

²⁰⁰ Many of the analysts I focused upon in the Literature Review have discussed the *potential* for and nascent moves towards a wider conception of *North American security* that integrates security policy

to achieve better, *layered*, HS and establishing a “security perimeter” around the NAFTA zone in order to better protect the U.S. and North America, especially from terrorism.²⁰¹

Both of these solutions have appeared in actual U.S. policy efforts. The ‘Smart Border’ and 21st Century Border Management programmes undertaken amongst the NAFTA countries, as discussed in the chapters to follow, justify themselves as focused on interdicting illicit threats whilst expediting licit trade.²⁰² In 2005 the U.S., Mexico and Canada announced the SPP, a trilateral undertaking that sought to regionalise and coordinate North American security arrangements whilst deepening economic integration amongst the NAFTA partners. Announcing the SPP, the three NAFTA leaders stated it would aim to, “establish a common approach to security to *protect North America from external threats*, prevent and respond to threats *within North America*, and further streamline the secure and efficient movement of legitimate, low-risk traffic across our shared borders.”²⁰³ As I mentioned in the Literature Review, the SPP was described by Shannon as an agreement that understood, “North America as a shared economic space and that as a shared economic space we need to protect it”. He went on to say it would effectively “armor

across the three NAFTA countries to catch up with economic integration, and indeed some have actively encouraged such a development. See that chapter for further detail. Others have discussed concepts such as ‘border projection’, whereby the U.S. achieves border security through aiding its international partners. However, many have remained skeptical that these processes are either currently happening in North America or indeed will happen in the near future. As indicative reminders, Pastor charges, “Today’s problems” in the NAFTA area, including continuing security problems, “are the result of the three governments failure to govern the North American space”. He encourages the creation of trilateral institutions to tackle security issues, including CN concerns. O’Neil suggests a partnership-based approach to mutual security issues that would move beyond the militaristic focus of the Mérida Initiative to something akin to a ‘whole of society’ programme that seeks to tackle Mexico’s security crisis from the perspective of inculcating Mexican ‘rule of law’. Andreas discussed the potential for the creation of a North American security perimeter in line with policy initiatives that have suggested, “pushing borders outwards” as a solution to the border paradox, whereby border security tasks could be completed by trusted international partners, in this case Canada and Mexico. However he has concluded that such an approach, “would require such a high level of institutionalization and regional policy harmonization that it does not seem realistic at the present time” and instead through piecemeal policy programs the potential creation, “of an informal, quasi-continental security perimeter” could eventually take place. Robert Pastor *The North American Idea: A Vision of a Continental Future* (Oxford University Press, 2011); p.167; Shannon K. O’Neil *Two Nations Indivisible: Mexico, the United States, and the Road Ahead* (Oxford University Press, 2013); Andreas ‘Redrawing the Line’ p.98-99

²⁰¹ Gary Claude Hufbauer and Gustavo Vega-Cánovas ‘Whither NAFTA: A Common Frontier?’ in Peter Andreas & Thomas J. Biersteker *The Rebordering of North America: Integration and Exclusion in a New Security Context* (Routledge, 2003) p.128-153 Flynn ‘The False Conundrum’

²⁰² U.S. White House President George W. Bush Archive ‘Border Security: U.S.-Mexico Border Partnership Agreement’ (Washington D.C.) <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/usmxborder/> Accessed 20.07.14; U.S. White House Office of the Press Secretary Declaration by The Government Of The United States Of America and The Government Of The United Mexican States Concerning Twenty-First Century Border Management (Washington D.C., May 19th, 2010) <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/declaration-government-united-states-america-and-government-united-mexican-states-c> Accessed 22.07.14

²⁰³ U.S. Department of State Archive *Joint Statement by President Bush, President Fox, and Prime Minister Martin: Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America* (Crawford, Texas, March 23rd, 2005) <http://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/prsrl/2005/69850.htm> Accessed 22.07.14

NAFTA”.²⁰⁴ Clearly the Partnership was understood as tackling the interconnected nature of security and economic issues in North America through integrative measures. The initial report developed by Working Groups who were tasked with suggesting where progress could be made on the SPP stated, “While the Security and Prosperity agendas were developed by separate teams, we recognise that our economic well-being and our security are not two separate and distinct issues.”²⁰⁵

Crucially the SPP was envisioned as being operative on multiple issues and a multiple scales. Again the initial report on the SPP’s progress from its Working Groups set out the goals:

In North America, we have established plans for equivalent approaches to strengthen aviation security, to enhance maritime transportation and port security, to combat transnational threats to the United States, Canada, and Mexico, including terrorism, organized crime, illegal drugs, migrant and contraband smuggling and trafficking, to enhance partnerships on intelligence and information sharing, and to develop and implement a common approach to critical infrastructure protection, and response to cross-border terrorist incidents and, as applicable, natural disasters.²⁰⁶

Thus the SPP was an ambitious trilateral agenda, which at heart sought to secure the North American economic space from internal and external threats and threat potentials. This is in line with core U.S. foreign policy goals in securing key markets, but is also a specific regional expression of this aim, greatly influenced by the high-level of integration within the NAFTA zone. Showing further compatibility between policy scales, the intended protection of the North American economic space was also intended to improve U.S. HS through coordination and regularisation. In this sense it represented *security projection*. However amidst political pressure and a lack of substantive, trilateral, high-profile policy progress the SPP lost steam. Thus there is skepticism about achievements on a trilateral level concerning the SPP.

We are better served in seeing the SPP as part of a *process towards U.S.-Mexican security integration*, which in turn adds towards the *overall* regionalisation of NAFTA’s security. The SPP, alongside tentative security interconnectivity between the U.S. and Mexico prior to that agreement, helped continue to lay the foundations for greater bilateral cooperative efforts on security questions that have culminated in the MI. Recalling Cadena-Roa’s analysis, which is perhaps closest overall to my own argument in this project:

... we should interpret [the] SPP not as a single (failed) project but rather as one of a series of agreements and commitments assumed by the [NAFTA] member states. Thus the SPP, Calderón’s war on drugs, and the Mérida Initiative are not

²⁰⁴ Shannon quoted in Laura Carlsen ‘Armoring NAFTA: The Battleground for Mexico’s Future’, NACLA Report on the Americas 41,5 (September, October, 2008) p. 17

²⁰⁵ *Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America: Report to Leaders 2005* (June 2005)
Accessed via the Government of Canada’s SPP Archive here [http://www.spp-psp.gc.ca/eic/site/spp-psp.nsf/vwapj/Report-Rapport-Ju2005.pdf/\\$file/Report-Rapport-Ju2005.pdf](http://www.spp-psp.gc.ca/eic/site/spp-psp.nsf/vwapj/Report-Rapport-Ju2005.pdf/$file/Report-Rapport-Ju2005.pdf)

²⁰⁶ *SPP Report to Leaders* p.32

unrelated, nor are they responses to short-term problems [...]; rather, they are stages in a long-term project to draw Mexico into the U.S. security perimeter as a reliable partner.²⁰⁷

Those analysts who have drawn connections between the SPP, the MI and U.S. security interests are much closer to the import of the policy. However, no study has been able to reveal in detail just how deep the connections between the *aims* of the SPP and *actual policy detail* of the MI are. We also must keep in focus the causal role of U.S. strategic interests in securing both Mexican stability and continued economic openness in North America. In the next section, I finalise my explication of what is driving this policy, and connect up and unpack the different levels of the policy clearly.

Transnational Threats: Within and Without

As noted within the SPP documentation cited above, the official discourse surrounding U.S. policy in Mexico has reflected the growing official focus on transnational threats and TOC as a significant focus within U.S. strategy.²⁰⁸ The increasing emphasis on TOC in the Mexican context, running through policy academia, military statements, and administrative policy programs like *The Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime*,¹¹² is in some sense *reflective* of the security challenge facing the U.S. U.S. strategic interests in Mexico are facilitated by the open North American economic space, *but* cartels, and potentially others, straddle and take advantage of those open borders. In this scenario focusing on transnational threats makes *prima facie* sense. Effectively, the very ‘transnationalism’ of this challenge necessitates a response that goes beyond the immediate border with Mexico. The use of TOC here then is part of the wider *concrete* move to solutions that transcend border security by looking at the security issues more regionally and holistically. As a Pacific Council report noted, drug trafficking is not “a ‘border problem’, but rather a bi-national and international problem that governments try to address *in part* through enforcement and interdiction at the border”.¹¹³

This links back to the threat posed by drug traffickers, which the U.S. is now conceptualizing as TCOs.²⁰⁹ Andreas and Friman have highlighted how increasingly powerful transnational criminal actors, through their increased use of violence, can undermine the authority of the state both by directly challenging it, and by undermining the populations wider trust in the state and its institutions.¹⁰² A Mexican state unable to effectively hold the monopoly of violence or guarantee the rule of law is inimical to the interests of the U.S. in sustaining an open economically integrated investment environment in the NAFTA zone. In the context of Mexico’s security crisis, U.S. concerns are not primarily about the ill-defined phenomenon of ‘spillover violence’, or the effects of drugs themselves (although these factor into policymaking). Instead, the manner in which profits massively swell in the act of

²⁰⁷ Jorge Cadena-Roa ‘The Mexican Political Security Crisis: Implications for the North American Community’ in Ayres and Macdonald *North America* p.132

²⁰⁸ U.S. White House: National Security Council *The Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime* (Washington D.C., 2011)

²⁰⁹ In the sense that their activities move beyond drug trafficking there is some logic behind this designation. However how hierarchical or even networked these ‘organisations’ are, and how far their reach extends, is hard to discern from the lay perspective due to the very nature of their activities.

successfully crossing illicit material over the border acts as a *force multiplier* for the operational abilities of violent groups *inside Mexico*. These profits connect U.S. interests at the border to these wider interests in Mexico itself, and they span the NAFTA zone and beyond. This concern *coexists* with the U.S. interest in preventing potential transnational terror threats from emanating from Mexico and crossing the border, or threatening the North American economic space more holistically. These also threaten the same things - integration, trade, investment and (to a certain extent) the societies that sustain them - as natural disasters or pandemics.

Therefore, much of the contemporary bilateral U.S. policy with regard to Mexico is more reflective of North American security concerns, ensuring that the Mexican state is far more competent in meeting a *wide variety* of current and potential transnational security threats inside its territory. This is very much inclusive of, but not limited to, CN concerns and the strategic threat of Mexican instability. It *also* aids in the attempted establishment of a North American security perimeter. Official explanations of policy have emphasised that the U.S. is partnering with Mexico as part of a wider concern in ensuring that it can, “leverage opportunities working with our foreign partners to intercept and neutralize threats before they reach the U.S. border.”²¹⁰ The policy reaction to Mexico’s current security crisis is very much a part of this, and to a degree drug-related violence has acted as a catalyst for policy action, especially in terms of providing a connecting point with Mexican security institutions and concerns. The regionalised, integrative logic of the SPP reflects what underpins current security aid to Mexico - the improvement of Mexico’s ability to maintain internal stability, its ability to be involved in the protection of North America’s shared economic zone, and the improvement of U.S. HS through projection. These aims are intended to complement one another as part of *NAFTA-land Security*. Through this the U.S. seeks to protect its strategic interests in Mexico and North America. In the following chapters I show this empirically.

Conclusion

This chapter has set the macro-theoretical and theoretical context of U.S. foreign policy in a general sense, and with specific regard to contemporary U.S.-Mexican relations and security aid revolving around the MI. In keeping with the ontological commitments and key explanatory claims of the project’s argument, I made a case for the centrality of interests in the make up of U.S. foreign policy and grand strategy, looking at interests from a macro-theoretical perspective, before showing how they are formed and operate with regard to the U.S. I then drew connections between the U.S. political-economic interests in securing foreign political-economies with connections to the U.S. and global economy, and the drug violence in Mexico. Finally, I introduced the concept of NAFTA-land Security and how it relates to multiple U.S. key interests in both U.S.-Mexican relations, the North American

²¹⁰ Testimony of Mariko Silver, then Acting Assistant Secretary, Office of International Affairs, DHS, in *Merida Part Two: Insurgency and Terrorism in Mexico* Hearing Before the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere of House Committee on Foreign Affairs and Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations and Management of House Committee on Homeland Security (Serial 112-108 / 112-48) 112th Congress (October 4th, 2011) p.30

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economic space, HS, and beyond. This provides the platform to examine U.S. interests in Mexico historically, and the MI and NAFTA-land Security, from a sound theoretical basis.

Chapter Four

‘...So Close to the United States...’ The U.S.-Mexican Relationship in History

‘¡Pobre México! Tan lejos de Dios y tan cerca de los Estados Unidos!’
‘Poor Mexico! So far away from God, and so close to the United States!’¹

Introduction

When reading analyses on the history and nature of U.S.-Mexican relations, one is often left with the overall impression of neighbours that do not particularly get along, but, due to the brute facts of geography, are forced to deal with each other. There is popularly considered to be a deep suspicion of U.S. interference within all levels of Mexican society, engendered by the appropriation of half the latter’s territory by its powerful neighbour in 1848, interventions in its Revolution, and forthright U.S. reactions to Mexican economic nationalism or narcotic and security problems. For its part the U.S. has been cast as a frustrated observer weary of Mexican recalcitrance on important issues, not least those revolving around narcotics, and its general unwarranted suspicion of U.S. motives. On both sides much of this mutual distrust and subsequent fractious relations are rooted in a fundamentally asymmetrical power relationship that of course the United States is on the happier side of.² In this reading, the run up to and passage of NAFTA is seen as a watershed moment marking a *shift* towards more cooperative approaches. This sense has deepened with the adoption of the MI. Emphasis is given to both the unprecedented scale of cooperation between Mexico and the United States under this framework, and the likelihood for continued and deepening cooperation despite the continued relevance of historically entrenched misunderstandings, potential flashpoints, and antagonisms.

This chapter seeks to offer a necessarily brief sweep of the history of U.S.-Mexican relations in the 20th and 21st Century, through Mexico’s Revolution to the signing of NAFTA. Its initial aim is to qualify, but not entirely refute, the historical truism that this particular relationship has been marked by inequality, distrust and suspicion that has only recently begun to thaw. Unsurprisingly given its pervasiveness, the idea that historical relations have been at best strained between these two nations is of course based on a good deal of evidence. Nevertheless, in positing a narrative of mutual wariness, and occasional conflict within U.S.-Mexican interaction that has only recently begun to shift towards cooperation, a number of studies tend to elide or

¹ Remark attributed to Mexican President Porfirio Díaz

² Amongst numerous examples, see Enrique Krauze ‘Looking at *Them*: A Mexican Perspective on the Gap with the United States’ in Fukuyama, Francis (ed.) *Falling Behind: Explaining the Development Gap Between Latin America and the United States* (Oxford University Press, 2008) p.49; Jorge I. Domínguez and Rafael Fernández de Castro *The United States and Mexico: Between Partnership and Conflict* (Routledge, 2009) p.9; Sidney Weintraub *Unequal Partners: The United States and Mexico* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010) p.27, 92-93; Tony Payan *The Three U.S.-Mexico Border Wars: Drugs, Immigration, and Homeland Security* (Praeger Security International, 2006) p.97, 120;

underplay some important issues. Firstly, we need to be clear that the asymmetry underpinning this relationship was of course one born of specific and complex historical contingencies, but has been to a good degree *maintained* and even *deepened* through U.S. policy, rather than being a pre-given and natural set of affairs. Secondly we must be careful not to over-emphasise the conflictual or mistrustful elements of the U.S.-Mexico relationship. As we will see in this chapter there are significant episodes of cooperation on important issues *prior* to NAFTA, and whilst we will see that cooperation has indeed deepened in the run up to the trade agreement and beyond, it is simplistic (if conceptually helpful) to demarcate periods of cooperation and non-cooperation. More importantly, we cannot understand broad changes in the nature of bilateral relations *without a clear conception of the U.S. interests motivating policy* in the context of its regional and (developing through the period under inspection) global hegemony.

Thus, in keeping with the project's historical materialist framework, I seek to highlight that the *core interest* that has guided U.S. policy makers has been the keenness to ensure Mexico remains an *economically open* and *politically stable* neighbour. This is in service of the strategic interests that propel (but do not entirely determine) U.S. foreign policy as discussed in Chapter Three, rising from socio-economic structures and conditioned strongly by the logics of capitalism and capitalist social relations. I show that in the period under review here the U.S.' central aim in encouraging, fostering and maintaining Mexico's openness to U.S./ foreign capital and its political stability has not *dramatically* changed. Neither has it been severely threatened, other than during and in the immediate aftermath of the Mexican Revolution. However, since Mexico's economic crisis in 1982 the U.S. *has* reasserted itself and both its core interests and more contextual ones more strongly. In tandem with Mexican political elites, the U.S. has been able to ferment a relationship with Mexico whereby the latter is much *more* 'open' to the U.S.' influence both economically and politically, a political-economic arrangement "locked in" by NAFTA.³ In turn, the deepening of the U.S. economic interests within NAFTA provoked a deeper U.S. security involvement in Mexico. This was instantaneously clear as political violence reemerged as NAFTA went into effect.

Throughout this historical analysis, I will show the utility of my established theoretical framework as a tool for understanding the U.S. bilateral relations with Mexico. I am able to focus on and pinpoint evidence for the centrality of strategic interests as drivers of the U.S. policies and behaviors, but the framework remains flexible enough to do this whilst including and accounting for the richness of historical developments. Thus it takes in and takes seriously contingencies, intermittent conflicts, various administrations, shifting ideological currents, and the complications of a shared border, whilst showing that core and durable interests have continually shaped relations at a macro-level. Indeed the historical narrative offered bolsters the theoretical framework and its key claims with supporting evidence. I also am able to demonstrate the aptness of my understanding of U.S. hegemony, and how it works in conjunction with the four types of power outlined in the Introduction. The U.S. has regularly applied purer forms of coercion to achieve its interests in Mexico,

³ G. John Ikenberry *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order After Major Wars* (Princeton University Press, 2000) p.239-242

especially in the early periods of the chronology covered here. However, whilst it has at times displayed imperialistic tendencies (which some actors in the U.S. state have reached for more than others, and often taking place in particular contexts), for the most part Mexico has been able to nominally exercise its own political control. Nonetheless, it does this within regional power realities and under U.S. hegemony, whereby its choices are limited to strategically trying to plot its own path within a delimiting context. Thus we see a complex history unfold here, where Mexico has periodically asserted its independence, a mutually acceptable status quo has persisted, but where the U.S. has directly *employed* aspects of its power to change realities in Mexico in line with its interests and preferences. The chapter closes at a point where the U.S. has successfully created a situation whereby the Mexican state largely ‘wants what the U.S. wants’. U.S. regional hegemony is currently at a high-point in bilateral relations, not least due to the strictures and realities of NAFTA. However this has its complications and contradictions with regard to regional security.

Chapter Outline & Key Aims

This chapter is essentially structured around a chronological exploration of key points in the history of U.S.-Mexican relations, from the Mexican Revolution up to the passage of NAFTA and its immediate aftermath. The chapter aims to begin to integrate the theoretical framework offered in the previous chapter with the empirical case for the motivating power of U.S. strategic interests in its historical dealings with Mexico. In the first instance, we see how strategic interests undergirded U.S. policy towards Mexico in broadly defined historical junctures; the immediate run-up to the Mexican Revolution, the Revolution itself and its aftermath, Mexico’s expropriation of its oil reserves, World War II, Cold War relations, Mexico’s economic crash, and finally the passage of NAFTA. The broad swath of history I look at is bookended with two periods where Mexico is extremely open to U.S. trade, investment, and influence conducive to U.S. interests - the *Porfiriato* (1884 - 1911), and the period around the NAFTA agreement (1982 onwards). I will show that U.S. policy has been aimed, with a great deal of continuity, at ensuring Mexico is a politically secure and stable economic neighbour open to U.S. investment and trade (and latterly to more global economic interaction). However within this I also look at the complex interplay of some core issue areas. If strategic interests stemming from its political economy are a guiding thread for U.S. policy, they also interact with and are connected to a cornucopia of other concerns, not least of course over narcotics. Therefore I aim here to give a nuanced account that leaves the broad argument for policy guided by strategic interests intact, whilst maintaining historical specificity and complexity.

Through this discussion a good deal of important points relating to this chapter’s argument, and the themes and arguments of the wider project, will be further brought out. Perhaps most importantly, I set the empirical bedrock for the argument that there is a good deal of continuity in the U.S.’ effort to create a secure and stable Mexican political economy. This chapter helps to show that Mérida fits in with longer-term trends in this regard. However, in the final stages of this historical narrative we will also begin to see the practical fallout of the deepening of strategic interests in Mexico’s political economy inculcated by economic integration. The increased awareness of (potential and real) security threats to those interests through terrorism, political violence, and drug-related violence, have been catalysts for much deeper involvement on the part of the U.S. in Mexican security. This chapter ends at the

point where the U.S.' achievement in helping to pull Mexico into an unprecedented trading relationship, tying Mexico's development and political future fundamentally to the U.S.' preferences, begins to produce its own dynamics. In this way we will begin to see that there is both deep continuity with regard to the interests of the U.S. in Mexico, and change in their import and how they are secured.

U.S.-Mexican Relations in Overview: From Conflict to Cooperation?

Before entering into detailed historical discussion, it is useful to offer both an overview of the bilateral relationship, and some of the established understandings of it. This both sets the scene for what follows, and helps identify further what I am trying to illustrate here in contrast to those established understandings. Perhaps the overriding fact of U.S.-Mexican relations is the inequality of power between the two neighbours. This imbalance lies in the starkly differing development of Mexico (and indeed Latin America generally), and the United States. As the former became subject to colonial *latifundia* and *hacienda* agricultural systems, and imperial metropolises, national elites and *international* capitalism plundered its resource wealth, the latter embarked upon a developmentalist programme of *national* capitalism, built squarely on an industrial base, competitive exports, and strong domestic markets.⁴ The resultant economic disparity was matched in the nations' relative political stability; in an indicative period between April 1824 and January 1846, Mexico had 30 presidential reigns (amidst continued Spanish and French intervention, and domestic coups and counter-coups) to the U.S.' orderly seven.⁵ The important state of Texas won its independence from Mexico in 1836, and Mexico was comprehensively defeated militarily by the United States in the 1846-1848 war, culminating in the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo through which Mexico ceded half of its pre-war territory.⁶ By the eve of the Mexican Revolution, Porfirio Díaz's 30-year⁷ repressive order, marked by economic growth, state violence, stark inequality and huge foreign capital investment and ownership, had fundamentally tied Mexico to U.S. influence, to the point one contemporary observer characterised it as a virtual U.S. "slave-colony".⁸

Thus the U.S.-Mexico relationship mirrors that of much of Latin America, as the U.S. assumed a position of economic dominance. In addition, Mexico endured the most far-reaching military intervention in the continent. This history of intervention is argued to have created a disdainful diffidence on the part of Mexico towards the U.S., and a fierce insistence on the sanctity of Mexican sovereignty in the national psyche, even at an official level.⁹ Further, the unfolding of the Mexican Revolution, as Dillon

⁴ Eduardo Galeano *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent* (Serpents Tail, 1971) p.115-116, 200-203

⁵ Monroe was at the tail end of his Presidency by 1824, Polk at the beginning of his in 1846, and Henry Harrison died 32 days into his tenure in 1841.

⁶ Jan Bazant *From Independence to the Liberal Republic* in Leslie Bethell (ed.) *Mexico Since Independence* (Cambridge University Press) p.15-22

⁷ Díaz effectively ruled Mexico from November 1876 until May 1911. The tenures of Méndez (two months in 1876-1877) and González (1880-84) were essentially puppet presidencies. Friedrich Katz *The Liberal Republic and the Porfiriato* in *ibid*, p.71-74

⁸ John Kenneth Turner quoted in Galeano *Open Veins* p.121

⁹ Enrique Krauze *Looking at Them* p. 49

and Preston put it, would set Mexico, “on a different course [...] from that of its Latin neighbours.”¹⁰ Characterising the relationship that emerged as one of “conflict” Domínguez and de Castro point to the tensions over Mexico’s 1917 nationalist constitution that claimed Mexican ownership for all resources in its territory.¹¹ Weintraub highlights the build-up and fall-out of Lazaro Cárdenas’ 1938 expropriation of foreign oil companies.¹² However it was during the Cold War that Mexico’s unique approach amongst Latin American countries to U.S. foreign policy is argued to have most obviously manifested itself. Preston and Dillon summarise that, “Mexico had [...] guarded its independence from Washington’s polarizing policies during the Cold War more zealously than most Latin nations.”¹³ Mexico did not receive the kind of security aid provided to almost every other Latin American nation, and often spurned U.S. policies, especially in Central America and Cuba.¹⁴ It also pursued a relatively independent developmental path based on nationalised companies, import-substitution-industrialisation (ISI), and large officially sanctioned workers unions, all fundamentally tied to its rather idiosyncratic one party system under the PRI.

However, following the Mexican economic crash of the early 1980s, it would seem a new era of bilateral cooperation has been ushered in, most visibly through increased economic integration and trade openness culminating in NAFTA. Following ostensibly the expectations of neo-Liberal or functionalist / neo-functionalist regionalisation theory, improved bi-national security ties, based officially in CN, have also improved, themselves culminating in the MI. It is this general narrative that informs much of the broad study on U.S. Mexican relations. Weintraub characterises the correlation that emerged through the knitted history of the two nations as one of diffident yet resentful dependency on the part of Mexico, and blasé dominance on the part of the United States.¹⁵ This is based largely of course on the realities of relative U.S. power, which is both resultant of its direct dealings with Mexico, and broader historical processes as it assumed the role of economic powerhouse, and then global superpower. Domínguez and de Castro also outline that same historical backdrop and the dominant nature of the United States, asserting that, “No political order in Mexico was able to survive without U.S. self restraint.”¹⁶ However, in spite of this power imbalance, they characterise the relationship as one subject to dynamic shifts. Whilst conflict marked the Mexican Revolution and its early institutionalisation, mutual “bargained negligence” prevailed for most of the Cold War era. We are now in an unprecedented era of cooperation indicated by the NAFTA and Mérida agreements, albeit one in which historical tensions remain.¹⁷

The idea that a fundamental shift in bilateral relations has occurred rests on the pervasive trope that Mexico was so deeply suspicious of U.S. intervention that

¹⁰ Julia Preston and Samuel Dillon *Opening Mexico: The Making of a Democracy* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2004) p.ix

¹¹ Domínguez and de Castro *The United States and Mexico* p.9

¹² Weintraub *Unequal Partners* p.27, p.92-3

¹³ Preston and Dillon *Opening Mexico* p.ix

¹⁴ Domínguez and de Castro *The United States and Mexico* p.39-41; 58-60

¹⁵ Weintraub *Unequal Partners* p.6

¹⁶ Domínguez and de Castro *The United States and Mexico* p.10

¹⁷ *ibid.* p.8-14

bilateral cooperation on any significant scale faltered. It is in this context that scholars are able to highlight the import of an unprecedented “turning point”¹⁸ or “major shift”¹⁹ in bi-national relations, whether we see this as happening through NAFTA and its preceding trade negotiations or, like Weintraub, with the abandonment by Mexico of ISI policies in the ferment of the economic crisis of 1982.²⁰ There is no doubt that major shifts have occurred in the relationship since the early 1980s. However, examining the historical record clearly shows that these phases cannot be as neatly compartmentalised as this perspective implies. Following the narrative that relations moved from ‘conflict to cooperation’, as Dominguez and de Castro put it, can obscure important and illustrative instances of cooperation prior to the broader shift represented by NAFTA. Moreover, as I go onto demonstrate, the conflictual or neglected nature of the relationship is often overplayed. Quite simply, the U.S. interest in Mexico’s political economy being stable and open to U.S. investment drove its behaviour towards Mexico. As Pastor contends, “The heart of U.S. concerns in Mexico is its political stability”.²¹ This project insists that this remains as true after NAFTA as it did prior to it, and asserts that we make the vital connection between political stability and the stable environment necessary for investment and capital accumulation. The relationship has not been particularly strained on this key level since the Revolution.

Thus, whilst these aims certainly caused friction in the years prior to, during and following the Revolution (of which more below), during the Cold War they were simply not threatened in anything like the same way they were elsewhere in Latin America. As Mason Hart has shown, following the revolutionary ferment the U.S.-Mexican relationship was reasonably benign; U.S. firms invested in Mexico respectful of the boundaries set in the Revolution years and it’s aftermath concerning national control of resources.²² Moreover, the PRI’s one-party state was just as concerned with political stability within its borders as the U.S. was during the Cold War, and actively sought to confront challenges to its rule from social dissidents (whether they were Communist sympathisers or merely promoting social change). Whilst at times it could be brutal,²³ and it undoubtedly had a pronounced authoritarian strength, the PRI was effective at maintaining stability and to some extent social cohesion because it also brought a lot of interest groups along with its nationalist project, co-opted many others, and achieved high levels of growth. Deep U.S. intervention in defence or promotion of strategic interests in this context was simply not necessary. What, then, *has* driven the historical changes in the relationship, most especially the undoubtedly huge change in the 1980s and 1990s? What provided the catalyst for this switch to interlocking economies, and the opening up of Mexico to

¹⁸ Domínguez and de Castro *United States and Mexico* p.14

¹⁹ David R. Mares & Gustavo Vegas Cánovas *The U.S.-Mexico Relationship: Towards a New Era* (Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, 2010) p.3

²⁰ Weintraub *Unequal Partners* p.6

²¹ Robert A. Pastor & George C. Casteñeda *Limits to Friendship: The United States and Mexico* (Vintage, 1989) p.8

²² John Mason Hart *Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico Since the Civil War* (University of California Press, 2002) p.403-431

²³ Especial mention here for the victims of Tlateloco massacre in 1968 linked to President Díaz Ordaz, and some of the actions sanctioned or tolerated in restive states like Chiapas and Guerrero, including the massacre at Acteal and Aguas Blancas in 1997 and 1995 respectively. These were (at least) linked to the local state authorities and not properly investigated by central authorities.

the free market, despite the fact that the realities of power between the two nations remained static? Why did Mexico begin to accept more security aid and influence from the U.S.? Many studies have suggested changes in the global economy and international system has driven the shift towards a more cooperative U.S.-Mexico relationship.²⁴ They also, as we saw in the Literature Review, take the issue of narcotics as *the* main driver on security integration.

In these accounts Mexican policymakers are argued to have ‘woken up’ to the economic realities of the era following the debt-induced crash of 1982, and explicitly moved to reform the economy towards a more free-market, less state-led model of growth, which, in conjunction with the end of the Cold War and the space it allowed for focus on new priorities, led inexorably to the NAFTA negotiations. There is a sense of an unproblematised, natural historical progression in these accounts, with little room for investigations of the actors and structural mechanisms propelling the shifts. Firstly we need to recognise that the strategic importance of Mexico to the U.S. jumped as Mexico made huge oil discoveries in the 1970s. We also need to understand that during the 1970s and 80s, as the U.S. itself helped *unleash* and *construct* globalised capital within a global crisis of capital accumulation. The U.S. acted more purposively towards Mexico, as part of a *wider* strategy of reestablishing U.S. structural economic power and control. That U.S. interests *within* Mexico were not severely threatened during the Cold War does not negate its grander strategic goals in sustaining its regional and global hegemonic position. It used the opportunity presented by Mexico’s profound economic crisis to open it up to *more* U.S. influence, investment, and trade in line with its globalised political economic strategy.

However, this integrative process did have specific bilateral effects. Whilst the U.S. has had particular strategic security concerns in Mexico for much of its history, the deepening of integration has led to a heightening of those concerns. Moreover, the EZLN political insurgency in Chiapas, although short-lived, alarmed U.S. policymakers, as did the political violence of the *Ejército Popular Revolucionario* (EPR), who stemmed from Guerrero but operated more widely and with some sophistication. The deepening of economic interests in Mexico was always likely to push increased security involvement, though a challenge remained in getting Mexico to accept it. However cooperation was given undoubted impetus by political instability in Mexico’s south. U.S. military aid to Mexico began to step in line with NAFTA and these events, and although a longer concern for CN intersected with this, it was not the primary rationale behind this security interaction in this period. However as drug-related violence began to snowball over the 20-year period following NAFTA, it too began to concern U.S. policymakers still overwhelmingly concerned with Mexico’s political economic stability.

²⁴ Domínguez and de Castro *United States and Mexico* p. 17-34, Weintraub *Unequal Partners*, Nora Lustig *Mexico: The Remaking of an Economy* (Brookings Institution Press, 1998)

U.S. - Mexican Relations: From Intervention and Expropriation, to NAFTA and Integration

Capital and Revolution: Bilateral Relations 1870-1945

Mexico and U.S. Expansionism

As we saw in Chapter Three, U.S. strategic interests have proliferated and deepened in Latin America and across the globe, and in effect this followed the expansionary logic of capital, and the profit-seeking of individual capitalists. We can see the role this private initiative and investment played in U.S. foreign relations in the influx of capital and capitalists into Mexico prior to the Mexican Revolution in 1910; railroad tycoons, investors, bankers, landowners, ranchers and so on (although the interests of some of them were often not limited to singular pursuits). Indeed Mason Hart has argued that what U.S. investors would do in Mexico would be repeated on a more global level, and that this is where U.S. economic expansion, led by this capitalist phalanx, cut its teeth.²⁵ As U.S. investors looked to Mexico and financed and armed the Mexican Liberal struggle against the short-lived French colonial regime of Maximilian (1864-1867), their actions dovetailed with the wishes of U.S. statesmen who were concerned about continued European involvement in the Western Hemisphere and expectant that Mexico would inevitably fall under growing U.S. sway, but whom were of course in the throes of their own civil war.²⁶ U.S. economic penetration increased throughout this period, and rail interests especially looked for opportunities to expand their networks into Mexico. However, U.S. investors and financiers were increasingly frustrated by the 'nationalistic' policies followed by the Liberal administrations of Benito Juárez (1867-1872) and even more so by Sebastián Lerdo (1872-1876).²⁷ By 1876 prominent U.S. capitalists were throwing their financial muscle behind the popular General, insurrectionist, and seasoned warrior Porfirio Díaz, and helped sustain and propel his rebellion to victory.²⁸ Díaz wooed a variety of influential members of the U.S. economic elite with promises of investment opportunity, stability (including stopping violent attacks on U.S. property in the border regions), loan repayments, and economic development based on a close relationship with U.S. capital. The U.S. state was both more cautious about Díaz and more bullish towards him, initially displaying its autonomy from investors excited

²⁵ Mason Hart *Empire and Revolution* p.3

²⁶ Mason Hart *Empire and Revolution* p.9-17; Walter LaFeber *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations Volume II: The American Search for Opportunity 1865-1913* (Cambridge University Press, 1993) p.7-9 LaFeber contends that Unionists such as William Henry Seward were reluctant prior to the U.S. Civil War to expand U.S. territory and thereby potentially boost slave states. They were also concerned with the 'stock' and 'character' of the Mexican people. Combined with the realisation that economic penetration promoted U.S. interests and influence without the need for political administration, this effectively ended significant U.S. territorial acquisitions.

²⁷ Mason Hart *Empire and Revolution* p. 59-60 These Liberal regimes also cancelled railroad concessions and loans, struggled with significant fiscal problems, and were eventually starved of credit, angering U.S. investors *en masse* and making it harder for them to secure political stability, including violence in the U.S.-Mexico border region and Díaz's insurrection.

²⁸ Díaz was a hero of the struggle against the French, playing a decisive role in the Battle of Puebla (origin of the *Cinco de Mayo* celebrations) and in later engagements. However he was a long time political headache for Benito Juárez and led a rebellion against him 1871-72, prior to his more successful rebellion against Sebastián Lerdo in 1876. See *ibid* p.60-68; John Mason Hart *Revolutionary Mexico: The Coming and Process of the Mexican Revolution* (University of California Press, 1987) p.105-128; Katz 'The Liberal Republic' p. 65-69

about Díaz and eager to recognise him, but as the General began to make good on his wider promises to the U.S. and its investors he was officially recognised as *de jure* sovereign in 1878.²⁹

Díaz's rule ushered in an unprecedented increase in American involvement in Mexico. The figures are quite remarkable. The driving force behind this change was the laying down of railroad track that inserted Mexico into the industrialised economy of the U.S. and, through its technological compression of space and time, opened up the Mexican economy to profitable investment. In 1867 there was only 50 kilometres (km) of track in Mexico. As Díaz welcomed U.S. railroad men this number grew exponentially. By 1884 there was 5,898km,³⁰ and by 1910 there was 24,560km. The vast majority of these various lines were owned by U.S. investors (including William Rockefeller, James Stillman, E.H. Harriman and son William, and the Gould family).³¹ As Hart states, the railway, "transformed economic relations" between the U.S. and Mexico, encouraging trade levels to hugely increase alongside profit margins, as Mexican raw materials and goods could be brought onto U.S. and global markets more efficiently. Bilateral trade thereby increased from \$15 million in 1880 to \$166,386,917 in 1910.³² By the dawn of the Mexican Revolution U.S. investors owned 130 million acres of Mexico's 485 million surface area - over 25% of its total (with 100 million acres owned by 154 companies or individual landholders) - whilst Mexico's indigenous rural smallholders of land saw their share drop from 25% to 2%.³³ As Mexico's economy was integrated increasingly into the U.S.' in the period between 1876 and 1910 there were profound implications for both countries, namely an unprecedented economic boom alongside a developing semi-dependency on the part of Mexico, and the creation and compounding of U.S. *strategic* interests in Mexico's political-economic stability and continuing integration with the U.S. market. It would also set the political and social context for the Mexican Revolution of 1910 as a combination of forces and classes sought to end Díaz's rule, and to very different extents and intents to change Mexico's political economic system.

Inevitable Revolution? The Porfiriato and U.S. Interests

LaFaber has discussed how U.S. systemic dominance in Central America helped create socioeconomic conditions of, "inevitable revolution".³⁴ Given the political economy and political system created by Porfirio Díaz, with hindsight we can see something similar at work regarding U.S. economic expansion into Mexico. Díaz dominated Mexican politics from 1876 until 1910, a period that became known as the *Porfiriato* in a literal representation of the absolute nature of his leadership. This era would witness unheralded economic growth and (on the surface, and relative to the

²⁹ At the Congressional level there was some disquiet at the open support of Texan businessmen and military men for Díaz's rebellion. At the Executive level the state delayed recognition in an effective act of political pressure, waiting to be assured that he would fulfill Mexico's international obligations and pressuring him at the border. See Mason Hart *Empire and Revolution* p.66-67; Schoultz *Beneath the United States* p.236-237; Peter V.N. Henderson 'Woodrow Wilson, Victoriano Huerta, and the Recognition Issue in Mexico' *The Americas* 44, 2 (1984) p.156; Katz 'The Liberal Republic' p. 68-69

³⁰ Of course the two puppet presidencies mentioned in footnote 7 occurred in this period.

³¹ Mason Hart *Revolutionary Mexico* p.131-135

³² *ibid* p.133

³³ *ibid* p.xi

³⁴ Walter LaFaber *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America* 2nd edn. (W.W. Norton & Company, 1993) p.13-18

period prior to his reign) political stability in Mexico. However the system began to break down in the latter half of the first decade of the 20th Century. Katz shows this was significantly due to the contradictions of Díaz's policies - namely, "concessions to foreign and especially US interests, rapprochement with Europe, and maintenance of internal stability at any price" - becoming too much to contain.³⁵ He summarises a period of genuine and unprecedented openness to foreign capital, and the foreign control of crucial sectors of the Mexican economy, including, "banking, mining, industry and transportation."³⁶ Rich in resources such as gold, silver and oil, Mexico began to rely on exports and became a, "classic example of an underdeveloped country producing raw materials that depended on markets in the industrialized North Atlantic."³⁷ Whilst this was by no means exclusively in U.S. interests, or controlled by U.S. capital,³⁸ U.S. firms had the majority of key holdings in Mexico, including "three quarters of the mines and more than half the oil fields".³⁹ Mexican railways were plugged into the U.S., rather than serving Mexico itself, and by 1911 those railway lines were aiding in the delivery of 75% of Mexico's exports to its northern neighbour.⁴⁰

We should resist the temptation of seeing Díaz as the nominal head of a U.S. colony, despite the undoubted influence of the more powerful nation. Firstly, the policies followed by the dictator were not just a meek submission to U.S. power, but an economic policy arrived upon by an educated section of the ruling class within Mexico, collectively known as the *científicos*. This group was aiming to advance Mexico through stages of historical development, in line with vogue theories of Social Darwinism, via free trade inspired economic growth.⁴¹ Secondly, both Díaz and this clique became uneasy about the undoubted dependency/dominance dynamic with the United States their open foreign investment policies had engendered, and actively attempted to diversify Mexican trading partners, especially in the latter years of the *Porfiriato*.⁴² However the *científicos* did encourage U.S. firms to extract profit from Mexican resources. This extraction served *both* the specific profit interests of the firms in question, and the need for key resources in the rapidly growing and industrialising U.S. economy as a whole. In turn, these U.S. interests dovetailed with both the high-minded interests of the ruling class and its significant *científico* element in Mexico (their technocratic right to rule, their mission to modernise the country

³⁵ Katz *The Liberal Republic in Bethell Mexico Since Independence* p.72, 109-110 & 117

³⁶ *ibid* p.81

³⁷ *ibid*

³⁸ The role of Great Britain and its companies, unsurprisingly, was significant in Mexico in this period especially, and France and Spain had continuing influence.

³⁹ Bill Weinberg *Homage to Chiapas: The New Indigenous Struggles in Mexico* (Verso, 2000) p.45

⁴⁰ *ibid*; Mason Hart *Empire and Revolution* p. 106-130

⁴¹ Various, *ibid*, Katz *Liberal Republic* p.84 and John Womack Jr. *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* (Thames & Hudson, 1969) p.10

⁴² Katz *Liberal Republic* p.121-122, Krauze *Looking at Them* p.54 Indeed Katz argues (p.103-104) that the *científicos* intellectual bias was towards economic integration with Europe, though in reality the U.S. emerged as the key player. Perhaps the temptations of self-enrichment were stronger than intellectual and policy consistency, and the brute facts of geography should not be discounted.

through growth)⁴³ and their baser class interests and the interests of other powerful class strata (quite simply self-enrichment and the consolidation of state power).⁴⁴

The broad economic policies followed by Díaz and his *científico* ministers had intense impacts on Mexican society. Between 1884 and 1900 the Mexican Gross National Product (GNP) grew at 8% annually, and the much sought after modernisation did occur in Mexico to a significant degree. However, it occurred very unevenly, both in terms of regions (where the North prospered over the South) and classes (where wealth was concentrated at the top of societal strata).⁴⁵ It also unleashed or affected powerful social forces, as important class formations were *created* or affected- a genuine middle class locked out of the political leadership, a small but growing industrial working class, and a more traditional agrarian ‘peasantry’ who lost out severely as land was transferred to private ownership on a massive scale.⁴⁶ After 1900, the economic ramifications of openness to foreign investment, the *científico* desire to place Mexico within a global economic regime, and the (perhaps unintended) semi-dependence on the U.S. coalesced in dramatic fashion. Foreign capital poured into the country between 1900 and 1910, tripling the amount invested between 1884 and 1900. The process and events that ensued are summarised by Katz:

This new wave of investments led to a sharp rise in prices, which was further accentuated by the decision of the Mexican government to give up silver and adopt the gold standard. The result of these developments was a sharp fall in real wages in many parts of Mexico. This tendency was accentuated when the boom gave way to one of the greatest economic crises that Porfirian Mexico had ever faced. In 1907-8, a cyclical downturn in the United States extended into Mexico, leading to massive lay-offs and reductions in wages.⁴⁷

Thus, the domestic social and economic context for revolution was set, as the contradictions of the policies of the *Porfiriato* proved too much to hold social stability in Mexico together. However, whilst there was a populist social and redistributive element within the Mexican Revolution, most purely personified by Emiliano Zapata and his Zapatista army (and to a lesser extent Francisco “Pancho” Villa and the Northern Division) it was also at its heart a political and power struggle *amongst* elites. Wealthy middle class landowners like Francisco Madero and Venustiano Carranza were key actors in the drama. They succeeded in decapitating the very top level of Díaz’s regime that had denied them a political voice (the leader himself and the *científicos*) with the crucial aid of Zapata and Villa’s more populist forces. However the more radical social and political-economic designs of the latter did not

⁴³ Womack *Zapata* p.10

⁴⁴ Gibler *Mexico Unconquered* p.34-37 describes how the *Porfiriato* period witnessed the acceleration of transportation projects, through foreign investment and capital, which opened up new markets and areas to further penetration of foreign and domestic capital. This led to a race for “land, water, and labor” (Womack *Zapata* p.15), which in turn led to a huge increase in communal land expropriation, to the benefit of large landowners (domestic and foreign, though agricultural policy was still profoundly nationalist) in terms of real estate, and dispossessed labor to work on it.

⁴⁵ Katz *Liberal Republic* p.74-75

⁴⁶ Stuart Easterling *The Mexican Revolution: A Short History* (Haymarket Books, 2012) p.4-40

⁴⁷ Katz *Liberal Republic* p. 109-110

come to pass. The Revolution ended as a violent and protracted power succession between the elites of the North.⁴⁸ Morton (following Gramsci) terms it a “passive revolution”, whereby crucial political economic arrangements shifted but largely remained intact.⁴⁹ After the initial Revolutionary moment and removal of Díaz, in essence Mexico descended into a civil conflict, although there is no doubt important elements of the socio-economic revolutionary politics swirling within this did survive intact through the brutal process and impacted upon policies and politics later on.

For its part the U.S. involved itself through its support for certain factions in the conflict. It acted as kingmaker by granting or denying international legitimacy and access to vital financial support through official recognition of any grouping that ascended to state power.⁵⁰ This afforded it some measure of influence in events that were to follow, though this was of course by no means total or always or completely successful. The presence of elite interests in the Revolution’s ferment, and the disparate, complex and often confusing progress of the fighting, allowed the U.S. space to intervene and *attempt* to shape its outcome in a manner broadly beneficial to U.S. interests. The overarching logic driving U.S. policy towards the Revolution was the securing of a *stable* political order in Mexico friendly towards the United States, and to the presence of U.S. capital in the country. It is important to note that the nature of U.S. intervention shows that the first element in this dual interest most animated successive U.S. administrations thinking, as a *prerequisite* for the second.⁵¹ Whilst there were myriad complexities to the interests, events, actors and actions involved, (as with any period in history) this dominant logic does come through in the U.S. administration’s actions.

The Mexican Revolution and U.S. Policy

The Mexican Revolution exploded into life after Francisco Madero and his allies had fermented a crisis and insurrection in northern Mexico in response to Díaz’s repression of more open elections, and his arrest of Madero and his supporters as they attempted to politically campaign in June 1910 (Madero escaped to San Antonio, Texas).⁵² Eventually through the revolutionary crisis and several military defeats Díaz would flee to Spain and Madero would be elected to the Presidency in October 1911. However Madero’s regime was embattled by instability generated by an insurgency centered in Morelos led by former revolutionary ally Emiliano Zapata,⁵³ the

⁴⁸ For an authoritative account, see Womack *Zapata* and also his chapter *The Mexican Revolution 1910-1920* in Bethell *Mexico Since Independence* p.125-201

⁴⁹ Adam David Morton *Revolution and State in Modern Mexico: The Political Economy of Uneven Development* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2011)

⁵⁰ See Henderson ‘Recognition Issue in Mexico’ on the importance of recognition generally, and especially to revolutionary figure General Victoriano Huerta (of which more below)

⁵¹ The U.S. Presidency switched from Taft to Wilson during the Mexican Revolution. Though following different methods to achieve it, they were both concerned with Mexican stability as an important site for U.S. capital and provider of cheap exports, notably petroleum. Wilson also had to consider a more global context however as war in Europe also began in 1914, and European powers, not least Germany, schemed within Mexico.

⁵² Historical detail here draws on various sources from already cited works.

⁵³ Zapata had supported Madero’s conflict with Díaz, but had grown disillusioned with what he saw as the new leaders overly modest proposals for agrarian reform. More radical changes on land ownership were the bedrock for Zapata’s ‘Plan of Ayala’ issued in late 1911.

continuing rebellion in the North by another erstwhile backer Pascual Orozco,⁵⁴ armed challenges from supporters of Díaz, and fiscal problems. Perhaps more importantly for Madero's eventual fate, there were also continuing attacks on U.S. economic interests in Mexico that alarmed the U.S. political leadership,⁵⁵ and the U.S. began to have serious doubts about the new regime's ability to assure the required stability. As the relative solidity of the *Porfiriato* crumbled and the Mexican elite turned against Madero,⁵⁶ Díaz's pithy quip that through removing him Madero had, "unleashed a tiger; let's see if he can tame it" was definitely answered in February 1913 during *La Decena Trágica*, as Madero was overthrown in a coup led by his former ally General Victoriano Huerta, and then killed alongside his Vice-President in captivity.⁵⁷

In one of many examples of the complexity of events in this period, the U.S. ambassador to Mexico, Henry Lane Wilson, appears to have sanctioned and even helped coordinate Huerta's coup, and was in definite support of the general.⁵⁸ However, much of his actions appear to be effectively independent of, rather than directed by, the U.S. government in Washington. U.S. President Taft had given Lane Wilson a lot of leeway in his posting, most concerned that U.S. economic interests were secured. Taft backed much of the pressure Lane Wilson was putting on Madero to improve stability and especially security for U.S. citizens and economic interests affected by revolutionary violence.⁵⁹ Katz suggests, based on German foreign cables, that there may have been official sanction to threaten intervention and other measures designed to "upset" - as in encourage the removal - of Madero.⁶⁰ As the President struggled to keep a lid on continuing violence from the more 'radical' factions within the revolutionary mix, and attacks on U.S. interests continued, Taft told Secretary of State Philander C. Knox that the Mexican leader was a, "dreamer", who was "unfitted to meet the crisis in the country of which he is President" and whom may require some "dynamite" to wake him up.⁶¹ However, in supporting a murderous coup there is no direct evidence Lane Wilson was doing anything but acting independently of official directives, albeit he was still trying to secure U.S. political-economic interests as he saw fit.⁶² Knox himself became increasingly distrustful of his Ambassador's

⁵⁴ Orozco was defeated by troops led by Victoriano Huerta in 1912. When Huerta claimed power in a coup in 1913 Orozco eventually agreed to support him and led missions against Huerta's Constitutionalist foes.

⁵⁵ For example Mason Hart *Empire and Revolution* p.276-278

⁵⁶ Friedrich Katz *The Secret War in Mexico: Europe, the United States and the Mexican Revolution* (The University of Chicago Press, 1981) p. 92-93

⁵⁷ LaFaber *American Search for Opportunity* p.223 The coup began as rebellion of those tied to the former regime, including Felix Díaz, Porfirio's nephew. Katz *Secret War in Mexico* p.95-96 Huerta's involvement as a traitor to Madero was decisive, and an accident of history, as he replaced loyal wounded General Lauro Villar as head of the armed forces.

⁵⁸ See Schoultz *Beneath the United States* p.240

⁵⁹ LaFaber *American Search for Opportunity* p.225

⁶⁰ Katz *Secret War in Mexico* p.92 According to the German minister to Mexico Taft was willing to intervene militarily at this point, but Secretary of State Knox was opposed. However he was willing to sanction the plan to 'upset' Madero. Cables from Knox himself suggest that Taft was more wary of intervention than Hintz suggests (*ibid* p.99)

⁶¹ Taft quoted in Easterling *Mexican Revolution* p.63

⁶² For example see Alan Knight *The Mexican Revolution: Volume 1 Porfirians, Liberals and Peasants* (Cambridge University Press, 1986) p.486; Katz *Secret War in Mexico* p.94, 99, 110

reporting.⁶³ Katz points out that Taft may have agreed with Lane Wilson's view that U.S. interests were served best by Madero's removal given his tacit support for the affair's outcome - Huerta as President. However, high-level involvement in or support of Lane Wilson's actions therefore remains a matter of historical uncertainty.⁶⁴

Indeed, the Republican President was wary of recognising coup-leader Huerta officially in the very final days of his tenure. Henderson suggests this was due to the bargaining power that would be retained with Huerta if he were made to anxiously wait on the U.S.' official recognition, important given the security for U.S. interests both Taft and his successor were aiming to achieve.⁶⁵ In addition the Zapata insurgency continued, and the landowner and governor of Coahuila Venustiano Carranza launched his own Constitutionalist insurrection against the new leader almost immediately.⁶⁶ When Woodrow Wilson moved into the White House in March 1913 he inherited a fluid, unstable situation. He was also suspicious of the actions and intentions of his ambassador, and the reports of the DoS. Sending his own reporters and emissaries to Mexico, Wilson sought to uncover the nature of Huerta's ascent, and Lane Wilson's part in it. His informants reported the Ambassador had played a decisive role in the coup. Wilson, shocked by the diplomat's actions, summoned him to Washington where the latter resigned after realising his case that Mexico's new leader should be officially recognised without delay was not winning through with his President.⁶⁷ In August 1913 President Wilson officially advocated neutrality in the ongoing Mexican 'Revolution' (a civil conflict by this point), which cut off arms supplies to Huerta. By April 1914 the U.S. was directly intervening in Veracruz to stop arms shipments to the Mexican regime in its fight against its rebels, and to destabilise Huerta's leadership credentials.

Why did Wilson follow this course? Henderson argues that the U.S. had fashioned and followed a policy of official recognition that should have kicked in fairly quickly in this instance, whereby Huerta would meet the conditions of a) control of the "machinery of the state", b) no significant opposition to his rule, and c) a guarantee to meet "international obligations" (debt repayments and a number of issues important to the U.S.). He further suggests that Huerta easily met the first, arguably the second (see below), and was moving towards the third, and therefore he should have been afforded *de facto* recognition under traditional U.S. approaches to such matters.⁶⁸ In addition, Lane Wilson had singled out Huerta as most conducive to guaranteeing U.S. economic interests in Mexico. Domínguez asserts Huerta was the revolutionary figure, "most favorably disposed towards U.S. investors". He therefore concludes that, "economic considerations" cannot explain Wilson's actions as much as Wilson's ideological commitments to self-determination and democracy and his revulsion at

⁶³ Katz *Secret War in Mexico* p.94-95

⁶⁴ Katz *Secret War in Mexico* p.112-113

⁶⁵ Henderson 'The Recognition Issue' p.161

⁶⁶ These forces called themselves Constitutionalist in reference to the Mexican constitution of 1857, which they felt could be restored.

⁶⁷ Mark E. Benbow 'All the Brains I can Borrow: Woodrow Wilson and Intelligence Gathering in Mexico, 1913-15' *Central Intelligence Agency Library: Studies in Intelligence* 51, 4 (2007)

<https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/vol51no4/intelligence-in-another-era.html> Accessed 08.05.14

⁶⁸ Henderson 'The Recognition Issue' p.163-175

the coup itself can.⁶⁹ However, the U.S. *did* arm Huerta for six months in 1913 in the hope he could impose order on the situation,⁷⁰ even as Wilson deliberated about recognising his regime and investigated the coup. As Henderson shows, during his vacillations Wilson came close to granting official recognition.⁷¹ In May 1913 the President drafted instructions to Lane Wilson that Huerta would be recognised if hostilities ceased and he called early elections. He repeated this in June and August making clear that Huerta should not be a candidate.⁷² Huerta refused despite the fact his fellow coup conspirator Felix Díaz *could* have participated.⁷³ This rebuff hardened Wilson's stance and he employed an arms embargo. However what sealed U.S. disapproval was in fact a *mixture* of elements, not just Wilson's distaste at Huerta's methods of claiming power. The General was indeed repugnant to Wilson's democratic ideals,⁷⁴ but just as importantly, he *did not bring the stability to Mexico the United States required*.

The Zapatista Rebellion centered around Morelos rumbled on, and those who were winning back land they had lost were never going to accept Huerta's power, which effectively represented "a *científico* counterrevolution"⁷⁵ and a return to the *Porfiriato* status quo. In addition the Constitutionalist forces of Venustiano Carranza and the populist forces of Villa had allied against the General and won several significant engagements in the North, denying a swift end to the conflict. Evidence shows that Wilson was aware of this and it factored heavily into his deliberations. On different occasions during press conferences he discussed the fact that Huerta did not control the territory he was meant to or claimed to, exaggerated his military victories, and even said that his government "can't last."⁷⁶ Meanwhile Wilson was receiving intelligence that instability was significant and Huerta could not bring it to an end.⁷⁷ His Secretary of State Jennings Bryan summed up the concerns in August 1913 when he wrote to his President that U.S. action was delayed by a lack of information, and, "by the desire to allow a reasonable time for those supporting Huerta to prove their ability - or inability to restore order and establish peace - they have now had nearly 6 months". Encouraging action, Bryan, stated the recognition option was, "indefensible on *both material and moral grounds*."⁷⁸

There is thus a very strong case that Henderson's recognition test of 'no significant opposition' was not met even prior to Wilson's personal moral misgivings, and stability remained elusive. As Raat and Brescia argue it is better to consider Wilson's

⁶⁹ Domínguez *Cold War* p.40

⁷⁰ Mason Hart *Empire and Revolution* p.502

⁷¹ Henderson 'The Recognition Issue' p.163-175

⁷² Arthur S. Link [ed.] *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson Volume 27, 1913* (Princeton University Press, 1978) p.435-436; 518

⁷³ Katz *Secret War in Mexico* p.107-108 Felix was Porfirio's nephew. Katz relates that immediately after the coup these two rowed bitterly over who would become President, perhaps showing the unrealistic element of Wilson's plan.

⁷⁴ Schoultz *Beneath the United States* p.241-243

⁷⁵ W. Dirk Raat & Michael M. Brescia *Mexico and the United States: Ambivalent Vistas* Fourth Edn. (University of Georgia Press, 2010) p.120

⁷⁶ Arthur S. Link [ed.] *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson Volume 28, 1913* (Princeton University Press, 1978) p.57-58; 141-142

⁷⁷ For example *ibid* p.27-34; 77-78

⁷⁸ *ibid* p.136 My emphasis.

“morality” as fused with his wider ideology.⁷⁹ As Knight points out, Wilson saw liberal government as “the best guarantor of political order”, and this would in turn be conducive to U.S. trade and investment.⁸⁰ Effectively Wilson was an early practitioner of the liberal grand strategy the U.S. would come to wholeheartedly adopt and employ during and after the Second World War. Rather than Wilson being led by his moral compass, his morality formed part of his decision-making process in trying to best secure the clear U.S. interests at stake in Mexico. Wilson and many in his administration did not trust that Huerta could guarantee long-term stability, and in fact there was a lot of evidence in Huerta’s military losses that this was indeed the case.⁸¹ As the beleaguered General made favourable overtures to Great Britain (and its oil companies) and Germany, Wilson moved from a stance of waiting and watching, diplomatic opprobrium, and failed cajoling to direct intervention through arms supplies to the Constitutionalist forces in February 1914, and then in April 1914 the launching of the Veracruz action, a planned occupation of the Mexican coastal port on a flimsy public pretence⁸² that sought to deny Huerta further arms supplies from Europe or elsewhere.⁸³

The allied Constitutionalist and Villaista / Zapatista forces were able to force Huerta’s abdication of power in July 1914, aided by the strength of U.S. armaments, at which point the Revolution more comprehensively splintered into a number of factions, based mostly around the big split between the Constitutionlists and the Villaistas / Zapatistas. Thus Wilson’s policy did not yield the desired result as the instability deepened. From hereon Wilson’s actions became based around supporting the faction most able to bring a close to the armed stage of the Revolution, stability to the nation, *and* thereby be conducive to U.S. economic interests. These latter interests were based around a political agreement through a, “conservative but reputedly popular constitutional restoration, an American loan to reform the foreign debt and fund a claims commission, and American financial supervision of Mexico’s economic development.”⁸⁴ As Womack points out these aims, “tallied well enough with the interests of the twenty or so large foreign and domestic companies” in Mexico.⁸⁵ Again though stability was the prerequisite for all else. Some in the U.S. therefore tentatively supported Villa in early 1915, before the military victories of Carranza’s Constitutionalist forces through 1915 convinced U.S. observers that he was the man

⁷⁹ Raat and Brescia *Ambivalent Vistas* p.120-121

⁸⁰ Knight *Mexican Revolution Vol. II* p.67-68

⁸¹ Henderson suggests that not recognising Huerta *generated* instability as the U.S. could not back him financially and militarily to counter Carranza and his allies. There may be some validity to this. Again though, arms *had* been provided for six months to no positive result for the U.S., and to say Huerta could’ve quelled the ongoing insurrection both benefits from not being definitively provable, and underestimates the opposition to him and the revolutionary social forces already unleashed by this point.

⁸² The intervention was justified as a response to a bizarre incident where U.S. sailors were very briefly jailed in Tampico and the local authorities failed to apologise in the formal manner the U.S. requested. However in reality it was in the immediate sense launched to stop a German rearmament ship for Huerta’s administration from docking at Veracruz itself. See Knight *Mexican Revolution Vol. II* p.150-153

⁸³ Womack *The Mexican Revolution* p.147-149

⁸⁴ *ibid* p.157

⁸⁵ *ibid*

to back to reestablish stability.⁸⁶ Mason Hart's meticulous research shows the U.S. helped arm Carranza and his Generals through Veracruz (whilst denying weaponry to Villa and Zapata), and that the force of these arms helped Carranza to defeat the Villaistas and Zapatistas.⁸⁷ Through official *de facto* recognition of the Carranza regime in October 1915, the U.S. was then able to *openly* back the Constitutionalists with arms and even through allowing Carranza's troops to move through the U.S.⁸⁸

It is important to note the relative autonomy of the U.S. state is highlighted through Wilson's policies in this period. Whilst we should consider the important role of foreign capital in Mexico, as Knight points out we should also not make the mistake of subsuming U.S. interests *as a state* to the interests of those foreign companies.⁸⁹ In a telling quote, Wilson bemoaned that, "I sometimes have to pause and remind myself that I am the President of the whole United States and not merely a few property owners in the Republic of Mexico."⁹⁰ The U.S. President resisted the more robust military intervention that some oil interests and other lobbying groups, especially the media, were lobbying for.⁹¹ No doubt partially influenced by his commitment to self-determination (within important limits, most especially concerning the right to decide domestic economic policies), and having duly noted the Veracruz intervention had initially united all revolutionary parties in proclaiming they would defend Mexico from the U.S., Wilson followed a more subtle path that attempted to gain a beneficial result for wider U.S. interests, rather than simply those of specific interests. Hence as war with Germany approached in 1916, both the U.S. and its European enemy were deliberately *destabilising* the nascent Carranza regime in Mexico to deny the other an ally; the interests of stability temporarily took a subordinate role to geostrategic concerns.⁹² There is also evidence to suggest the U.S. aimed to maintain some opposition to Carranza, and delayed his *de jure* recognition to maintain a stronger bargaining position with him on the wider matters of U.S. interest.⁹³

Mexico's Constitution and Revolution's 'End'

Following the passage of the Mexican Constitution on February 5th, 1917, U.S. policy again became more hardened. Article 27 of that Constitution, no doubt in large part inspired by the economic woes Mexico found itself in through years of war (despite a boom in oil exports), and by the Villaista / Zapatista element of the Revolution,

⁸⁶ New Secretary of State Robert Lansing's (in office June 24, 1915 – February 13, 1920) role is especially important in convincing his President and others of the wisdom of recognising Carranza, despite some misgivings about his willingness to cooperate with the U.S. See Louis G. Kahle 'Robert Lansing and the Recognition of Venustiano Carranza' *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 38, 3 (August, 1958) p. 353-372

⁸⁷ Mason Hart *Revolutionary Mexico* p. 14-15, 280-301

⁸⁸ See Knight *Mexican Revolution Vol. II* p.334, 343-345 This was what provoked Villa to attack Columbus, New Mexico in 1916, which itself led to the second direct U.S. intervention in the Revolution as General John J. Pershing led an unsuccessful nine month 'Punitive Expedition' into Mexico to capture or kill the infamous revolutionary.

⁸⁹ *ibid* p.69

⁹⁰ Quoted in Weinberg *Homage to Chiapas* p.52

⁹¹ *ibid*

⁹² Womack *The Mexican Revolution* p.173-175 In late 1916 Germany offered a pact to Mexico to try and establish a diversionary front in the Americas, details of which were contained in the infamous 'Zimmerman telegram'. For example see James Thompson *Making North America: Trade, Security and Integration* (University of Toronto Press, 2014) p. 77

⁹³ Kahle 'The Recognition of Venustiano Carranza' p. 366-369

“vested in the Mexican nation the ownership of the country’s natural resources, specified as Mexican all titles to land and water, and mandated the expropriation of large estates and their subdivision into small farms and communal landholdings.”⁹⁴ The U.S. response given this grave threat to the interests to its oil and mining companies and the possibility for a greatly less favourable Mexican political economy was relentless pressure on the Carranza government through diplomatic and economic channels.⁹⁵ This ramped up following Germany’s defeat in Europe, and Carranza had to ‘negotiate’ with the U.S. and concede that Article 27 would not be retroactive upon U.S. company property.⁹⁶ The pressure was heightened still further as Carranza was assassinated in May 1920 during the last stage of counter-revolution in Mexico - the victory of the Sonoran industrial-agricultural section of the Mexican elite. Carranza was undone by resisting the leadership campaign of this group, expertly led by Revolutionary General Álvaro Obregón.⁹⁷ The United States once again had the ace card of non-recognition of whatever leading group emerged. The Sonorans were therefore keen to emphasise their openness to foreign capital investment, and their obligations to the international community to repay foreign debts.⁹⁸

Hence, ten years of Revolutionary struggle ended with the baton of power passed from one section of the Mexican elite to another. Through an extremely complex period U.S. interests were largely secured by its end, albeit elements of the Mexican Constitution were troublesome, and it had taken some time and policy flexibility. Though U.S. ‘intervention’ was often quite limited, and events in Mexico itself were of course the main driver of outcomes, U.S. co-option and influence at points was indeed important in the eventual conclusion. This left much intact in terms of the commanding heights of Mexican politics and economy, which of course suited the U.S., whilst undoubtedly sweeping away the Porfirian order and increasing the influence of particular social classes.⁹⁹ Womack suggests, “There was nothing historically definitive in [the Revolution’s] principal economic and social results: the same big companies existed as before, plus a few new ones, relying more heavily than ever on American markets and banks.”¹⁰⁰ However, there was a dialectical element to the Revolution also, as although it was sparked by an intra-elite political spat and ended in continued elite rule, it was also militarily reliant at crucial stages on populist social forces, led by Villa and Zapata, that were made certain promises. In conjunction with broader development processes in Mexico following the revolutionary period, these forces would come to complicate matters for Mexican elites, and U.S. interests in Mexico. As Gibler contends, “The elite were able to gain national control over the masses [...] but they could not hold power without making

⁹⁴ Womack *The Mexican Revolution* p. 176

⁹⁵ The U.S. oil companies in Mexico also actively plotted with Mexican co-conspirators about directly removing Carranza. *ibid* p.183

⁹⁶ *ibid* p.187

⁹⁷ Knight *Mexican Revolution Vol. II* p.490-493

⁹⁸ However, the specific dispute around Article 27 rumbled on until 1923, of which more below.

⁹⁹ Whilst the agrarian class as represented by Zapata were defeated militarily they remained important. Also something we have not mentioned is the importance of a small industrial working class who threw their support behind the Constitutionalists and who would become a key part of the post-revolutionary Mexico. Of course the Revolution and its results were also the outcome of the already increasing influence of these classes brought about in large part by Porfirian policies, and related growth and industrialisation.

¹⁰⁰ Womack *The Mexican Revolution* p.199

concessions.”¹⁰¹ This would come to be important in bilateral relations in the years leading up to WWII.

Post-Revolution Relations

The Sonoran elite who assumed control of the Mexican state following the Revolutionary period were interested in reconstruction and stability for Mexico. However from Obregón’s election in November 1920 to the beginning of the rule of Lazaro Cardenas in 1934 Mexico still moved through five Presidents.¹⁰² Obregón himself faced revolt from former ally Adolfo de la Huerta in 1923-24.¹⁰³ He was assassinated after winning a second election in 1928 in an event linked to the extremely brutal Cristero Revolt that had broken out in 1926, in which tens of thousands died.¹⁰⁴ There was also an attempt on the life of President Ortiz Rubio in 1930. Nonetheless, whilst politically the Mexico ruled by the Sonorans and their allies¹⁰⁵ remained fractious and violent (perhaps understandably after such an upheaval), its economic strategy remained relatively stable, and whilst Obregón was especially keen to include Mexico’s newly influential class formations in the political project (on the terms of the elite), the economic arrangement that followed the Revolution was not radically different to that which preceded it. As Knight states, “Under the Sonorans, the country [Mexico] remained an exporter of primary goods and a major recipient of foreign investment”. He contends that the, “nationalist provisions of the Constitution lay fallow” as Mexico remained under the leadership of the conservative Elias Calles (President 1924-1928) in the *maximato* period (1924-1935) of post-revolutionary reconstruction.¹⁰⁶

The sheer level and proximity of U.S. economic power and influence can be seen in generating this result to a degree, although the Sonorans themselves were dedicated to a conservative and cautious path based around capitalist development and their continued rule. The retroactivity of Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution remained a sticking point for bilateral relations. The Wilson and Harding administrations delayed recognition of the Obregón Presidency until he acceded to certain preconditions in the Bucareli Accords, agreed to in 1923. This agreement included a provision that U.S. oil companies would not be subjected to retroactive action in terms of their existing holdings in Mexico as long as they pre-dated 1917, and the company had completed a, “‘positive act’ (such as erecting drilling equipment)”.¹⁰⁷ Once Obregón had been recognised, the U.S. actively militarily supported him with aid and equipment to meet the challenge of de la Huerta.¹⁰⁸ President and *jefe maximo* Elias Calles seemed to reverse course on Bucareli initially, making more stringent demands on U.S. oil companies (and those from elsewhere). However the status quo of the Accords

¹⁰¹ Gibler *Mexico Unconquered* p.42

¹⁰² However, the specific dispute around Article 27 rumbled on until 1923, of which more below.

¹⁰³ Obregón feared that Villa was planning to enter this revolt on de la Huerta’s side, and had him assassinated in 1923. Raat and Brescia *Ambivalent Vistas* p.129-129

¹⁰⁴ Jean A. Meyer *The Cristero Rebellion: The Mexican People Between Church and State 1926-1929* (Cambridge University Press, 2008)

¹⁰⁵ I use the term Sonarans collectively for ease; the group was not all geographically tied to the state.

¹⁰⁶ Knight *Mexican Revolution* p.517

¹⁰⁷ Raat and Brescia *Ambivalent Vistas* p.129

¹⁰⁸ *ibid* p.145

returned by 1927, and in 1929 the U.S. again provided material support to Calles as he faced his own rebellion.¹⁰⁹

Thus much of the Revolution's nationalist fervour and radicalism was dulled in these years. However the revolutionary Constitution remained intact as a potential framework for a different agenda in Mexico. In conjunction with the conditions set as Mexico entered into an economic crisis that preceded the more global crisis of 1929, this would allow a Mexican leader with a distinctly more nationalist and progressive development strategy the political options and space to challenge the status quo on his ascent to power in 1934. Lázaro Cárdenas would put in place some of the stalled revolutionary hopes and dreams through a series of far-reaching policies. One of these, the expropriation of foreign oil companies and nationalisation of Mexico's oil industry, would appear to have directly challenged U.S. interests. How did the U.S. react?

Lázaro Cárdenas, Oil Expropriation and its Impact for U.S. Interests in Mexico

The state expropriation of the holdings of foreign oil companies under the leadership of Lázaro Cárdenas in 1938 is seen as a high point of Mexican nationalism and its ability to exercise independence from foreign influence, most especially the United States. Sparked by an industrial dispute between foreign companies and the recently formed *Sindicato de Trabajadores Petroleros de República Mexicana* (STPRM) oil workers union, a failed attempt to arbitrate between the sides by the Mexican government ended in expropriation on March 18th, 1938¹¹⁰ (still a national holiday in Mexico). Lustig, referring to the legal and institutional basis of the expropriation provided by Article 27 of the 1917 Constitution, cites Cárdenas' actions as an example of, "the extent to which the Mexican government can exercise its constitutional powers."¹¹¹ Weintraub contends it provides an illustrative instance of the U.S. pushing its domineering approach to Mexico too far, forcing Cárdenas into an act of resistance.¹¹² The nationalised petroleum sector remained largely intact even through the opening of the Mexican economy in almost every other area since 1982 (including a unprecedented number of privatisations).¹¹³ Recent legislation to open the industry to foreign investment sparked fierce debate amongst Mexico's political class,¹¹⁴ and amongst the population for whom it was a source of pride.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁹ *ibid* p.155, 145

¹¹⁰ Alan Knight 'The Politics of the Expropriation' in Jonathan C. Brown and Alan Knight (eds.) *The Mexican Petroleum Industry in the Twentieth Century* (University of Texas Press, 1992) p.91-92

¹¹¹ Lustig *Remaking of an Economy* p.103

¹¹² Weintraub *Unequal Partners* p.27 Weintraub refers to a longer period of conflict over the issue of oil between the Mexican and U.S. governments. As we shall see I slightly disagree with his analysis.

¹¹³ See Dag Macleod *Downsizing the State: Privatization and the Limits of Neoliberal Reform in Mexico* (The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004)

¹¹⁴ The Calderón and Peña Nieto administrations, seeking to encourage private involvement in the state oil company Pemex, introduced a series of reforms in recent years. Adam Thomson 'Pemex Approves Incentive-based Oil Contracts' *Financial Times* (November 25th, 2010)

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/fa632a2c-f8b2-11df-b550-00144feab49a.html#axzz1Cov9ByTM> Accessed 02.11.01 U.S. Energy Information Administration 'Mexico's Energy Reform Seeks to Reverse Decline in Oil Production' <http://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.cfm?id=16431> Accessed 02.07.14

Accessed 02.07.14 However these debates were sufficiently overcome near submission for reform to pass, see Chapter Five for more detail.

¹¹⁵ Weintraub *Unequal Partners* p.83, 149 Polls showing large opposition to foreign influence in the oil sector are cited. This goes some way to explain the large protests against the recent reforms that

However, notwithstanding the importance of this event, both symbolic and ‘actual’, the “politics of the expropriation” were a good deal more complex than allowed in short summaries or popular nationalist mythologizing.¹¹⁶ A detailed look at the oil expropriation helps reveal the continuing importance of foreign capital and resource extraction to U.S.-Mexican relations *and* that whatever this importance, U.S. interests writ large do not equate to the interests of its companies or various capitals. It also provides an example of the agency of the Mexico state, and the import of internal social, class and political relations within Mexico determining events. It is important from the outset to recognise that the expropriation has to be seen as very much a product of class relations and a shifting political climate in Mexico under Cárdenas. The President has variously been seen as an enactor of the social causes of the Revolution, a radical aberration who went far beyond those revolutionary goals, and a clever politician of the elite, setting in place the inflexible institutions and nationalism that would sustain the emergent one party state in Mexico for the next sixty years whilst guaranteeing popular support.¹¹⁷ The truth probably lies in a composite of the first and last readings; Cárdenas put in place significant land reform programmes as well as proving to be more sympathetic to labor in industrial disputes, but this shored up his personal support in the country (which was essential in the early days of his Presidency as he fought off the challenge of the previously dominant and right-wing Elías Calles), and coincided with the creation of many of the state instruments that would corral social forces and movements to support of the state and the various guises of the emergent PRI.¹¹⁸

Regardless of his intentions, Cárdenas and his supporters and ministers within the emergent party deliberately unleashed, co-opted or represented new or previously subsumed social forces and classes within Mexico, including the growing industrial proletariat, one contingent of which were the freshly organised oil workers.¹¹⁹ Preceding and consequent Presidents and their ruling allies within the party system deliberately dampened or even crushed the aspirations and power of these same social forces and class formations, in favour of others. Through his nationalist and inclusive policies, again whatever they were designed to do,¹²⁰ Cárdenas was able to largely end the hangover violence of the Revolution and begin to institutionalise one-party rule. Within the PRI, the balance of social forces and class factions within Mexico was mirrored, and actualised in policies, in intra-elite struggles amongst Mexico’s

Mexico has witnessed. See Shannon Young ‘American Media Misses the Story on Mexican Oil Reform’ *Texas Observer* (February 10th, 2014) <http://www.texasobserver.org/american-media-misses-story-mexican-oil-reform/> Accessed 02.07.14; Al Jazeera ‘Mexico Energy Reform Sparks Mass Protest’ *Al Jazeera* (February 1st, 2014) <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/americas/2014/02/mexico-energy-reform-sparks-mass-protest-2014218747733878.html> Accessed 02.07.14

¹¹⁶ Knight *Politics of the Expropriation*

¹¹⁷ Knight *Cardenismo* p.245, and, for examples of the latter reading, Weinberg *Homage to Chiapas* p.57-58 and Gibler *Mexico Unconquered* p.43-44

¹¹⁸ The PRI started life as the PNR (*Partido Nacional Revolucionario*), then became the PRM (*Partido de la Revolución Mexicana*) before the PRI itself was formed in 1946.

¹¹⁹ For an overview, see Knight *Cardenismo* p.255-277

¹²⁰ Once more, seeing self / elite / party interest in them does not mean there was also not a coeval progressive element.

ruling class.¹²¹ The oil expropriation occurred when the balance and aims of Mexico's ruling elite were shifted to the left politically and consequently the interests of labor and the large agrarian population were more robustly represented. This ability to reflect, co-opt and utilise social currents within Mexico would prove vital to the longevity of the developing PRI state. As Preston and Dillon have stated, the party was, "largely unencumbered by doctrinal commitments, making it exceptionally adaptable."¹²² This in fact gave it a stabilising ability not matched elsewhere in much of Latin America.

However at this juncture one of the undesirable results of the Revolution for those interests, Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution, combined with the shifting political and social balance in Mexico and led to the removal of its oil companies and the closure of the petroleum sector to outside investment. If the interests of its capitals and the extraction of key resources such as oil are so integral to U.S. thinking with regard to its Mexican neighbour, why was this situation allowed to develop, and why was the nationalisation allowed to occur successfully? The answer lies in the historical contingencies faced by U.S. planners, but also tell us much about the nature of U.S. interests in Mexico, and the U.S. state. Thus, the U.S. response to the expropriation was far from muted,¹²³ but is also fell short of the far-reaching, definitive reaction desired by both U.S. and British oil companies,¹²⁴ and indeed the reaction expected by the British government.¹²⁵ The oil companies were obviously concerned with pure bottom-line profits, but were also extremely worried about what kind of precedent an uncontested and successful nationalisation in a producer country could set, and the reactions it could elicit elsewhere. This also stimulated British government concerns, and the continued cheap supply of petroleum on the eve of potential conflict in Europe sharpened this alarm and triggered an angry response.¹²⁶

These elements were by no means unconsidered by the U.S. government. The DoS, under Secretary Cordell Hull, was particularly hawkish on this issue, whilst the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) were circulating reports of Cárdenas' latent pro-German outlook.¹²⁷ However they were specific elements amongst many others. Myriad factors were involved in the setting of U.S. policy, including President Roosevelt's personal antipathy towards oil companies, his emphasis on promoting a 'Good Neighbour' policy with Mexico, a wider and older effort to encourage a 'Pan Americanism' between the United States and Latin America, and the clique within the administration and policy circles who favoured such a conciliatory approach, not least

¹²¹ *ibid* p.251 Knight however states that intra-elite struggles "coincided" with country-wide struggles, whereas I place the emphasis on them representing those struggles, and those struggles becoming a tool for the elite, rather than overwhelming them.

¹²² Preston & Dillon *Opening Mexico* p.53

¹²³ Initially a boycott of Mexican petroleum, and suspension of silver purchases from Mexico (which were absolutely vital to the Mexican economy) was put in place.

¹²⁴ Knight *Cardenismo* p.285, Weinberg *Homage to Chiapas* p.58

¹²⁵ Lorenzo Meyer *The Expropriation and Great Britain* in Brown & Knight *Mexican Petroleum Industry* p.155-157

¹²⁶ George Philip *The Expropriation in Comparative Perspective* in *ibid* p. 176

¹²⁷ Schoultz *Beneath the United States* p.306-307 Interestingly the British were compiling reports on Cárdenas' "revolutionary socialism" (Meyer *Expropriation and Great Britain* p.155) leading one to the conclusion it was not so much his political or ideological stance that was concerning U.S. and British officials, just simply his more populist approach and moves against the dominance of foreign capital.

U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Josephus Daniels.¹²⁸ The response to the expropriation began to shift from its initial stress on confrontation, to one that was more accommodating of Mexico's fundamental right to expropriate, as long as sufficient compensation was provided for those companies affected. However what really set the die in favour of an eventual acceptance of the expropriation was the impact of the impending Second World War.

Macleod succinctly summarises the import of the brewing global conflict on U.S. policies towards the Mexican expropriation, "The Roosevelt administration was not in a position to push Mexico too hard on behalf of U.S. petroleum companies. The need to secure the southern border as well as the need for raw materials [oil, but also others such as silver that would be affected by a protracted dispute] would force the United States to adopt a more conciliatory approach."¹²⁹ There was no doubt that the fear of an Axis bridgehead in Mexico was at the forefront of U.S. planners minds, and that this possibility, however unlikely, was not impossible, as Mexico began supplying Italy and Germany with petroleum in the context of a boycott elsewhere.¹³⁰ However, to state that the U.S. government was 'forced' to accept Mexican expropriation by international events is too simplistic. Notwithstanding the other elements at play (Pan Americanism, the Good Neighbour policy) we have already seen above, the U.S. administration was also *actively* following principles of non-intervention that would come to underpin the liberal order *they* would construct following WWII.¹³¹ The dispute was not fully settled between the U.S. and Mexico until November 1941. Two months previously Roosevelt had publicly expounded the norms that would govern the international order the *U.S.* would come to guarantee in the British-American Atlantic Charter, a skeletal precursor framework to the United Nations (UN). Hence the historical global context no doubt played a crucial determining part in the eventual U.S. response that rejected the specific interests of the oil companies in favour of wider geostrategic expediencies.¹³² However there was also significant agency within the higher echelons the U.S. administration to follow certain broad policies and an emergent wider strategy within this context.

U.S. military cooperation grew through World War II. As Raat and Brescia show the U.S. clearly saw Mexico as important to its strategic interests prior to this. Alongside military support, albeit limited, plans were in place to militarily secure ports and oil and coal fields if necessary, and these were only removed in 1946. Politically radical groups from left and right inside Mexico were infiltrated, and intelligence assets reported on labour relations, troop movements, the Mexican Communist Party, and

¹²⁸ Various Philip *Expropriation in Comparative Perspective* p.174-177, Knight *Cardenismo* p.285-286, Schoultz *Beneath the United States* p.283, 306-307

¹²⁹ Macleod *Downsizing the State* p.56

¹³⁰ Meyer *Expropriation and Great Britain* p.158 Indeed, there were fascist sympathies within Mexico's elite in the 1920s and 30s, represented by the former President and *jefe máximo* Elias Calles and his clique, who dominated this era prior to Cárdenas rule. Purportedly, when Cárdenas had Calles arrested in 1936 prior to deportation, he was found in bed flicking through *Mein Kampf* (Knight, *Cardenismo* p.256)

¹³¹ A similar argument is followed in Meyer *Expropriation and Great Britain* p.155-156

¹³² Even the previously intransigent Cordell Hull would grow tired of the lobbying of oil companies that continued even as war approached, and signed the eventual inter-governmental agreement without their approval (Knight *Cardenismo* p.286, Schoultz *Beneath the United States* p.307)

others.¹³³ However the global conflict created the conditions for U.S.-Mexican security cooperation on quite a large scale. Mexico entered into an alliance with the U.S. and Allied forces and declared war on the Axis powers following the sinking of Mexican tankers by German submarines. The U.S. and Mexico also made mutually favourable agreements for vital raw materials from Mexico (including opium as a derivative for morphine, necessary of course in combat). The U.S. helped create a Mexican airforce who saw service in the Philippines. The Bracero Program was undertaken, whereby casual labourers from Mexico would be granted temporary admission to the U.S., helping the U.S. to overcome the U.S.' labour shortage during the war, and beyond (it only ended in 1964). In effect we can see this wartime induced cooperative relationship as the end of the Revolutionary period and its immediate fall-out. It ended with a sufficiently friendly regime in place in Mexico, and U.S. interests *largely* secured.

Economic Entente: Bilateral Relations 1945-1978

Mexico Under the PRI

Mexico's social balance shifted again at the end of Cárdenas' tenure. Disproving some of the more disparaging analysis that characterise him one-dimensionally as a party man,¹³⁴ the economic and social policies he followed elicited a real backlash within Mexico's inflation-hit middle class, and business and capital interests in the country also agitated for change. By building a power base on the left, the President had stirred opposition on the right.¹³⁵ This recalibration of social forces was mirrored by a power struggle within the ruling party. Cárdenas' successor, Avila Camacho, would shift Mexico back to a more business-friendly, conservative environment, overseeing a, "decline of agrarian reform, the curtailment of workers control, renewed stress on private enterprise and commercial agriculture, the dynamic growth of private and foreign investment (and of profits at the expense of wages), accommodation with the Church and the elimination of Socialist education."¹³⁶ Thus the balance between the interests of capital and labour tilted back towards capital, and this coincided with an increasingly close military and economic relationship with the U.S. in the ferment of WWII. Alemán Valdés continued in this vein, though he added personal enrichment and corruption to PRI politics, a tradition taken up with gusto by his party in subsequent years.¹³⁷

From this point to the early 1970s Mexico's economy underwent the 'Mexican Miracle'; sustained, steady economic growth. This was certainly based substantially on an ISI development model and investment in infrastructure projects. However the conception of Mexico as simply a closed, corporatist space suspicious of foreign ownership does not stand up to scrutiny.¹³⁸ Instead we should see the Mexican economy in this period as a compromise between U.S. and Mexican capitalist interests. As Mason Hart summarises:

¹³³ Raat and Brescia *Ambivalent Vistas* p.144-148

¹³⁴ Gibler *Mexico Unconquered* p.42-45

¹³⁵ Knight *Cardenismo* p.289-293

¹³⁶ *ibid.* p.302

¹³⁷ Preston & Dillon *Opening Mexico* p.54

¹³⁸ Weintraub *Unequal Partners* p.45-46 Also see Stokes and Raphael *Global Energy Security* p.205 for a critical presentation of this argument.

During the 1940s the role of Americans in Mexico moved from the lost ownership of productive properties to an overwhelming domination of bi-lateral trade and high technology. [...] The Americans also adapted to greater control of their private enterprises by the Mexican government. The nationalism of the Cárdenas era had demonstrated that the Mexicans wanted control of their resources, and the U.S. elites preferred *cooperation to confrontation*.¹³⁹

As a result of this cooperative relationship, U.S. interests in having a secure space for capital accumulation in Mexico were realised, within important parameters. By 1970 *half* of Mexican industry was foreign owned, with U.S. firms heavily represented.¹⁴⁰ Although Mexico trod its own development path, based on the macro-scale on ISI-led development, the U.S. was satisfied enough on economic questions to deal with Mexico. Moreover this qualified economic entente was backed up by the political stability that Mexico largely ‘enjoyed’. For much of the Cold War period Mexico’s political stability appeared more robust than many of the Latin American countries to its South. Thus, Mexico has been seen as somewhat of an outlier within ‘Latin America’ with regard to Cold War relations. The empirical case for this ‘uniqueness’ is a strong one. Mexico had no defence treaty with the U.S. during the Cold War, was the only country outside Cuba in Latin America not to host a U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group, and did not accept large amounts of U.S. military assistance.¹⁴¹ Mexico did not vote to expel Cuba from the OAS in 1962.¹⁴² During the late 1970s/early 1980s President Portillo, boosted by the discovery of large Mexican oil reserves¹⁴³ and the fact that the U.S. was actively diversifying its supply of crude oil from a Middle East dependence to other sources, including of course Mexico,¹⁴⁴ openly challenged U.S. wishes and hegemony in Central America by providing political and military support to the Sandanistas in Nicaragua, and political support to the insurgents in El Salvador.¹⁴⁵ Why did the U.S. tolerate this in the Cold War context?

Conflict, Cooperation and the Cold War

U.S. strategy in the Cold War (and indeed before and beyond the ‘superpower conflict’) helps us better understand the Cold War relationship between the U.S. and Mexico. The U.S. was concerned with the suppression of alternative development models in Latin America, whether they were *communist or not*. U.S. actions in Latin America were less about countering Soviet advances or the spread of ideological communism, and more about the containment, often the violent containment, of social movements or forces who sought to encourage nationalistic economies, threatened

¹³⁹ Hart *Empire and Revolution* p.403

¹⁴⁰ Weinberg *Homage to Chiapas* p.61

¹⁴¹ Domínguez and de Castro *The United States and Mexico* p.39 There was however a limited International Military Education and Training (IMET) partnership, with a 1000 trainees between 1950-1980. More details below.

¹⁴² *ibid.* p.55

¹⁴³ Peter H. Smith *Mexico Since 1946: Dynamics of an Authoritarian Regime* in Bethell *Mexico Since Independence* p.376

¹⁴⁴ Weinberg *Homage to Chiapas* p. 61

¹⁴⁵ Domínguez and de Castro *The United States and Mexico* p.41

direct U.S. economic interests, and, most importantly, provided “the threat of a good example” i.e. a nationalistic economy that succeeded without U.S. influence, and was not primed for U.S. economic needs. Through widespread military training - especially in COIN - and support for U.S. friendly regimes, the U.S. sought to achieve these goals across Latin America.¹⁴⁶ How does Mexico, which developed a nationalist economy, rejected U.S. influence over its military, and *aided* social movements in Nicaragua and El Salvador, fit into this strategy? Whilst it is of course a complex case, we should consider the overriding fact that the *Mexican economy categorically allowed U.S. capital and business interests to operate in the country during the Cold War*, and that *stability was largely secured through the power of the PRI and its ability to oversee economic growth*.

However, there are some interesting cases within the larger backdrop that can illuminate the relationship in this period a little beyond generalisations. In terms of its aid to Central American insurgent movements, we should contextualise this phenomenon with Mexican support for U.S. backed COIN operations in Guatemala and its *agreement* with the U.S. to secure its southern border from Guatemalan insurgent penetration, revealed in released documents now presented by the National Security Archive.¹⁴⁷ Relatedly, during the Dirty War of the late 1960s/1970s, Mexico turned its military against *the exact social / political forces U.S. military aid was helping states repress across Latin America*.¹⁴⁸ The U.S. did not need to provide *extensive* military aid or engage in COIN in Mexico to protect a capitalist model attuned to U.S. economic/strategic interests. The Mexican state did it of its own volition. There are even some diffuse links to wider U.S. Latin American strategy in the Cold War. During the formative years of the Dirty War, the Mexican military and PRI leadership recognised the need for a revamp of the military’s preparedness for internal insurgency. As rebel movements began to bubble up in the countryside and Mexico’s cities, inspired by a number of issues,¹⁴⁹ - the political and military powers in Mexico actively planned to meet these challenges in a forthright manner.¹⁵⁰

Part of this planning involved the deliberate *but Mexican-led* adoption of the U.S. devised ‘Low Intensity War’ strategy, one that had been taught at the School of the

¹⁴⁶ This is, of course, the revisionist account of the Cold War, based on conceptualizing the U.S. as an imperial force in Latin America. For an excellent and useful summary, see Doug Stokes *America’s Other War: Terrorising Colombia* (Zed, 2002) p.21-25 Also see Ruth Blakeley *State Terrorism and Neoliberalism: The North in the South* (Routledge, 2009); Michael McClintock *Instruments of Statecraft: U.S. Guerrilla Warfare, Counter-Insurgency, and Counter-Terrorism 1940-1990* (Random House, 1992) As these sources make clear this went beyond Latin America.

¹⁴⁷ Kate Doyle *Mexico’s Southern Front: Guatemala and the Search for Security* (National Security Archive, November 2nd, 2003) <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB100/index.htm>

¹⁴⁸ For a useful introduction and summary see Doyle *The Dawn of Mexico’s Dirty War: Lucio Cabañas and the Party of the Poor* (National Security Archive, December 5th, 2003)

<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB105/index.htm> & *Human Rights and the Dirty War in Mexico* (National Security Archive, May 3rd, 2003) <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB89/>

¹⁴⁹ To include the Cuban Revolution, similar movements across Latin America, political isolation and alienation from the PRI regime amongst Mexico’s youth, and the grinding inequality and poverty of the countryside in states like Guerrero.

¹⁵⁰ Jorge Luis Sierra Gúzman ‘Armed Forces and Counterinsurgency: Origins of the Dirty War (1965-1982)’ in Fernando Herrera Calderón and Adela Cedillo [eds.] *Challenging Authoritarianism in Mexico: Revolutionary Struggles and the Dirty War 1964-1982* (Routledge, 2012) p.182-197

Americas since 1961.¹⁵¹ As Guzmán relates, the Pentagon described this strategy as comprising the political, paramilitary, psychological and economic measures that would be required to aid in the defeat of ‘subversion.’¹⁵² In contemporary military terms, this is a COIN strategy.¹⁵³ The adoption of this strategy was followed by the regime of Díaz Ordaz’s (1964-70) decision to send 306 officers to military training academies in the U.S., to prepare for rural COIN especially.¹⁵⁴ Whilst by no means was this responsible for some of the brutal tactics in *La Guerra Sucia*, it was not an insignificant development given the established wisdom that Mexico’s leadership and military was wary of U.S. involvement in its internal affairs.¹⁵⁵ As would be repeated throughout Central America in the coming years on a far wider and more violent scale (with much more direct U.S. involvement), paramilitary forces were formed and utilised as part of Mexico’s COIN effort. One paramilitary group, *Los Halcones*, were trained by, “lieutenants and captains in the armed forces” whom, “used what they learned from taking courses on counterinsurgency techniques in the United States, Japan, and France.”¹⁵⁶ However to reiterate the key point, Mexico undertook this effort on its own terms for its own ends. Crucially, though, the U.S.’ key interests were not threatened through this period.¹⁵⁷

However the bilateral issue of narcotics *did* become pertinent. Whilst the Mexican military had been engaged in domestic crop (marijuana and opium) eradication efforts since the 1930s,¹⁵⁸ it was through an increased focus on CN during Nixon’s presidency that the U.S. was able to pressure the Mexican government into undertaking significant domestic CN efforts through its military. This was largely achieved through “economic blackmail” via the closing of the US-Mexico border to trade for 20 days in 1969.¹⁵⁹ One Nixon advisor referred to this action as, “an exercise in international extortion, pure, simple, and effective, designed to bend Mexico to our will.”¹⁶⁰ Over the coming two decades, Mexico would dedicate increasing numbers of troops to CN missions in drug producing states, including the launch of Operation Condor in the 1970s. According to one study, by 1985 20% of the Mexican military was engaged in CN efforts.¹⁶¹ Thus an absolutely crucial aperture for the U.S. in being able to influence Mexican security forces began to be prized open. This of course would have large ramifications.

¹⁵¹ *ibid* p.156; The School of the Americas became infamously associated with torture and human rights repression across Central and South America during the Cold War. See Ruth Blakeley ‘Still Training to Torture? U.S. Training of Latin American Military Forces’ *Third World Quarterly* 27, 8 (2006) It has since become the Western Hemisphere Institute for Hemispheric Security, and it trains Mexican recruits, as we will see in Chapter Six.

¹⁵² Guzman ‘Armed Forces and Counterinsurgency’ p.156

¹⁵³ United States Headquarters Department of the Army *Counterinsurgency* FM 3-24 (Washington D.C., Dec 2006) p.1

¹⁵⁴ Guzman ‘Armed Forces and Counterinsurgency’ p.186

¹⁵⁵ Domínguez & de Castro *The United States and Mexico* p.39-40

¹⁵⁶ *ibid* p.188

¹⁵⁷ Mason Hart *Empire and Revolution* p.402-431

¹⁵⁸ Camp *Armed Forces and Drugs* p.8

¹⁵⁹ Richard Craig cited in Domínguez and de Castro *United States & Mexico* p.42 The border closing was named Operation Intercept.

¹⁶⁰ G. Gordon Liddy quoted in Kate Doyle *Operation Intercept: The Perils of Unilateralism* (The National Security Archive, 2003) <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB86/>

¹⁶¹ Camp *Armed Forces and Drugs* p.9

The Prelude to and Aftermath of the 1982 Economic Crisis: From the Volcker Shock to NAFTA

Whilst the post-war era can appear rather stilted in terms of U.S.-Mexico relations, the period between 1970 and 1982 would prove to be dynamic and formative. It sets crucial context for Mexico's opening up to the U.S. and the signing of NAFTA, and therefore the deepening of U.S. interests in Mexico which underpins the contemporary security agenda. The systemic crisis in the global capitalist economy that rumbled through the 1970s and early 1980s affected Mexico and the U.S. in distinct ways. In the U.S., a balance-of-payments issue mounted as a result of increased global competition, especially from Japan, and the costs of the Vietnam war. The oil shock of 1973 further added to U.S. economic woes. In Mexico, the slowdown in the U.S. economy affected the Mexican economy adversely as private enterprises began to struggle and fail. However, a series of huge oil discoveries through the 70s would allow the Mexican state the economic flexibility to prop up these private businesses and extend state ownership.¹⁶² It also increased U.S. interests in Mexico, as Mexico primarily exported its new-found oil to the U.S. Exports jumped from 94,200 barrels per day to 562,500 between 1975 and 1980.¹⁶³ Mexico underwent a boom as a result of its enhanced production of petroleum and gas, with GDP growth spiking at around 9% by the end of the 1970s. However, inflation spiked along with growth,¹⁶⁴ and much of the state investment and spending that drove the economy and made up for the private downturn was based on international borrowing, as banks scrambled to lend to the 'newly' petroleum rich country.¹⁶⁵ The Mexican national debt rose from \$6.8 billion to \$58 billion between 1972 and 1982.¹⁶⁶ When the bust came, it came spectacularly, as the Mexican economy crashed precipitously in 1982 and struggled throughout the rest of the 1980s.

There is a sense in much of the traditional analyses that the 1982 economic crisis persuaded Mexican policy-makers of the obsolescence of the internal developmentalist approach. Weintraub contends that the ruling party had an epiphany: "it realised that whatever benefits earlier economic policies had, and these were in fact substantial, they were no longer suitable."¹⁶⁷ Coerver and Hall suggest that this was part of region wide "disillusionment" with state-led ISI models on the part of Latin American policy-makers,¹⁶⁸ whilst Domínguez and de Castro summarise that as a result of the regional economic collapse in the 1980s (of which Mexico was the first major victim), "nearly all Latin American governments readjusted their economic strategies."¹⁶⁹ The Mexican crash that inspired this realisation, according to Weintraub, was brought about, "by a mixture of just about all Mexico's development policies." These included an over-reliance on newly discovered oil exports which of

¹⁶² David Harvey *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford, 2005) p.99

¹⁶³ The number kept rising up to 1985 Gabriel Székely 'The Oil Industry and Mexico's Relations with the Industrial Powers' in Brown and Knight *The Mexican Petroleum Industry* p.257-261

¹⁶⁴ Inflation and growth overviews based on real GDP growth and consumer price inflation. See Weintraub *Unequal Partners* p.12, 49

¹⁶⁵ Macleod *Downsizing the State* p.50, 58-59

¹⁶⁶ Harvey *Neoliberalism* p.99

¹⁶⁷ Weintraub *Unequal Partners* p.6

¹⁶⁸ Don M. Coerver & Linda B.Hall *Tangled Destinies: Latin America and the United States* (University of New Mexico, 1999) p.188

¹⁶⁹ Domínguez & de Castro *United States and Mexico* p.xii

course fluctuated in price, and an under-reliance on other exports as, “a consequence of the Mexican policy of keeping its distance from the U.S. market,” the use of foreign debt financing (i.e. borrowing) to stimulate the economy rather than opening up to FDI, and the Volcker shock in the U.S. which left Mexico paying more interest on its borrowings.¹⁷⁰ Preston and Dillon also lay the blame at the Mexican government’s door, specifically that of Lopez Portillo, who presided over a splurge in public spending based on the façade of oil wealth, and who made a series of bizarre decisions as the economy began to crumble with tumbling oil prices, not least nationalising the banks.¹⁷¹

Whilst these analyses offer important insights into undoubted mistakes made at the ‘commanding heights’ of the Mexican economy, they offer a rather reductive view of events that *only* considers internal factors. As Lustig has pointed out, Mexico at this time faced a very unfavourable external environment with regards to borrowing, oil prices, the slowdown in global demand in the 1970s and a host of other factors not entirely in Mexico’s control. In addition, she argues that those who point to Mexico’s ISI development policy as having a role in the crash are conflating 30 years of development policy with a period of, “macroeconomic mismanagement.”¹⁷² Gowan shares a similar analysis, but crucially adds the *agency of U.S. policymakers* to effect change within the structure of the global economy. The Mexican crisis occurred within the context of explicit U.S. state moves to reassert economic dominance through a “Dollar Wall Street Regime” (DWSR). The Gold Standard was abandoned, currency exchanges pegged to the dollar, and petrodollars resulting from U.S. induced higher oil prices were recycled through Wall Street’s private banks and onto the economies of the South in the form of hugely increased lending.¹⁷³ Mexican leaders, unwisely, took the opportunity to borrow heavily to prop up the private sector and extend social spending. The new “DWSR” caused increased volatility for the global economy, especially in the developing world, which suddenly had to contend with fluctuating exchange rates not pegged to an internationally agreed standard. It also gave the U.S. state and private capital a far greater stake in a number of domestic economies. The Volcker shock that followed the high levels of U.S. lending, which again was explicitly about the U.S. attempting to restructure its economy by killing inflation and disciplining labour internally, served to also help push Mexico into a debt crisis.¹⁷⁴

International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) loans followed the crash, which were dependent on huge economic restructuring more in line with the ‘economic realities’ of the era. This ‘economic reality’ can be broadly described as the applicability of neoliberalism; suppression of inflation through monetarist policy, opening the economy to foreign direct investment (FDI), more openness to mobile finance capital, the rollback of the public sector and state enterprises (and therefore

¹⁷⁰ Weintraub *Unequal Partners* p.28-29 How this is an *entirely* Mexican development policy is not explained.

¹⁷¹ Preston & Dillon *Opening Mexico* p.95-96

¹⁷² Lustig *Remaking of an Economy* p.1-12

¹⁷³ Peter Gowan *The Global Gamble: Washington’s Faustian Bid for World Dominance* (Verso, 1999) p.19-22

¹⁷⁴ Harvey *Neoliberalism* p.99 U.S. recession and high oil prices formed the other elements of a trifecta that pushed Mexico into recession.

national debt), and so on. These policies would serve to greatly benefit capital interests, those of financial and political elites internationally and domestically, and *U.S. interests* over the coming decades.¹⁷⁵ This was a process undertaken across Latin America (with echoes today in continuing ‘structural adjustment programs’ (SAPs). In sum, for Gowan this entire development could be summarised as one where:

[...] a successful development *strategy* [ISI] faced sudden, large challenges to macroeconomic *tactics* produced by the *orchestrated* chaos of the new international monetary-financial regime. The macroeconomic tactical failure led to terrible currency and financial crises and these enabled Washington to impose a new strategic model on these countries. This model was then claimed to be a superior strategy to an earlier failed strategy.¹⁷⁶

Whilst Gowan is instrumentalist in his thinking here, skirting over the fact that the U.S. state *itself* was in crisis management mode during much of this period,¹⁷⁷ there is no doubt we need to consider this wider context when we come across arguments that suggest this was an internal Damscene conversion on the part of Mexican economists. Although more ad-hoc than Gowan states, the U.S. efforts in this period cleaved to the continued need to secure its interests, based on its primacy and through hegemony, within financial markets and beyond. Where we can see stronger instrumentalism on the part of the U.S. state is its role in overseeing the innovative SAP that conditioned loans and ‘help’ on extensive economic restructuring.¹⁷⁸ For the first time the WB provided loans based on conditionality, and this conditionality helped open Mexico up to U.S. and globalising capital through Mexican membership in the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT).¹⁷⁹ However this SAP was not a complete imposition upon the Mexican state, as a resurgence of U.S.-Mexican capital class collusion unseen since the Porfiriato played out. The U.S. trained *tecnocratas* that served as Presidents from ’82 (de la Madrid, Salinas and Zedillo) were the modern day equivalent of the *científicos*, orchestrating the reinvigorated welcome of greater U.S. investment and private ownership through *huge* deregulation and privatisation in a bid to stimulate growth and pay off Mexico’s debts.¹⁸⁰ That this process also happened to personally enrich them and a number of political cronies also highlights the links between the *científicos* and the *tecnocratas*. This group would also be key to the passage of NAFTA, not least President Salinas de Gortari.¹⁸¹

Narcotics Again?

Regarding the relationship on narcotics between the U.S. and Mexico in this period, U.S. pressure and the focus on CN in source and transit countries such as Mexico was increased in 1986 through Reagan’s designation of drugs as an issue of National

¹⁷⁵ See *ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ Gowan *Global Gamble* p.49

¹⁷⁷ Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin *The Making of Global Capitalism: The Political Economy of American Empire* (Verso, 2012) p.214-216

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.*, Harvey *Neoliberalism* p.98-104

¹⁷⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ Harvey *Neoliberalism* p.100 Macleod *Downsizing the State*

¹⁸¹ It is an interesting counterfactual to consider what would’ve happened in U.S.-Mexican relations had Cuatehomoc Cardenas (Lazaro’s son) won a Mexican election he appeared to be leading before a mysterious massive computer glitch in 1988.

Security through National Security Decision Directive 221. The Certification progress enacted through Congress (whereby aid would be withheld from countries deemed not to be cooperating with the 'War on Drugs') also ramped up. The Mexican administration of Miguel de la Madrid responded largely as US pressure had intended; in 1987 Madrid followed Reagan in classifying drugs as an issue of Mexican national security.¹⁸² The Mexican government began to allow DEA agents to operate in Mexican territory. The 1985 abduction, torture and murder of one such agent, Enrique Camarena, which had a level of state complicity regarding Mexico's highly corrupted internal intelligence agency (and possibly beyond)¹⁸³ provoked a second round of border closing.¹⁸⁴ The DEA was apoplectic with Mexican recalcitrance to extradite or apprehend individuals it suspected of involvement who enjoyed political, and even effectively rendered two such individuals to the U.S. The steady application of pressure - the threat of unilateral U.S. border actions and the certification power vested in Congress - thereby loomed over all Mexican CN action.¹⁸⁵

NAFTA, the Zapatista Uprising, Narcotics and U.S.-Mexican Security Relations
Whilst NAFTA is of course crucial in contemporary U.S.-Mexican relations, this is more so because it was the high-point of a longer term *shift* that culminated in NAFTA, 'locking in' Mexico's structural changes. I have covered how NAFTA has created and deepened U.S. interests in Mexico's political economy in Chapter Three. Thus here I highlight the relationship between NAFTA and improving U.S. Mexican *security relations*, especially with regard to the renewal of political violence in Mexico in the 1990s most (in)famously associated with the EZLN. Following the structural adjustments solidified through NAFTA, U.S. interests in Mexico's openness were now being met on a level not seen since the *Porfiriato*. This meant that U.S. interest in how Mexico secured its political economy from potential threats, especially threats to the political economic structure and the investment climate, grew considerably. In conjunction with NAFTA, the U.S. upped its security aid to Mexico to unprecedented levels. Under the administration of Presidents Zedillo and Fox US-Mexican cooperation ostensibly based on CN increased¹⁸⁶, even as the US continued to engage in unilateral actions,¹⁸⁷ and the violence and corruption associated with the

¹⁸² Freeman and Sierra *Militarization Trap* p.277

¹⁸³ Camarena had been involved in the discovery of *Rancho Bufalo*, a huge marijuana plantation (it is estimated up to 7000 people worked on the site) that appeared to be operating with the knowledge or cooperation of authorities in the region, including, allegedly, the CIA itself. There are also posited connections to the (latterly uncovered) conspiracy to arm the Contras in Nicaragua. Charles Bowden *Down by the River: Drugs, Money, Murder and Family* (Simon & Schuster, 2003); Paul Kenny and Mónica Serrano 'The Mexican State and Organized Crime' in Paul Kenny; Mónica Serrano and Arturo Sotomayor, (eds.) *Mexico's Security Failure: Collapse into Criminal Violence* (Routledge, 2011) p.36-37

¹⁸⁴ Domínguez and de Castro *United States and Mexico* p.42 Weintraub *Unequal Partners* p.78

¹⁸⁵ See Freeman and Sierra 'The Militarization Trap'; Camp *Armed Forces* for useful summaries

¹⁸⁶ For an overview, see *ibid.* p.270-287, Domínguez and de Castro *The United States and Mexico* p.43-49

¹⁸⁷ Including state based border interdiction Operations Gatekeeper, Hold the Line and Safeguard (which were primarily anti 'illegal' immigration operations) and Operation Casablanca, a covert DEA detail that chased the money generated by the drug trade in Mexico itself, without official Mexican knowledge. Mexican banks were unsurprisingly implicated, but the full import of the investigation may have been lost as it was shut down prematurely to avoid further Mexican government ire. Domínguez and de Castro *The United States and Mexico* p.45, 48

drug trade also steadily rose. Aid and training for military and federal forces from the U.S. to Mexico also increased in this period, undergoing a dramatic spike from 1995. Again, this was officially justified within a CN rubric. Equipment, mostly in the form of helicopters or helicopter equipment, was provided. Mexico sent a total of 1,488 personnel to U.S. military academies between 1981 and 1995. Then, in 1997 and in 1998, more than 1,000 GAFEs [*Grupo Aeromóviles de Fuerzas Espaciales*], an elite ‘CN’¹⁸⁸ special forces unit, went through training in the United States in *each year*,¹⁸⁹ surpassing in number the trainees for the *entire previous fifteen years*. Whilst drugs were of a concern to U.S. administrations and populations,¹⁹⁰ I contend this increasingly close relationship between Mexico and the U.S. in military affairs is related to Mexican political and social conflicts that followed NAFTA, especially the Zapatista insurgency.

Domínguez and de Castro acknowledge this “closer” military relationship between the US and Mexico in the wake of the Zapatista uprising and the Mexican military’s subsequent COIN campaign.¹⁹¹ They state, however, that despite these increases, “the United States did not wish to be drawn into counterinsurgency operations.”¹⁹² Where connections do seem exist between U.S. aid and Mexican COIN, analysts have contended that Mexico has used the aid in a manner unintended by U.S. planners. For example, Domínguez and de Castro assert that the U.S. has “found it difficult to control the Mexican military’s absorption of equipment and training that was delivered for counter-narcotics efforts.”¹⁹³ In other words, US CN training and aid was inadvertently (from the U.S perspective) being diverted into Mexico’s internal security battles with political dissidents and insurgents. This notion is reinforced through their explicit distinction between training provided under the CN budget, and that provided through ‘military’ budgets at locations such as the (then) School of Americas. Foley expresses a similar sentiment. Whilst pointing out that US CN training *could* be applied in COIN contexts and situations, and that the lack of Congressional oversight of such training programs leads to concerns over *how* they are being applied, he is concerned that training provided to Mexico maybe being used in ways not consistent with, “U.S. foreign policy aims”, and further that, “foreign militaries are able to use military assistance and training in ways not foreseen under the terms of U.S. military assistance law.”¹⁹⁴ Therefore, any link between U.S. training and Mexican COIN operations is seen as *unplanned* and even undesirable. There is *prima facie* evidence that such a conception is plausible, as the U.S. gave instructions that Mexico could not use a donation of 73 UH-1H helicopters in operations outside of a CN capacity.¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁸ See below for a discussion of this dual role.

¹⁸⁹ Freeman and Sierra *Militarization Trap* p.280

¹⁹⁰ It seems both Nixon and Reagan had a personal antipathy towards drug use. We should also consider the role of domestic societal pressure to ‘do something’ about drugs, and the institutional growth and influence of important agencies such as the DEA.

¹⁹¹ Domínguez & de Castro *United States and Mexico* p.49

¹⁹² *ibid*

¹⁹³ *ibid* p.51

¹⁹⁴ Michael W. Foley *Southern Mexico: Counterinsurgency and Electoral Politics* (United States Institute of Peace, January, 1999) p.5

¹⁹⁵ Domínguez and de Castro *The United States and Mexico* p.47, Freeman and Sierra *Militarization Trap* p.279 Mexico later returned the helicopters, claiming they were ineffective, in a further example that not all matters in the burgeoning bi-national security relationship ran smoothly.

However, there is also strong evidence that the uptick in training and aid provided by the US to Mexico *was* significantly inspired by the Chiapas rebellion and similar nascent movements across the Mexico, and indeed *was designed to aid* Mexican forces in their response to it. Declassified defence intelligence documents show that the U.S. DoD had been monitoring increasing levels of political violence and military deployment in Chiapas for some time prior to the official start of the uprising in 1994.¹⁹⁶ These documents also show that as the conflict continued and fitfully flared from this point, US officials were concerned about the Mexican military's ability to successfully fight the rebels on a number of fronts. As Doyle summarises, "U.S. defense experts observed that the military had no real counterinsurgency capabilities, did a poor job gathering intelligence and failed to comprehend the crucial role of public relations in 'selling' their operations to the Mexican people."¹⁹⁷ The distinction between US CN and COIN aid and training should also be questioned in light of the fact that GAFE troops, explicitly *publicly* trained in the US under a CN rubric in 1997-1998 as Freeman and Sierra point out,¹⁹⁸ were deployed to Chiapas in the wake of the Acteal massacre¹⁹⁹ of civilian indigenous villagers by state-backed paramilitaries in 1997.²⁰⁰ That a force envisioned as, "combat ready shock-troops to attack drug cartels"²⁰¹ should be deployed to a region in the midst of low-intensity but bloody insurgency and COIN should not come as a surprise when considering what GAFE were trained in at U.S. military locations such as Fort Bragg;²⁰² "*helicopter assault tactics, explosives, rural and urban warfare, drug interdiction and operational intelligence and planning*".²⁰³ This, as Foley pointed to above, is easily applicable to COIN situations. Further, Weinberg cites a telling report from a Fort Bragg magazine concerning the GAFE forces trained at that location and their operations in Chiapas and Guerrero (the latter being the birthplace and operational base of the EPR insurgent group) which makes "no mention of counterdrug training."²⁰⁴

We can therefore begin to offer a conception of the relationship between CN aid and training, COIN aid and training, and the Chiapas rebellion. In the DoD concern about Mexico's COIN capabilities as the Chiapas rebellion brewed and erupted, and the dual use of ostensibly CN trained GAFE troops in both CN and COIN operations, can we trace deliberate US COIN policy at work in Mexico? We can certainly fundamentally refute a neat distinction between CN and COIN training. Literature emanating from influential academic institutions from within the defence community

¹⁹⁶ Kate Doyle *Rebellion in Chiapas and the Mexican Military* (The National Security Archive, 2004) <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB109/>

¹⁹⁷ *ibid*

¹⁹⁸ Freeman and Sierra *Militarization Trap* p.279

¹⁹⁹ Again, despite denials on the part of successive Mexican governments and the conclusions of Mexican investigations, US defense intelligence documents show significant evidence of Mexican military support of paramilitary groups in Chiapas in this period. See Kate Doyle *Breaking the Silence: The Mexican Army and the 1997 Acteal Massacre* (The National Security Archive, 2009) <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB283/index.htm> We will explore these issues further in subsequent chapters.

²⁰⁰ Weinberg *Homage to Chiapas* p.172-173

²⁰¹ Freeman and Sierra *Militarization Trap* p.279 Quote from Washington Post.

²⁰² Weinberg *Homage to Chiapas* p.173, 357

²⁰³ Freeman and Sierra *Militarization Trap* p.279 My emphasis.

²⁰⁴ Weinberg *Homage to Chiapas* p.357

in this period blurs the lines between drugs and COIN. Weinberg points to several examples of this phenomenon in his discussion of U.S. involvement in the COIN campaign in Chiapas.²⁰⁵ One U.S. Army report concluded that, “the distinction among drug traffickers, arms traffickers, other heavily armed criminal groups and bandits, or insurgents is often not a clear one” and that therefore, “military support to law enforcement will certainly be directed against a variety of targets.”²⁰⁶ We should also consider the activities of the EPR here too, who announced their arrival in 1996 with attacks on security forces in Guerrero, and then a sophisticated bombing campaign across Oaxaca, Guerrero, Puebla and Mexico City.

What we can say is that the U.S.’ interests in Mexico’s political stability increased as its economic integration with Mexico grew, from the discovery of huge Mexican oil reserves, through Mexico’s structural readjustment, and into the NAFTA era. We can also note that political instability increased in the wake of NAFTA through two genuine insurgency campaigns which had concerned the U.S. Finally, U.S. security aid to Mexico jumped significantly from its previously relatively low levels, and that aid was undoubtedly multi-purpose in its potential use. The threat that politically violent groups posed to the foreign investment, free-trade, export led political economic model in Mexico was real. An adviser to Chase Bank reported that the Mexican government would, “need to eliminate the Zapatistas to demonstrate their effective control of the national territory and security policy”.²⁰⁷ By no means a formal announcement of U.S. *state* policy, the instability provoked by the EZLN and EPR spooked investors and thus activated *core U.S. interests*. Increasingly into the 2000s, drug violence would begin to do the same. In addition, 9/11 would expose the vulnerability of the North American economic space. Security integration was set to grow far further than anything previously seen in U.S.-Mexican relations.

Conclusion

There is a clearly traceable focus on U.S. interests in Mexico based around the twinned concerns that the U.S.’ neighbour be as open as possible to U.S. investment and economic interchange, and be as politically stable as possible, even with the complex tumult of bilateral history. These interests were largely met during the *Porfiriato* on the surface, but their contradictions splintered the stability in Mexico and resulted in twenty years of violence and fractiousness, despite strong U.S. interventionism. A Mexico emerged that to a certain extent kept the U.S. at arms length, whilst never really threatening those key interests of economic interaction and political stability, even when Mexico nationalised its oil reserves (perhaps partly as a result of favourable geopolitical timing). Gradually a political-economic entente prevailed in an era of mutual post-war economic growth. With the onset of Mexico’s economic crisis however, a particular political configuration within the U.S. state, and wider global economic trends, led to the U.S. seeking to open up Mexico once more to deep U.S. involvement. This process that culminated in the “locked in” openness of

²⁰⁵ *ibid* p.355-358 There are other examples through the text.

²⁰⁶ Graham H. Turbiville Jr. quoted in *ibid.* p.356

²⁰⁷ Mason Hart *Empire and Revolution* p.452-453

NAFTA arrangement, fixing Mexico to a development course that was open to U.S. investment and trade and relied heavily on exports to the U.S. market.

The results of this were Janus-faced. The events leading up to the passage of NAFTA, and the agreement itself, have solidified a genuine hegemony in both North America and with regard to U.S.-Mexican relations. Whilst core interests in Mexico have been largely secure post World War II -as Mexico achieved its own political economic stability and was open to U.S. capital whilst following its own developmentalist path - the economic and political ructions associated with the rise of 'neoliberalism' resulted in an even more favourable arrangement for the U.S. Mexico has bought into a agenda that interlocks with U.S. preferences and interests. However, this has in turn inspired greater U.S. concern for the stability of Mexico's political economy in the fashion I discussed in Chapter 3, as the coeval link between economics and security began to inspire greater U.S. intervention to ensure Mexico's stability through military aid. Much of this is in line with continuous trends within wider U.S. grand strategy based on the spread and maintenance of stable open markets. Nonetheless, the regional dynamo of NAFTA and contingent events have also *pushed* U.S. policy in quite unique regional directions. Perversely, but not unsurprisingly from a historical-materialist perspective, destabilising forces have appeared or grown up with the passage of NAFTA, and economic interdependence has also revealed interdependent vulnerabilities. More happily for the U.S., the Mexican state is keen to protect the hegemonic status quo, and has begun to more deeply tie itself to U.S.-led security arrangements within the NAFTA-zone, girding U.S. regional hegemony further still. I turn now to the policy results of these developments, as I explore the concept of NAFTA-land Security.

Chapter Five

The Security Prosperity Partnership and the Logic of NAFTA-land Security

Introduction

I discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 how NAFTA has deepened U.S. interests in Mexico's political economy and North America's continued openness. In this chapter I reveal how 9/11 and drug violence highlighted the vulnerabilities of this economic integration. Both the security problems themselves, *and the initial U.S. reaction to them*, began to challenge that openness and have adverse effects on the North American economy, and, thereby, U.S. interests within it. Thus more innovative solutions were required. These began to coalesce around the ideas of layered security, risk assessment, smart borders, security or border projection and, specifically within North America, a regional security perimeter. The disparate ideas came together under the SPP whereby a security layer would be added to the economics of NAFTA. In addition, and less publicly, the U.S. began building on increases in military-to-military interaction post-NAFTA in trying to find ways to open up Mexican security forces to further U.S. influence, with the aim being to export the same security concepts to Mexico's security forces. Whilst the basis for increased security involvement had already been set by the integrative processes leading up to and springing from NAFTA, the impact of 9/11 made it a matter of urgency. As Mexico's drug-related security crisis worsened over the contemporary period, it too began to animate policymakers in the direction of regionalised security in North America, due to its increasing threat to Mexican stability and therefore North America's political economy. This chapter briefly explores these processes, filling out some of the work already undertaken in the theory chapter with empirical detail.

Again, the evidence presented here is both facilitated by the historical materialist framework employed and the understandings of U.S. interests and hegemony that have been fleshed out previously, and builds further evidential support for their pertinence in this case. This chapter begins to affirm that the U.S. is *above all* motivated by a concern for the *political economic stability* of Mexico both singularly and as a crucial component of the North American economy. It also speaks to how political economic developments within economic integration display a dark side, through interdependencies that are vulnerable to transnational threats piggybacking on economic regionalisation. I develop the case that the U.S. solution to this centres around building a stronger security relationship with Mexico where Mexican security institutions are encouraged to take robust actions to ensure Mexican stability, the protection of U.S. HS, and regional security for 'NAFTA-land'. It is crucial to emphasise these points within the historical materialist framework, because such a conception shows how the MI and NAFTA-land Security are in an important sense 'working', something that is not captured in much of the extant literature. Meanwhile, this chapter begins to provide more direct evidence that drug-related violence is a strategic concern, something I build on in Chapter Six. Finally, the complexities of regional relations under U.S. hegemony are once more emphasised. The U.S. has actively sought to cajole Mexico to participate in NAFTA-land Security, but the lines between power and partnership here are distinctly blurry. The U.S. has allowed space for Mexico itself to push forward the liberalising economic agenda, but of course

Mexican policymakers do this within regional economic realities that are underpinned by U.S. hegemony. Mexico has to effectively respond to U.S. security priorities. Indeed there is insight here into how the U.S. actively strategises about pulling Mexico further into integrative processes in economics and security. Again a complex 'back and forth' develops between the NAFTA countries, but U.S. interests are the most powerful driving force behind developments.

Chapter Structure & Aims

Having already established the depth of U.S. interests in Mexico, and set out the theoretical underpinning of *why* the U.S. has sought to regionalise security within and around NAFTA in response to threats to economic openness, this chapter's initial aim is to provide the detail as to *how* the U.S. has actually gone about this. I thus approach this chapter through a broad historiography of processes and events around the creation of some key policy responses that have sought to 'secure openness' through regional security thinking within and around North America in the wake of 9/11, namely the 'Smart Border' effort, the SPP, and 21st Century Border Management. Most important here is the SPP; in many ways it encompasses the other two. I also look at the role of NORTHCOM in regional security and involvement in and with Mexico. This leads us into a discussion of how Mexico's security crisis has both stimulated action in direct response to it, and allowed access on the part of the U.S. to Mexican security institutions with those wider regional goals in mind. All of these policies are part of the creation of a nascent NAFTA-land Security framework for North America's political economy.

I then look at some of the wider context of NAFTA-land Security, linking in some more associated policy programmes to the overall logic, and discussing recent reform in Mexico and U.S.-Mexican conversation of further economic integration, reinforcing the case that economic integration deepens interests and necessitates some kind of security backdrop. Thus in a sense the chapter is introductory in terms of setting out the crucial context for the MI. It is the necessary starting point to understanding Mérida, which I tackle directly in the following chapter, because Mérida is fundamentally connected up to the policies I look at here, and the overall logic of NAFTA-land Security. In traceable ways Mérida grows out of the SPP, taking forward some of the *posited* policies within the SPP framework that it failed to deliver in terms of tangible, policy results. Because of these deep conjunctions between what are in fact *elements* of NAFTA-land Security rather than disparate policies, at times I will have to 'jump forward' in this chapter to give a little detail MI for clarity, although as far as possible I aim to stick to Mérida's backdrop rather than the Initiative itself.

9/11 & The Border Paradox

Following 9/11 the U.S. unilaterally imposed the highest-level security checks at its borders with Canada and Mexico. The impact was immediate. Trucks and trade were backed up on NAFTA's borders for miles. Produce rotted on the roads. U.S. auto companies, reliant on just-in-time processes within North American production lines, told the Bush administration that if relief wasn't forthcoming to get cross-border

traffic normalised they would soon go out of business.¹ In many ways, the impact on the NAFTA economy thus became another of the costs imposed on the U.S. (and even more so upon Canada and Mexico) by the terrorist attacks, and this, paradoxically, was reinforced by the security response at the border. This revealed a conundrum. The U.S. became concerned about its vulnerability to direct attack and the costs that would have on its open economy. That economy was rooted in large an open North America. Yet, an open North America appeared *in itself* more threatening in the potential for a ‘cross-border’ terrorist incident. Whilst the U.S. Ambassador to Canada may have bullishly told his hosts that they would have to get used to a new reality where, “security trumps trade”,² the ‘real reality’ was that U.S. policymakers were scrambling to find ways to *maintain* the economic openness the U.S. relied upon whilst better protecting it, and the Homeland, from transnational threats. The problem was (and to a good degree still is) that securing the U.S. at its contiguous borders is inherently paradoxical; the inspection regimes that would be required to ‘fully’ protect the U.S. from illicit actors impose prohibitively high costs, and those that already exist already slow down licit trade, as well as incur unintended effects in honing the skills of illicit border crossers and traffickers.³

We saw in the Literature Review and Chapter 3 that a number of analysts and policymakers, often working in tandem or straddling the line between policy and academia, were animated by this problem of ‘secure openness’. The U.S. state, again incorporating ideas from this wider milieu (the state, after all, is a social relation) was working along the same lines. The proposed solutions began to formulate around some core general concepts:

- 1) Risk-based assessment of cross-border traffic that used intelligence and leveraged partnerships to screen risk traffic and expedite licit traffic.⁴
- 2) Border projection, whereby inspections would be undertaken by partners and U.S. officials prior to reaching the U.S. border.
- 3) Through the above, a *layered defence* of the U.S. homeland.

These priorities can be seen in core policy documentation following 9/11. The 2002 National Security Strategy of the United States stated that a new threat came from, “shadowy networks of individuals” who, “can bring great chaos and suffering to our shores for less than it costs to purchase a single tank.” The risk to open economies and

¹ Edward Alden *The Closing of the American Border: Terrorism, Immigration and Security Since 9/11* (Harper Perennial, 2008) p.43-48

² Gloria Galloway ‘U.S. Envoy Chides Canada’ *The Globe and Mail* (March 25th, 2003) <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/us-envoy-chides-canada/article20448312/> Accessed 22.07.14 Celluci’s oft-quoted comments should be put in context; he was making clear U.S. dissatisfaction that Canada was unwilling to support the War in Iraq, and offering a timely reminder of the power realities in North America. It also served as a way to ensure continued cooperation by Canada with the U.S. reformulation of its security practices on the continent.

³ See previous chapters and Paul Ashby, ‘Solving the Border Paradox? Border Security, Economic Integration, and the MI’ *Global Society* 28, 4 (2014) I again draw on the arguments herein in the earlier parts of this chapter.

⁴ On the DHS’ risk management approach see U.S. Department of Homeland Security *Risk Management Fundamentals: Homeland Security Risk Management Doctrine* (Washington D.C., April, 2011)

societies was clear, “Terrorists are organized to penetrate open societies and to turn the power of modern technologies against us.”⁵ Further, the Strategy expressed succinctly the dilemma for U.S. hegemony that was also at the heart of the ‘border paradox’:

Our society must be open to people, ideas, and goods from across the globe. The characteristics we most cherish—our freedom, our cities, our systems of movement, and modern life—are vulnerable to terrorism. This vulnerability will persist long after we bring to justice those responsible for the September 11 attacks.⁶

Broadly speaking the Strategy sets out the response to this threat. Alongside headline grabbing claims to the right to pre-emptive defence (soon exercised in Iraq), it also states that the U.S. would go about, “defending the United States, the American people, and our interests at home and abroad by identifying and destroying the threat *before it reaches our borders*”.⁷ Of course on one level this meant the kind of expeditionary military action witnessed in Afghanistan (and to a lesser extent Iraq)⁸ and support for military campaigns in Pakistan, Somalia, the Philippines and so on. However there is another, less high-profile logic to this too. The Strategy reflected more granular approaches undertaken at lower levels of the U.S. state that sought to strengthen the U.S.’ defences by building partner capacities and projecting the U.S. border outwards. For example, cargo and passenger screening would begin *away* from the contiguous border. The aim was to minimise risk whilst maintaining the U.S. openness’ to global flows of people, goods and finance. The Strategy also set out the attendant benefits to this approach, stating the U.S.’, “emergency management systems will be better able to cope not just with terrorism but with all hazards. [...] *Our border controls will not just stop terrorists, but improve the efficient movement of legitimate traffic.*”⁹ As Alden reports, this was the logic the Bush administration was largely following under, “border of the future” principles, whereby the “big idea was to use intelligence and information systems in a sophisticated manner to *push the U.S. border outward*. The goal was to build a *layered defense*” of the Homeland.¹⁰

This aim is clearly reflected in lower level policy documentation, and actual policy, too. By 2007 the Homeland Security Strategy of the Homeland Security Council

⁵ U.S. White House *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America 2002* (Washington D.C., September, 2002)

⁶ *ibid* p.31

⁷ *ibid* p.6 My emphasis

⁸ I am one of those of the opinion that the Iraq War was classically geostrategic and meant to shape the international environment to U.S. interests, rather than being part of a response to a direct ‘terrorist threat’. In some ways the whole GWOT fits into this definition, but the terrorist threat in Afghanistan was patently more real than it that emanating from Iraq. See David Harvey *The New Imperialism* (Oxford University Press, 2003) p.213-221; Greg Muttitt *Fuel on the Fire: Oil and Politics in Occupied Iraq* (The Bodley Head, 2011); Doug Stokes ‘The War Gamble: Understanding US Interests in Iraq’ *Globalizations* 6,1 (March, 2009); Slavoj Zizek *Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle* (Verso, 2004)

⁹ *ibid* p.6-7 My emphasis

¹⁰ Alden *Closing of the American Border* p.138 My emphasis As Alden reports, this was not a uniformly supported strategy within the administration, and it came in for criticism. However I consider the main thrust of U.S. policy through this period and into the contemporary era to rely on these methods to secure openness.

(HSC)¹¹ was reflective of these border projection concepts in action. It also showed how the U.S. was conceptualising *various* threats to its security and the security of open markets, *not just terrorism*. In his introduction to the Strategy President Bush asserted:

Many of the threats we face – pandemic diseases, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, and natural disasters – also demand multinational effort and cooperation. *To this end, we have strengthened our homeland security through foreign partnerships, and we are committed to expanding and increasing our layers of defense, which extend well beyond our borders, by seeking further cooperation with our international partners.*¹²

This Strategy was reflected in several ways in actual policy, with a number of initiatives were undertaken within this broader framework. The Container Security Initiative (CSI) placed Customs and Border Protection (CPB) officials in foreign ports to screen cargo,¹³ whilst the Megaports Initiative (run out of the Department of Energy -DoE) sought to collaborate with foreign nations to ensure the security of ports to the trafficking of nuclear and radiological material.¹⁴ Older programs, such as the Export Control and Related Border Security Program (EXBS) that provides assistance on export control mechanisms to other states through the DoS, were expanded and connected up with these newer efforts.¹⁵ In addition new foreign assistance and “partner capacity building” programs specifically tailored to combating terrorism and improving HS capabilities in other countries (and thereby projecting U.S. defences) were introduced. The Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program (CTFP - under Section 2249c, Title 10 of the U.S. Code) was legislated in 2002 and allows the DoD to provide “tailored operational and strategic-level education and training to our international partners in support of U.S. efforts to combat terrorism”,¹⁶ whilst Section 1206 Train and Equip Authority, legislated in 2006, allows the DoD to build partner capacity in military preparedness for CT and stability operations, including maritime CT.¹⁷ Whilst we should be *very* mindful that these programmes can also support more established U.S. goals in foreign assistance to stabilise and secure ‘friendly’ countries and regimes in order to protect political economies favourable to investment and extraction and regional and international order, and therefore are connected to more established tropes in U.S. foreign policy in using

¹¹ An executive office created as part of the largest bureaucratic shakeup in recent U.S. history in the wake of 9/11. The Bush administration also of course created the DHS and NORTHCOM (see below) in its bureaucratic overhaul after 9/11.

¹² U.S. Homeland Security Council *National Strategy for Homeland Security 2007* (October, 2007) My emphasis

¹³ *ibid* p.18; U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection *Container Security Initiative in Summary* (May, 2011)

¹⁴ HSC *National Strategy for Homeland Security* p.18; U.S. Department of Energy National Nuclear Security Administration, Office of the Second Line of Defense *Megaports Initiative* (Washington D.C., 2010)

¹⁵ U.S. Department of State: The EXBS Program <http://www.state.gov/t/isn/ecc/c27911.htm> Accessed 29.05.13 We will see this in action in Chapter Six.

¹⁶ U.S. Department of Defense *Section 1209 and Section 1203(b) Report to Congress on Foreign Assistance Related Programs for Fiscal Year 2012* (Washington D.C. 2013) p.5

¹⁷ *ibid* p.4

foreign assistance in the interests of continued U.S. hegemony,¹⁸ there is nonetheless a new ‘layered defense’ logic within them too.

Security Projection in North America

In North America policy analysts were calling for an exceptional and specific framework, still fundamentally based on the layered defence principles, but one that would also recognise the North American economy as unique in its levels of integration, trade, and cross-border production, as well as its concomitant importance to the U.S. (and Mexico and Canada). Given this integration and importance, many suggested seeing North America *holistically*, and therefore defending it as such, by effectively projecting U.S. security outwards to NAFTA’s border, creating a security perimeter that would envelop and protect the North American marketplace and peoples from external threats, and allow the NAFTA countries to better cooperate and coordinate on security issues arising within NAFTA.¹⁹ This project shows empirically that this is *exactly the approach the U.S. has undertaken*, albeit with less focus on trilateralism and more on U.S. control of regional security than some of these observers have advocated. This has been done through a series of interlocking policies, directives and initiatives, all designed with the overarching logic of securing the NAFTA economy (and its openness) from external *and internal* threats under what I have termed NAFTA-land Security. These policies start with the Smart Border accords with Canada and Mexico in 2002 and 2004, are most definitively conceptualised under the SPP, and, crucially, are taken up in policy terms by the MI and associated programmes. Thus, and this is key, the CN *element* of the MI is *contained* within that same wider regional security logic. It conjoins with the aim to better defend the U.S. homeland through ‘layered defense’ and security projection.

Early Responses: Smart Borders

The first expressions of this effort in North America came through the respective bilateral ‘Smart Border’ agreements - between Canada and the U.S. originally, and then Mexico and the U.S. The agreements were essentially the same in tone and content, but of course the challenges on the U.S.-Mexico border were stronger and more resistant to change, incorporating issues of drug trafficking on a much higher scale than Canada, economic migration (seen by a vocal section of the U.S. population as illegal migration and increasingly pulled into a ‘terrorist threat’ narrative) and the fact Mexico was seen as a less reliable security partner. U.S. Ambassador Celluci stated that Canadian business groups considered that, “Canada and the United States already share a security perimeter to some degree; it is just a

¹⁸ In this sense, terrorism is a usefully elastic word. For example, what was previously considered as COIN can become CT, making funding much more palatable and justifiable for U.S. Congress and civilian populations. As we will see, it can also be conflated with CN.

¹⁹ For example, Stephen E. Flynn ‘The False Conundrum: Continental Integration versus Homeland Security’ in Peter Andreas and Thomas J. Biersteker *The Rebordering of North America: Integration and Exclusion in a New Security Context* (Routledge, 2003); Council on Foreign Relations Independent Task Force on the Future of North America ‘Creating a North American Community: Chairmen’s Statement’ *Council on Foreign Relations* (March, 2005); Council on Foreign Relations Independent Task Force on the Future of North America ‘Building a North American Community’ *Council on Foreign Relations* (May, 2005); Gary Claude Hufbauer, and Gustavo Vega-Cánovas, ‘Whither NAFTA: A Common Frontier?’ in Andreas and Biersteker *Rebordering of North America* p.128-153

question of how strong we want to make it”.²⁰ However, focusing on that tone and content of the Mexican side of the agreement shows clearly that the U.S. was aiming to *create* a secure U.S.-Mexican border - open to licit trade, closed to illicit activity. Thus, the officially titled ‘U.S.-Mexico Border Partnership Agreement’ would be a 22-point plan designed “to build a smart border for the 21st century - one that better secures our borders while also speeding the free flow of people and commerce.”²¹ The announcement of the Agreement went on to state that cooperative approaches to border management were key to the, “continued integration of the North American economic region”.²² The overall ideas were similar to the more global strategy, utilising technology to develop trusted programs for cargo, shipping, travelers and so on, based on risk assessment and border depth.

Nonetheless, there continued to be some more searching questions from the perspective of the U.S. towards Mexican security within NAFTA and in the ‘new’ security environment. Cables show concern about aviation security, improvised explosive device detection,²³ maritime security,²⁴ the impact Mexico’s increasing levels of drug violence was having upon investment,²⁵ and even Mexico’s plans to buy Russian fighter jets, an unfavourable scenario for the U.S. that would, “complicate North American security cooperation” (not to mention establish deep ties between Russia and Mexico).²⁶ Negotiations on increased U.S.-Mexican military cooperation, including in maritime and aviation security cooperation were clearly ongoing from 2003.²⁷ The U.S. became increasingly interested in more holistic, continental views of security in North America and an especial security focus on Mexico. This interest spurred the search for more profound answers to North America’s security questions. The Smart Border approach became a component of something much wider - the SPP.

²⁰ U.S. Embassy Canada *Placing a New North American Initiative in its Economic Policy Context* Cable Reference 000268 (28th January, 2005) Link: <https://cablegatesearch.wikileaks.org/cable.php?id=05OTTAWA268&q=canada%20perimeter%20security> Accessed 13.03.14

²¹ U.S. White House President George W. Bush Archive ‘Border Security: U.S.-Mexico Border Partnership Agreement’ (Washington D.C.) <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/usmxborder/> Accessed 20.07.14

²² *ibid*

²³ U.S. Embassy Mexico *Aviation Cooperation Continues, ICAO Demarche Delivered* Cable Reference 000787 (13th February, 2006) <https://cablegatesearch.wikileaks.org/cable.php?id=06MEXICO787&q=mexico%20security> Accessed 21.07.14

²⁴ U.S. Embassy Canada *Canada: Mission Perspective on SPP Security Goals* Cable Reference 001384 (6th May, 2005) Link: <https://cablegatesearch.wikileaks.org/cable.php?id=05OTTAWA1384&q=maritime%20mexico%20security> Accessed 22.07.14

²⁵ U.S. Embassy Mexico *Effect of Violence on Mexican Investment* Cable Reference: 001536 (22nd March, 2006) Link: <http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=06MEXICO1536&q=investment%20mexico%20security> Accessed 04.10.12

²⁶ U.S. Embassy Mexico *GOM Backing Off Purchase of Russian Fighter Aircraft* Cable Reference 000380 (25th January, 2007) Link: <https://cablegatesearch.wikileaks.org/cable.php?id=07MEXICO380&q=mexico%20northcom> Accessed 22.07.14

²⁷ *ibid*

The Security and Prosperity Partnership

Even as the above discussion was taking place, a new trilateral initiative was emerging behind the scenes that sought to maintain NAFTA's integrated economic openness *and* secure it from real, potential and perceived threats. The SPP aimed to formulate concrete, trilateral initiatives and policy solutions to deepen NAFTA's economic connections still further, whilst also (and more importantly for the U.S.' immediate interests) *protect* those economic connections from threats. Terrorism, broadly defined, was at the forefront of U.S. policymaker's minds in this endeavour, but the SPP took in other transnational issues to include drug smuggling, wider illicit trafficking, pandemics, natural disasters, and so on. Recalling the points made in Chapter Three and above, the SPP ambitiously aimed to answer Bush's call to 'secure U.S. borders without shutting down the U.S. economy' in the North American context. It did so through the exploration of trilateral security solutions and arrangements that conceptualised NAFTA as *a shared security and economic space*. Its basic premise was that trilateral 'cooperation' on mutual security issues (which would have to involve serious Canadian and Mexican flexibility to U.S. demands) would better secure the NAFTA economy from *all* security threats and their deleterious economic impacts. However it essentially contained two complementary logics - the NAFTA economic space would be both better protected and better able to withstand security problems with less economic fallout, *and* the U.S. homeland itself would also be better secured.

Interestingly the progenitor for the SPP appears to have come from Canada. The Canadian Council of Chief Executives outlined a 'North American Security and Prosperity' (NASP) plan as early as February, 2003. U.S. Ambassador to Canada Paul Celluci noted the plan envisioned, "making the U.S.-Canada border a 'zone of cooperation', not a line of defense; moving enforcement activities away from the border itself; and making the border 'an effective, shared checkpoint within an integrated economic space.'" It also sought regulatory reform, mutual resource security, "twenty-first century institutions" that could better tackle NAFTA's "continental issues", and, crucially, Canada addressing the U.S. post-9/11 focus on HS through internal defence programs, cooperation in the GWOT, and "moving to a new phase of cooperation with the United States on continental security".²⁸ Within this cable, we can see that this represents a response from the influential Canadian business community to 'new realities' and U.S. preferences. Celluci reported that the NASP's, "inclusion of a major security/defense component" is the strength of the NASP plan as it "acknowledges the importance of this element" to the U.S. government.²⁹ The cable in question is positive about the Canadian proposals, no doubt as it fitted the Bush administration's agenda in continued economic openness between the U.S. and Canada, U.S. border security, *and* security *for* that openness.

Clarkson reports that these priorities formed the basis of a meeting in March 2003 at the White House. Truly trilateral in that it involved officials from the Fox and

²⁸ U.S. Embassy Ottawa *Canadian CEOs Push 'North American Security and Prosperity Initiative' in WashDC on April 7* Cable Reference 000443(14th February, 2003) Link: <http://www.cablegatesearch.net/search.php?q=mexico+prosperity+security&qto=20030228> Accessed 22.06.14 My emphasis.

²⁹ U.S. Embassy Ottawa *Canadian CEO's*

Chrétien administrations, Clarkson contends the meeting effectively saw Bush accept that hardened U.S. borders could no longer, “jeopardize the transboundary flow of goods and people that were crucial to the three economies and therefore crucial to their hopes for future global competitiveness.”³⁰ Increasingly the ideas within the NASP plan began to be taken up as viable options to help protect North America, and overcome the border paradox. In January 2005 Celluci reported the benefits of a North American security undertaking could potentially be profound:

Security and law enforcement within North America have evolved rapidly since 9/11, leading to many less-than-perfect processes for handling legitimate international traffic. Collaboration to improve these processes could yield efficiency improvements which would automatically be spread widely across the economy, leading to general gains in trade, productivity, and incomes.³¹

The SPP was formally announced in March 2005. Upon announcement, the leaders echoed some of the language within wider U.S. efforts to expedite licit commerce and travel whilst screening for illicit elements, whilst adding a regional logic:

We are launching the next generation of our common security strategy to *further secure North America* and ensure the streamlined movement of legitimate travelers and cargo across our shared borders. To this end, Canada, the United States, and Mexico will work together to ensure the highest *continent-wide security standards* and streamlined *risk-based border processes* are achieved”³²

Immediately ‘Working Groups’ were tasked with the task of setting policies and achieving trilateral goals in two broad and *interlinked* areas, prosperity and security. On the prosperity arm groups worked on further streamlining practises and homogenising regulatory standards to increase trade and interconnectedness. On the security arm there were three points of focus within a guiding aim of developing “a common security strategy.” These were a) “Securing North America from external threats”, b) “Preventing and responding to threats within North America” and c) “Streamlining the secure and efficient movement of legitimate and low-risk traffic across our shared borders.”³³ The latter element had of course already begun under Smart Border agreements, and the SPP was intended to complement rather than replace those.³⁴ However the other two aims were deceptively expansive and quite distinct from wider ‘new border’ ideas. These official releases on the part of the U.S. government did not quite capture the full import of the SPP on this score.

³⁰ Stephen Clarkson *Does North America Exist? Governing the Continent after 9/11 and NAFTA* (University of Toronto Press, 2008) p.436

³¹ U.S. Embassy Mexico *Economic Policy Context*

³² U.S. Department of State Archive ‘Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America Security Agenda’ (Crawford, Texas, March 23rd, 2005) <http://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/prsr/2005/69849.htm> Accessed 16.04.12

³³ U.S. Department of State Archive ‘Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America: Fact Sheet’ (Washington D.C., March 2005) <http://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/fs/2005/69843.htm> Accessed 16.04.12

³⁴ *ibid*

Instead, a lecture provided by former Assistant Secretary for WHA Shannon sums up the logic of the SPP better than any general overview could. Discussing the North American Forum (an offspring of the SPP) he stated it was a dialogue between government and civil society that explored how the NAFTA countries could, “begin to create a vision for North America and an understanding of what North America is as an entity and then how governments could be working better together to fashion more productive cooperation and *address the kinds of problems we saw in the immediate aftermath of September 11*.”³⁵ The aim was to bring together the NAFTA countries in a specific manner, “integrating them economically but then providing a *security overlay*”.³⁶ The rationale provided by Shannon is worth quoting at length, as it highlights exactly the variegated threats the SPP saw itself meeting:

What the leaders again instructed their foreign ministers to do was to take another look at the security agenda and to adjust it to a reality in which the real threats to states were not other states in a hemisphere that had committed itself to democracy but instead the threats were terrorism, drug trafficking, natural disasters, environmental disasters and pandemics and in so doing created an opening for state dialogue about security which was new and unique and fresh. It actually took a lot of that dialogue out of defence ministries and put it in law enforcement agencies and intelligence agencies, in crisis and emergency response agencies, and also in health agencies, especially those that dealt with pandemics. This was, I think, an important step forward in again building kind of the connective tissue within the hemisphere that allows a *conversation and a level of cooperation that really had never existed before*.”³⁷

Thus, to quote (and repeat) the revelatory Shannon again, the goal was “armoring NAFTA” against variegated security threats,³⁸ and by armoring it the U.S. and its partners sought to ensure its secured openness. As Shannon also stated at another event, those constructing the SPP agenda were mindful, “that as we look for ways to improve security we don't want it necessarily to unduly constrain or inhibit what has always been a commercial relationship and a relationship among peoples that has been very fluid.”³⁹ In addition to the more global efforts to project borders outwards and screen for risks through a layered defense, in North America U.S. policymakers envisioned a unique regional configuration of these global principles that would create a holistic spatial security arrangement around the NAFTA zone. This would, in theory, protect the North American political economy from threats and potential threats emanating both from within and from without.⁴⁰ Although direct references to

³⁵ U.S. Department of State Archive Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs Thomas A. Shannon *Why the Americas Matter* Speech at 4th Annual Killam Public Lecture (Ottawa, Canada September 14th, 2006) <http://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/2006/72860.htm> Accessed 08.07.14

³⁶ *ibid* My emphasis

³⁷ *ibid* My emphasis

³⁸ Shannon quoted in Laura Carlsen ‘Armoring NAFTA: Battleground for Mexico’s Future’, *NACLA Report on the Americas* 41,5 (September, October, 2008) p. 17

³⁹ U.S. Department of State Archive Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs Thomas Shannon *Remarks at the Center for Strategic and International Studies* (Washington D.C. January 23rd, 2007)

⁴⁰ Isidro Morales *Post-NAFTA North America: Reshaping the Economic and Political Governance of a Changing Region* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) p.153

a 'NAFTA security perimeter' were not made officially in terms of planned releases,⁴¹ this rationale was thus implicitly clear in wider official explanations of the SPP. What the SPP effectively represented, then, was a framework for a NAFTA-land Security model.

This rationale is clearer still when we consider what the SPP *was aimed to do*. Although no great detail ever emerged on *concrete* trilateral policy initiatives, some generalised snapshots of plans are available. In the 2005 Report to Leaders a number of security elements were focused upon as being important to the successful implementation of the SPP. It is worth picking out a few to quote at length, because this will help make clear how the MI *directly* picked up some of these priorities in its more concrete policies. Thus within the three broad areas on the Security track ten smaller Working Groups were set up on traveller security; cargo security; border facilitation; aviation security; maritime security; law enforcement; intelligence cooperation; bio-protection; protection, preparedness, and response; and science and technology.⁴² The three countries sought to, "ensure real-time information sharing on high-risk individuals and cargo, and thereby better enable our Governments to prevent them from entering North America", and to, "implement import/export control programs, consistent with newly established international standards, to minimize the risk of illicit movements of radioactive materials that could be used for malicious purposes such as 'dirty bombs'." They also sought to protect shared critical infrastructure and, "develop and implement a comprehensive North American approach to strengthening maritime and aviation security".⁴³ In short, they sought to begin to establish NAFTA-land Security.

As the 2006 Report makes clear, progress on these issues was not uniformly successful, and was often in areas perhaps considered (in contrast to this project's focus at least) as 'policy minutiae'.⁴⁴ However, when it comes to the overall rationale of regionalised security within and around North America I consider this level of detail to again miss something of the 'bigger picture'. Many of those aims expressed in SPP reports required at once a more ambitious and more basic holistic effort to *improve, guide and coordinate* Mexico's security institutions towards what were *U.S. security priorities*. We should see the SPP's aims for the holistic approach that they are. For example, on aviation security, whilst passenger information is important, it does not say much about how effectively Mexico's reconnaissance and tracking systems meet U.S. concerns, or match up with those of the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD). It does not consider whether Mexico has the necessary capabilities to protect critical oil infrastructure, or the skills to track and board suspect ships. *How* Mexico would screen for radioactive and other illicit

⁴¹ Searches in WikiLeaks also did not send back results on 'security perimeter' and 'NAFTA' or 'Mexico' in this sense, aside from a few references to Canada.

⁴² M. Angeles Villarreal and Jennifer E. Lake *Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America: An Overview and Selected Issues* (Congressional Research Service, May 2009)

⁴³ *Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America: Report to Leaders 2005* (June 2005) Accessed via the Government of Canada's SPP Archive here [http://www.spp-psp.gc.ca/eic/site/spp-psp.nsf/vwapj/Report-Rappport-Ju2005.pdf/\\$file/Report-Rappport-Ju2005.pdf](http://www.spp-psp.gc.ca/eic/site/spp-psp.nsf/vwapj/Report-Rappport-Ju2005.pdf/$file/Report-Rappport-Ju2005.pdf) p.29-36

⁴⁴ *Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America: Report to Leaders 2006: Security Priorities* (August, 2006) Accessed via the Government of Canada's SPP Archive here [http://www.spp-psp.gc.ca/eic/site/spp-psp.nsf/vwapj/security-2006-Aug-10.pdf/\\$file/security-2006-Aug-10.pdf](http://www.spp-psp.gc.ca/eic/site/spp-psp.nsf/vwapj/security-2006-Aug-10.pdf/$file/security-2006-Aug-10.pdf)

material is not considered. These wider issues speak directly to the SPP's priorities when we look at them from a more 'macro' perspective.

It is here where I begin to see connections to the MI emerge. Indeed it is my core argument that Mérida *provided the concrete policy undergirding to these priorities*, by helping Mexico to *build its capacities in these very areas*, and (alongside the SPP discussions) providing the space for this to occur. Additionally, as the SPP quietly collapsed, Mérida took up its tasks. The SPP's existence at an executive level meant it faced a good deal of (often conspiratorial) criticism from the political right in the U.S that its real aim was to create a 'North American Union' along the lines of the European Union above the heads of the American people,⁴⁵ Mérida, as I go onto argue in Chapter Six, took up the baton of the SPP's goals, even as it was sold as a policy effort to fight drugs trafficking. However, in an overall sense, the SPP is in fact better understood as an expression of the wider goal to create NAFTA-land Security in response to pressing U.S. interests to protect the highly-integrated North American political economy. It is these pressing interests that better allow us to understand the connection between the SPP and Mérida. They are both aimed at the same goal; NAFTA-land Security. They are both in fact components of the moves in that direction. The Smart Border agreements should also be included in this expansive rubric.

The SPP & Mérida

Of course for a short time the SPP and the MI co-existed. Bush administration officials continued to refer to the SPP after the announcement of the MI, not least at the trilateral Leader's Summit that still took place under this moniker. However their pronouncements in this period were in fact amongst the clearest on the *priorities* of the SPP, underscoring its focus on treating the NAFTA zone as a homogenous economic entity in need of a coherent security framework, ideally through a mutual trilateral approach, and certainly by treating NAFTA as a common economic and security area. In a 2008 Chamber of Commerce event Shannon again summarised the continuing rationale for the SPP and the connection between economic integration, success and security:

... in order to have prosperity we have to have good security. *This means recognizing that we cannot protect our borders at the frontier.* What we can do at a frontier is regulate the movement of people, regulate the movement of goods and services, or facilitate them. But ultimately good security requires cooperative relationships among the countries of North America to identify external threats and to intercept them well before they get to our borders and in many instances *well before they get to*

⁴⁵ Jerome R. Corsi *Late Great USA: NAFTA, the North American Union, and the Threat of a Coming Merger with Mexico and Canada* (Simon and Schuster, 2009); CBC News 'Security and Prosperity Partnership: SPP FAQ's' *CBC News In Depth* <http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/spp/> Accessed 02.09.12 Robert A. Pastor *The North American Idea: A Vision of a Continental Future* (Oxford University Press, 2011) p.11, 136-137 Interestingly the conspiracists, although somewhat wide of the mark, were not completely without merit. Cellucci reported that the nascent SPP could "facilitate future steps toward trilateral economic integration, such as a common external tariff or a customs union, if and when our three countries chose to pursue them." U.S. Embassy Canada *Economic Policy Context*

North America.⁴⁶

As we will see in Chapter Six, much of this rationale informs the real policy in the MI and wider assistance provided to Mexico. At the same event the Assistant Secretary for the Private Sector Office at the DHS, Alfonso Martinez-Fonts, discussed the security / free trade economy dilemma and the need to screen undesirable cross-border traffic - guns, drugs, hazardous materials, human trafficking - and expedite legitimate trade further.⁴⁷ We will see that Mérida provides real policy that plugs into this logic, alongside associated programmes within the NAFTA-land Security framework. Also pushing the move in this direction were the DoD.

The Role of NORTHCOM

Alongside a ‘civilian’ bureaucratic overhaul, Bush’s post 9/11 reforms also created a new military entity and combatant command - USNORTHCOM. Stood up on October 1st, 2002, NORTHCOM describes its mission, “to provide command and control of Department of Defense [...] homeland defense efforts and to coordinate defense support of civil authorities. USNORTHCOM defends America's homeland — protecting our people, national power, and freedom of action.”⁴⁸ With an ‘Area of Responsibility’ (AOR) that covers the U.S., Canada, Mexico, and parts of the Caribbean and surrounding waters, this includes overseeing “Theater Security Cooperation” between the U.S, Canada, Mexico, and The Bahamas to ensure HS and protect U.S. regional interests.⁴⁹ Thus, self evidently, NORTHCOM defines U.S. HS within a regional context. Its subsequently has played a key role within the creation of *NAFTA-land Security*. NORTHCOM has actively set about to *pull Mexico into a continental security framework*.

NORTHCOM and NAFTA-land Security

In 2006 John A. Cope, an experienced veteran of official U.S. military interaction in the Western Hemisphere with U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM / SOUTHCOS) and the WHA, wrote a piece for the National Defense University’s (NDU) publication *Joint Forces Quarterly* that very succinctly encapsulates some of the driving logics that underpin the emerging NAFTA-land Security arrangement. Recalling that the DoD’s *Strategy for Homeland Defense and Civil Support* underlined those principles for a layered defence of the U.S. homeland that I have already discussed,⁵⁰ Cope states that a strong, integrated partnership with those layered principles at its core already existed with Canada, bolstering U.S. defences. However, he warned that the U.S.’ ‘southern approaches’ were more vulnerable, and this was due in large part to weaker relationship with a reluctant Mexico. Cope stated

⁴⁶ U.S. Department of State Archive ‘Discussion on the Security and Prosperity Partnership at the Association of American Chambers of Commerce in Latin America and Council of the Americas’ (Washington D.C., April 18th, 2008) Link: <http://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/2008/q2/103879.htm> Accessed 22.06.14 My emphasis

⁴⁷ *ibid*

⁴⁸ U.S. Northern Command: About USNORTHCOM <http://www.northcom.mil/About/index.html> Accessed 15.09.12

⁴⁹ *ibid*

⁵⁰ U.S. Department of Defense *Strategy for Homeland Defense and Civil Support* (Washington D.C., 2005)

that Mexico, “must somehow play a role” in regional defence, and he suggested that to encourage it do so the U.S. should work on how to generate and integrate, “threat perceptions”.⁵¹ His suggestions are especially pertinent and somewhat prescient for what was already the evolving U.S. approach, and therefore worth quoting at length. Cope states, “Since 9/11, Washington has tried to achieve a common threat picture in the region based on international terrorism.” However Mexico (and Central American countries) were more concerned about criminality and the cartels operating in their territories. Cope therefore offers:

This impasse can be overcome by accepting and acting on the correlation between the two threat perceptions. Proceeds from transnational crime are known to support terrorist organizations, and their members exploit the lines of flow used by traffickers. If countries in the zone improve public safety and the capacity to control, diminish, and, ideally, end the scourge of trafficking and smuggling networks, U.S. vulnerability to terrorists eager to take advantage of ungoverned space and local instability decreases. This avenue to the United States becomes unreliable and hard to use. Protecting the southern approach against terrorists is predicated on greater attention to the fight against drug trafficking and other forms of transnational crime.⁵²

Cope essentially suggested using the security issues Mexico and the Central American nations were most worried about as leverage in getting them to perform better on the issues the U.S. was most concerned about. He also suggested a manner by which Mexico would be encouraged to lead in a regional Caribbean Basin Security Partnership that would monitor and defend regional maritime and aviation security, and thereby contribute to the U.S. layered defence.⁵³

However this was not quite how the U.S. and NORTHCOM would engage Mexico. Cope’s argument does capture *some* of the essence of the goals underpinning NORTHCOM’s role in NAFTA-land Security in terms of layering U.S. homeland defence through the incorporation of Mexico into a regional security configuration, and allowing Mexico sovereign space to do so in part on its own terms. In addition drugs *would* become the main aperture through which the U.S. was able to achieve far greater Mexican security cooperation on a *variety* of security issues. What Cope missed was the *uniquely North American* element to the emerging U.S. strategy, which is based in the deep, integrative ties of NAFTA. Policy pieces by NORTHCOM staff themselves better capture this NAFTA based security logic. In 2007, Biff Baker (a strategist who has advised NORTHCOM) summarised U.S. regional security thinking clearly and succinctly, and is again worth quoting at length. I will avoid emphasis because the whole paragraph is crucial:

Our unique economic relationship has evolved over the past decade,

⁵¹ John A. Cope ‘A Prescription for Protecting the Southern Approach’ *Joint Forces Quarterly* 42, 3 (2006) p.17-19

⁵² *ibid* p.19

⁵³ *ibid* p.20 Interestingly, and as I discuss briefly in the next chapter, the early MI was more regional in scope, and the U.S. has also sought to bolster Central American regional security in tandem with its efforts in Mexico (and Cope was not all that far off some of the terminology used in some of these policies - the MI was originally the Mexico and Central America Security Initiative).

in part due to an inextricably linked infrastructure, which has shaped our current interests in security and defense. [...] From a bilateral perspective the North American economy and related critical infrastructure is a shared center of gravity that must be defended to preserve our ways of life. This continental view of defense and security issues became increasingly important after Mexico, the United States, and Canada implemented NAFTA.⁵⁴

Baker goes on to relate how the recession that followed 9/11 hurt the Mexican, U.S. and *North American* economy. Border closures also had negative effects, and therefore the U.S. must, “plan to ensure this does not happen again.” That meant security cooperation across North America.⁵⁵ Baker and NORTHCOM commander James Renuart made similar claims in a piece for another NDU publication. To preserve the advantages of free movement of capital, people,⁵⁶ and goods the NORTHCOM personnel stated, “*our homeland defense and security initiatives must be planned and coordinated continentally.*”⁵⁷

NORTHCOM’s resultant strategy, revealed in official documents, makes NAFTA-land Security logics clear. In the first instance we see this in the sense of the layered defence approach. NORTHCOM operates on its, “Theater Campaign Plan’s Cooperative Defense Line of Operation (LOO)” that seeks to promote, “a strengthened homeland defense through a mutually beneficial North American and Caribbean partnership that fosters effective continental defense to counter terrorism, WMD, illicit trafficking of funds, drugs and persons, other transnational threats, and their consequences.”⁵⁸ The desired end state is one in which the U.S.’ “allies” are involved in mutual defence of their region. However a document released to the National Security Archive makes clear that within that, “USNORTHCOM’s Top Theater Security Cooperation Priority is Mexico”.⁵⁹ The document repeats the wider designation of threats and reveals the broad security logics to its efforts, this time applying to Mexico specifically, stating it, “conducts security cooperation with Mexico to strengthen the cooperative defense of the continent through mutually beneficial partnerships that counter terrorism, WMD, other transnational and asymmetric threats and their consequences, while contributing to national security objectives.” This is described as “Line of Operation 2”, whilst “Line of Operation 3” is dedicated to defeating cartels (termed ‘TCOs’) in order to enhance the “Security and Prosperity of North America”. Whether we should read anything into this in terms of an ordering of priorities and importance is unclear. What *is* clear though is that a variety of threats are within the U.S. purview, and the U.S. seeks to create a

⁵⁴ Biff Baker ‘The United States and Mexico: Enhanced Military Cooperation’ *The DISAM Journal of International Security Assistance Management* 29, 3 (2007) p.28

⁵⁵ *ibid*

⁵⁶ Unless, it should be assumed, you are poor and Mexican.

⁵⁷ Victor E. Renuart Jr. & Biff Baker ‘U.S.-Mexico Homeland Defense: A Compatible Interface’ *Strategic Forum* 254 (February, 2010) p.3 My emphasis

⁵⁸ DoD *Section 1209 / 1203(c)* p.22

⁵⁹ This document is provided as part of a project of the National Security Archive called *Migration Declassified*. It can be found here Michael Evans ‘NSA Staffed U.S.-Only Intelligence “Fusion Center” in Mexico City’ *Migration Declassified* (November 14th, 2013) <http://migrationdeclassified.wordpress.com/2013/11/14/nsa-staffed-u-s-only-intelligence-fusion-center-in-mexico-city/> 02.12.13

NAFTA-land Security framework in order to better protect the North American political economy from them.

NORTHCOM's security engagement with Mexico as part of building the latter's capacities to achieve better security across a spectrum of areas is therefore its top priority. This is in service of a nascent NAFTA-land Security project. As the next chapter goes on to make clear in detail, NORTHCOM's involvement in Mexico adds a vital direct training component to the U.S.' regional security aims. Moreover, it complements the MI, and in turn the MI joins up with NORTHCOM activities. A crucial prerequisite to this, however, has been to open up Mexico's security forces to deeper U.S. involvement. WikiLeaks cables reveal that the U.S. government and its military were keen to build on security relations, and especially to engage a seemingly keen Calderón on these 'mutual' North American security issues. U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Tony Garza suggested for his government to take the opportunity afforded by Calderón's election on several occasions, suggesting some key actions that could be undertaken to help open up Mexico's military still further to U.S. security priorities.⁶⁰ Again, according to the cable doing this would help the U.S. "realign [its] own posture vis-a-vis Mexico to give it the stature it merits in our own security strategies, but also to build Mexico's acceptance of its strategic role in North America." Subsequently cables discussed with enthusiasm the growing engagement, trust, and shared priorities between U.S. and Mexican militaries. Cables from 2006 praise, "the years of patient work by DoD and USNORTHCOM" that "have opened the way to more meaningful interaction".⁶¹ These cables are interesting from the point of view of the development of the SPP and the MI, and their aims and priorities.

Another cable emphasises that, "We cannot achieve our security goals with regard to Mexico without a strong mil-mil relationship with a capable Mexican military." It goes on to lament that progress on improving both the interaction and their capabilities, "have reached the point where the *scant resources* we allocate to assistance have become the major limiting factor".⁶² In this context, the MI has been *crucial* as a delivery vehicle *and* integrative dynamo between the militaries. The next chapter will show this definitively. The goals of NORTHCOM in this regard though *clearly go beyond CN*. Admiral Timothy J. Keating⁶³ bemoaned the freeze on aid to Mexico due to the latter's signing of the Rome Statute,⁶⁴ stating that it hindered his Command's efforts to aid Mexico in meeting, "transnational terrorism and narcotics threats".⁶⁵ This would have a knock-on effect in NORTHCOM's mission, defined by Keating *as homeland defense as part of winning the GWOT*.⁶⁶ For NORTHCOM, this

⁶⁰ U.S. Embassy Mexico *Scenesetter for Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld' April 17-18 Visit to Mexico* Cable Reference 001889 (April 10th, 2006) Link: <https://cablegatesearch.wikileaks.org/cable.php?id=06MEXICO1889&q=northcom> Accessed 05.04.14 This included providing a waiver to sanctions against military aid following Mexico's signing of the Treaty of Rome, a crucial prerequisite to Mérida aid

⁶¹ U.S. Embassy Mexico *Engaging the New Mexican Administration on Security*

⁶² *ibid*

⁶³ NORTHCOM Commander Nov' 2004-Mar 2007

⁶⁴ Whereby the International Criminal Court was established. The U.S. seeks through sticks and carrots to convince nations to sign bilateral agreements to mutually ensure personnel won't be sent to the ICC.

⁶⁵ 'Statement of Admiral Timothy J. Keating USN Commander United States Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command' Before the Senate Armed Services Committee, 109th Congress (March 22nd, 2007)

⁶⁶ *ibid* p.1

entailed, “Theater Security Cooperation activities [that] contribute to the Secretary of Defense’s Security Cooperation Guidance’s *top priority* to build the capacities of allies and partners to help win the GWOT by enhancing coordination with our continental neighbors, Canada and Mexico.”⁶⁷ Again, although CN would increasingly gain its own standing as a top NAFTA-land Security issue, first *NAFTA-land Security needed to be constructed*. As I show in the next Chapter, CN concerns have helped NORTHCOM and the U.S. get over the line in persuading Mexico that an integrated security relationship is the path forward.

The Other Threat: Mexico’s Security Crisis

I discussed in Chapter Three *how* and *why* Mexico’s drug violence threatened U.S. interests in Mexico’s political economic stability. Of course it is worth recalling that this kind of instability in such a strategically crucial partner for the U.S. (and direct neighbour) may well have provoked a U.S. response *in and of itself*, in line with those well established tropes in U.S. foreign policy previously discussed. However, whilst this logic remains a key animator for policy, the cartel threat has been subsumed within the wider goals of NAFTA-land Security. On one level we can see this in the threat conflation that is often engaged in by the U.S., where there is a stated fear of, “potential collaboration among gangs, criminal networks, and terrorist organizations with global reach”.⁶⁸ Such discourse (which has little evidence to show it is a *current* real concern)⁶⁹ reflects both a keenness to justify NAFTA-land Security arrangements to Congress and the public, but also fear of *threat potentials* that underlie U.S. security policy. On another level, though, the reason to designate cartels as a threat to NAFTA-land Security is clear; they *destabilise the North American political economy*. NORTHCOM itself very much defines the cartels as a singular threat to Mexican stability, something alluded to above in its documentation, and I will demonstrate this further when in investigating the training role it has undertaken with Mexican security forces below. This though is still *within* the wider logics of

⁶⁷ *ibid* p.18-19

⁶⁸ Cole ‘Protecting the Southern Approach’ p.18 I will refer to more of this kind of threat conflation in an official sense as we proceed. A critical discourse analysis of the definitional debate around the cartels and threat conflations by the U.S. would be an interesting topic for further research.

⁶⁹ The posited narco - terrorist nexus is one of those cases where the strange inconsistencies within the U.S. state can be seen. Whilst many official reports continue to suggest it as a possibility that should animate policy, administration law enforcement officials are always keen to point out that there is little current evidence of transnational terrorist activity in Mexico, or a threat that would jump the U.S. borders. See Becky Bowers ‘Mitt Romney says Hezbollah in Latin America poses an imminent threat to the United States’ *Politifact (Tampa Bay Times)* <http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2011/nov/23/mitt-romney/mitt-romney-says-hezbollah-latin-america-poses-imm/> Accessed 02.09.14; Mark P. Sullivan & June S. Beittel *Latin America: Terrorism Issues* (Congressional Research Service, August 2014) p.11-12 In 2011 the U.S. prosecuted two Iranians for an assassination plot on the Saudi Ambassador to the U.S., a case the U.S. alleged had links to the regime in Tehran. The case is often cited by the political right (including in Congress) in the U.S. as evidence of a terrorist-narco relationship that goes as far as joint action. The problem is the agency in this plot seems to have all been from the side of the Iranians involved, who *tried* to contact *los Zetas*, but ended up negotiating with an undercover DEA agent. That *los Zetas* would’ve carried this out is therefore just speculation. See *A Line in the Sand: Countering Crime, Violence and Terror at the Southwest Border* Majority Report by the United States House Committee on Homeland Security: Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations and Management 112th Congress (2012) p.14; Peter Finn ‘Notorious Iranian Militant has a Connection to Alleged Assassination Plot Against Saudi Envoy’ *The Washington Post* (October 14th, 2011) http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/notorious-iranian-militant-has-a-connection-to-alleged-assassination-plot-against-saudi-envoy/2011/10/14/gIQAJ3E6kL_story.html?hpid=z2 Accessed 02.09.14

NAFTA-land Security project, because what threatens Mexico's political economy threatens the integrated political economy of NAFTA.

The Wider Context of NAFTA-land Security

In this section I provide more context for the NAFTA-land Security project. Firstly, I show how the 21st Century Border Management initiative begun under Obama *again* displays the same NAFTA-land Security logic that I have already discussed. Then I consider the recent moves to revivify the economic relationship between Mexico and the U.S. I show how U.S. interests in Mexico are set to intensify still more as a result of the latter's liberalising reform agenda. This once again prioritises the need for security within Mexico and the North American political economy still further, and provides further context for why the NAFTA-land Security project is so important, and how the MI pushes it forward.

21st Century Border Management

The 21st Century Border Management plan, launched officially in May 2010, is perhaps most striking in its repetition of much of the long-term goals of the 'Smart Border' agreement between the U.S. and Mexico in 2002. The plan uses even more brevity in expressing the same aims in overcoming the border paradox, citing the, "shared interest in creating a border that promotes their economic competitiveness and enhances their security through the secure, efficient, rapid, and lawful movement of goods and people".⁷⁰ It seeks to expand the risk management approaches begun under the Bush administration, coordinate and cooperate on identifying threats and risks *before* they meet the border, harmonise work at Points of Entry, and so on.⁷¹ 21st Century Border Management is thus best understood as *part* of the same wider NAFTA-land Security process that has sought to secure the NAFTA political economy from potential threats, whilst protecting and expanding integrative openness between its members. Indeed the undertakings within this framework are familiar; there are elements based around the reduction of violence and coordination of enforcement activities, renewed focus on construction of border infrastructure, and expansion of risk-based pre-clearance systems.⁷² Whilst the effort is multi-agency, the heavy involvement of the DHS affirms that it comprises 'securing openness', and that HS increasingly stretches beyond the U.S.' border. *At* the U.S.' borders this means the DHS recognises the, "importance of continuing efforts to promote and expedite lawful travel and trade that will continue to strengthen our economy" even as it tries

⁷⁰ U.S. White House Office of the Press Secretary *Declaration by The Government Of The United States Of America and The Government Of The United Mexican States Concerning Twenty-First Century Border Management* (Washington D.C., May 19th, 2010) <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/declaration-government-united-states-america-and-government-united-mexican-states-c> Accessed 22.07.14

⁷¹ See *ibid*; U.S. White House George W. Bush 'U.S.-Mexico Border Partnership' For more on policy detail, see U.S. Department of Homeland Security '21st Century Border: A Comprehensive Response and Commitment' <http://www.dhs.gov/21st-century-border-comprehensive-response-commitment> Accessed 08.08.14; U.S. Department of Homeland Security '21st Century Border: The Executive Steering Committee' <http://www.dhs.gov/executive-steering-committee> Accessed 08.08.14; U.S. Department of Homeland Security *U.S.-Mexico 21st Century Border Management: Progress Report 2013* (Washington D.C., 2013)

⁷² DHS *21st Century Border Management: Progress Report 2013*

to interdict threats.⁷³ The DHS co-chairs the Executive Steering Committee's group on infrastructure development, which, "coordinates plans for new ports of entry, the modernization of existing ports of entry, and upgrades to the infrastructure feeding into them at and between ports of entry along the U.S.-Mexico border."⁷⁴ Beyond the border, and within the 21st Century Border Management Strategy, the DHS chairs and co-chairs the 'Secure Flows' and 'Corridor Security' groups, with the former involving DHS, "engagement in relevant capacity building measures with the Government of Mexico."⁷⁵

Despite this clear continuity there has been an increase in the *stated* complementary of U.S. goals. One of the four key pillars of the contemporary MI is 'Building a 21st Century Border'. The 2011 INL Budget Guide stated that support for this pillar would include:

Information technology and technical equipment, including biometric equipment, and training will allow for rapid data collection and monitoring of all travelers entering and leaving Mexico. Non-intrusive inspection equipment will allow for efficient movement of legitimate trade while stopping illicit trafficking of drugs, bulk cash, and guns. Trained canine teams will target illegal activity, especially along the border with the U.S.⁷⁶

The 2012 document expresses similar aims,⁷⁷ whilst in 2013 the Budget Guide discusses policy based around this pillar focuses on helping Mexico secure its southern border, to permit, "the free flow of licit goods and people while deterring illicit flows."⁷⁸ When we consider much of this policy in its totality - the SPP, the MI, the increasing involvement of the DoD, and the 21st Century Border Management Plan - we see the U.S. state's institutions acting in tandem to achieve the wider goals of regionalised security that animate NAFTA-land Security. There is a real interconnectedness between programmes, strategies and policies, highlighting that the MI is part of something much larger than a mere CN plan.

Economic Integration Continues: The High-Level Economic Dialogue

In May 2013 President Obama conducted a visit to Mexico, where it was announced that the two countries would conduct a cabinet-level 'High-Level Economic Dialogue' (HLED) aimed to improve bilateral efforts in, "promoting competitiveness, productivity and connectivity, fostering economic growth and innovation, and

⁷³ U.S. Department of Homeland Security *The 2014 Quadrennial Homeland Security Review* (June, 2014) p.6-7

⁷⁴ DHS 'Executive Steering Committee'

⁷⁵ *ibid* The DHS has also operated within Mexico. 'Operation *Armas Cruzadas*' was run out of Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and sought to interdict weapons smugglers. Gunmen in San Luis Potosi attacked ICE agents Jaime Zapata and Victor Avila, and the former was tragically murdered.

⁷⁶ U.S. Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs *Fiscal Year 2011 Program and Budget Guide* (Washington D.C., 2010) p.172

⁷⁷ U.S. Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs *Fiscal Year 2012 Program and Budget Guide* (Washington D.C., 2011) p.164

⁷⁸ U.S. Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs *Fiscal Year 2013 Program and Budget Guide* (Washington D.C., 2013) p.221

partnering for global leadership.”⁷⁹ Also announced was a, ‘Bilateral Forum on Higher Education, Innovation, and Research’, which is touted as aiming to, “encourage broader access to quality post-secondary education for traditionally underserved demographic groups, especially in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields” to help build a “21st Century workforce” for “mutual economic prosperity”.⁸⁰ The two leaders also discussed progress on the ‘Transboundary Hydrocarbon Agreement’ concerning deepwater drilling in Gulf of Mexico boundary areas previously subject to a moratorium, and mutual projects in these areas between U.S. energy companies and PEMEX.⁸¹ All of this reflected a keenness within the administration of Enrique Peña Nieto, who came into power in Mexico in 2012, to shift the national conversation and bilateral relationship away from the continuing drug war, and towards developmental issues.

A recent House Committee on Foreign Affairs hearing on U.S.-Mexican relations reinforced how the U.S. has to an extent supported Peña Nieto’s efforts. Whilst it certainly retained content on security issues, there was also a good deal of discussion on these new bilateral economic actions, and interest in Mexican reforms, especially in the opening up of the energy market dominated by PEMEX.⁸² Also important in this context are the ongoing negotiations for Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), the expansive trade talks between Asia Pacific and Western Hemisphere countries that Mexico entered in June 2012. Indeed, watching U.S.-Mexico relations in recent years, one could be forgiven for surmising that ‘economics’ is back at the top of the agenda. A background briefing from the DoS prior to Secretary of State Kerry’s trip to Mexico in May 2014 underlines this sense:

...the Pena Nieto government, which has been in power for about a year and a half, has really wanted to balance the relationship moving away from what was an almost entirely security-focused relationship under the previous government of President Calderon to make sure that we emphasized both the security and the economic relationship. And so what you’ve seen over the last 18

⁷⁹ U.S. Embassy Mexico ‘Joint Statement Between the United States and Mexico’ (May 2nd, 2013) <http://mexico.usembassy.gov/press-releases/joint-statement-between-the-united-states-and-mexico.html> Accessed 15.06.13

⁸⁰ U.S. Department of State ‘United States-Mexico Bilateral Forum on Higher Education, Innovation, and Research: Fact Sheet’ (May 2nd, 2013) <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/05/208579.htm> Accessed 15.06.13

⁸¹ Mexico has sought some kind of progress on this issue since 2008, and the Agreement been laid out in principle in 2012 U.S. Embassy Mexico *Transboundary Reservoirs - What is Motivating Mexico?* Cable Reference 00000635 (March 3rd, 2009) Link: <http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=09MEXICO635> Accessed 06.08.13; U.S. Department of State ‘U.S. Mexico Transboundary Hydrocarbons Agreement’ (February 20th, 2012) <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/02/184235.htm> Accessed 21.02.12 At this point it was moving through the U.S. Congress, before being signed into law in December 2013 See U.S. Embassy Mexico ‘Joint Statement’ (2013); U.S. Department of the Interior ‘Secretary Jewell Applauds Passage of U.S.-Mexico Transboundary Hydrocarbons Agreement’ (December 23rd, 2013) <http://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/secretary-jewell-applauds-passage-of-us-mexico-transboundary-hydrocarbons-agreement.cfm> Accessed 10.07.14

⁸² For example, *The Future of U.S.-Mexico Relations* Hearing Before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs (Serial 113-167) 113th Congress (May 20th, 2014) p.38-39

months is a real focus on some of the economic components to the relationship: the High-Level Economic Dialogue, which kicked off; the focus over the last 18 months extensively on education, which you'll see a lot of today and I'll talk about that in a second; as well as, obviously, the whole slew of economic reforms that the Peña Nieto administration has put in place, including energy reform.⁸³

However, these economic efforts should not be decoupled from NAFTA-land Security, *instead they reinforce the logic behind it*. Indeed, I contend we would be better served seeing the 'shift' as a renewed focus on the 'Prosperity' arm of the SPP. Some quick points can illustrate this. Firstly, many of the specific aims of the HLED between the U.S. and Mexico are recognisable longer-term priorities from the SPP and further U.S.-Mexico integration, within the context of the *North American economy*. Vice President Joe Biden, whose office is leading the negotiations, released a Fact Sheet explainer in September 2013 that made the intentions of the HLED clear. It states, "The global competitiveness of both of our countries requires continued and deepened economic integration, commercial exchange, and policy alignment."⁸⁴ Peña Nieto himself has also made similar statements, telling *Foreign Affairs* that he wanted to "create conditions to help North America be more competitive vis-à-vis the world. I think that if we are able to attract the attention of the United States, all of North America might be a more competitive and productive region."⁸⁵ It appears that the Obama administration not only responded to Mexico's request to 'rebalance' the relationship towards the stimulation economic growth and further integration, but also is attempting to *seize an opportunity* to deepen economic ties, Assistant Secretary of State at WHA Roberta S. Jacobson connected the HLED to her administration "capitalizing on Peña Nieto's strong push for economic development".⁸⁶ The reform effort in Mexico has thus far been very successful in terms of the movement of legislation through the Mexican political process,⁸⁷ with energy sector reform and the

⁸³ U.S. Department of State 'Background Briefing on Secretary Kerry's Visit to Mexico' (May 21st, 2014) <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2014/05/226400.htm> Accessed 11.06.14

⁸⁴ U.S. White House Office of the Vice President 'Fact Sheet: U.S.-Mexico High Level Economic Dialogue' (September 20th, 2013) <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/09/20/fact-sheet-us-mexico-high-level-economic-dialogue> Accessed 22.12.13 My emphasis

⁸⁵ Enrique Peña Nieto 'Pact for Progress: A Conversation with Enrique Peña Nieto' *Foreign Affairs* 93,1 (Jan / Feb, 2014)

⁸⁶ *The Future of U.S. Mexican Relations* p. 12 My emphasis

⁸⁷ Shannon K. O'Neil 'Viva Las Reformas' *Foreign Affairs* 93,1 (Jan / Feb, 2014) p. 11-16; Roderic Ai Camp 'Mexican Political Reforms, Something New, Something Old? The Expert Take' *Woodrow Wilson Center Mexico Institute* (October 16th, 2013) <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/mexican-political-reforms-something-new-something-old-the-expert-take> 13.08.14 Duncan Wood 'Peña Nieto's Fiscal Reform and the Consolidation of the Grand Bargain - The Expert Take' *Woodrow Wilson Center Mexico Institute* (September 9th, 2013) <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/peñ-nieto's-fiscal-reform-and-the-consolidation-the-grand-bargain-the-expert-take> Accessed 14.08.14 Gene Bolton 'Evaluating Political Compromise: A "Pact for Mexico"' *Council on Hemispheric Foreign Affairs* (December 19th, 2012) <http://www.coha.org/pact-for-mexico/> Accessed 08.7.13; Montes, Juan 'How Mexico Ended Political Gridlock' *The Wall Street Journal* (August 15th, 2013) <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887323664204578607713224531972> Accessed 12.07.14; *Pacto por México* Website <http://pactopormexico.org/> Accessed 12.08.14 However, as O'Neil mentions, Mexican economic growth has lagged behind expectations and government forecasts, coming in at only 1.1% in 2013, and being revised down in 2014. Also see Anthony Harrup 'Bank of Mexico Lowers Growth Estimate for 2014' *The Wall Street Journal* (August 13th, 2014)

opening up of the state oil company PEMEX's monopoly - secured in December 2013 with secondary legislation becoming law in August 2014 - the "jewel" in the reform crown.⁸⁸ Other investment friendly and liberalising reforms have been undertaken, aiming to open up Mexico's telecommunications industry⁸⁹ to more competition, achieve the same in Mexico's banking sector, and reforming Mexico's tax system to increase federal intake and lessen the burden on PEMEX.⁹⁰ The government has pledged to increase infrastructure spending.⁹¹ Although this has mostly occurred under the *Pacto por México* agenda, it was kicked off under Calderón's tenure with labour reform that sought to 'liberalise' the employment market to favour business more strongly.⁹² The U.S. has responded positively, because effectively Mexico is taking a path the U.S. has wanted and *encouraged* it to take.

NAFTA-land Economy

As stated above, the HLED and much that surrounds it is justified in terms of improving *North American* competitiveness. Within that, the efforts are still largely bilateral, but that does not preclude the fact that U.S. policymakers are not thinking in terms of the NAFTA economy as a whole. President Obama captured the logic well enough prior to his trip to Mexico in May 2013:

Increasingly, our economic partnership is defined, not just by the goods we sell to each other, but by the products we make together. Already, some 40 percent of the products that Mexico exports to the U.S. are made with parts from the U.S. And given Mexico's rise as a manufacturing hub of the global economy, the possibilities for even greater "co-production" are tremendous.⁹³

<http://online.wsj.com/articles/bank-of-mexico-lowers-growth-estimate-for-2014-1407954283> Accessed 14.08.14

⁸⁸ David Enriquez 'Mexico's Energy Reform: A Game-Changer in the Nation's History (An Upstream Perspective)' *Woodrow Wilson Center Mexico Institute* (2014); Diana Villiers Negroponete 'Mexico's Energy Reforms Become Law' *Brookings Institute* (August 14th, 2014) <http://www.brookings.edu/research/articles/2014/08/14-mexico-energy-law-negroponete> Accessed 15.05.14

⁸⁹ Infamously monopolised by the world's richest man, Carlos Slim, in the wake of de-privatisation in the 1980s

⁹⁰ For a brief overview see Andres Sada 'Explainer: Mexico's 2013 Reforms' *Americas Society / Council of the Americas (AS/COA)* (December, 17th, 2013) <http://www.as-coa.org/articles/explainer-mexicos-2013-reforms> Accessed 19.07.14 On banking reform see Anthony Harrup and Amy Guthrie 'Mexican President Signs Financial Overhaul Into Law' *The Wall Street Journal* (January 9th, 2014) <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702303754404579310852089741302> Accessed 08.08.14 Tax reform is also part of the PEMEX effort. Secondary legislation and PEMEX is explained in Villiers Negroponete 'Energy Reforms Become Law'

⁹¹ Anthony Harrup 'Mexican Government Boosts Infrastructure Investment Plan' *The Wall Street Journal* (April 28th, 2014) <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304163604579530131171053254> Accessed 13.08.14

⁹² For example see Ron Buchanan 'Mexico Labour Reform: Watered Down, but Still a Positive' *Financial Times* (September 29th, 2012) <http://blogs.ft.com/beyond-brics/2012/09/29/mexico-labour-reform-watered-down-but-still-a-positive/> Accessed 17.08.14; Elisabeth Malkin 'Mexican Lawmakers Allow Changes in Labor Law' *The New York Times* (November 14th, 2012) http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/15/world/americas/mexican-lawmakers-approve-overhaul-of-labor-law.html?_r=0 Accessed 17.08.14

⁹³ Christopher Sabatini 'AQ Interviews U.S. President Barack Obama About Trip to Mexico and Costa Rica' *Americas Quarterly* (April 29th, 2013) <http://www.americasquarterly.org/aq-interviews-barack-obama-about-trip-to-mexico-and-costa-rica> Accessed 10.08.14

The HLED is intended to provide momentum to making this possible scenario more likely. It looks at three issue areas - Promoting Competitiveness and Connectivity, Fostering Economic Growth, Productivity and Innovation, and Partnering for Regional and Global Leadership. At the time of writing the Dialogue is ongoing, but the U.S. Department of Commerce has fleshed out some detail.⁹⁴ Once again the significant complementarity of goals is notable. The HLED focuses on more efficient borders and their importance to trade and integration, in line with the aims of Smart Borders Agreement, the SPP, and 21st Century border management concepts. As I will show, Mérida has provided border inspection equipment, justified as helping border efficiency, in line with the HLED's priorities that, "Understanding that a globally competitive economy needs infrastructure that facilitates the flow of goods, services, and movement of people in a low-cost, efficient manner".⁹⁵ This only goes to highlight the integrative direction U.S. bilateral policy with Mexico is taking under a number of avenues.

This reinvigorated drive to bolster the North American economy is further complemented by wider contemporary foreign policy that continues to push for liberalised, integrated global markets. The continuing negotiations for the TPP, for example, are also pulled into the North American rationale. Praising levels of established integration, President Obama stated during his most recent bilateral visit to Mexico that further integration on specific issues could help North American products and trade tap into, "the fastest growing part of the world is the Asia Pacific region -- huge markets." Through the U.S. and Mexico, "working closely together to upgrade and revamp our trade relationship we're also in a position to project outward and start selling more goods and services around the world."⁹⁶ The outcomes of the recent North American Leaders Summit, held in February 2014, even show some trilateral action in terms of "enhancing our [North America's] competitiveness in the global economy." Again, although little specific was set in stone, targets were announced to increase the NAFTA zone's competitiveness and productivity, through further integration and harmonisation of practises. Again, expediting licit movements across borders within North America is a key goal, and a North American trusted traveler programme and plan to look at North American transportation were announced.⁹⁷ None of this is particularly far away from SPP priorities.

⁹⁴ U.S. Department of Commerce International Trade Administration 'Work Plan Specifics' <http://trade.gov/hled/hled-workplan-specifics-06262014.asp> Accessed 10.08.14

⁹⁵ *ibid* Further, a HLED progress report noted that the fact five "Border Master Plans [...] designed to better coordinate infrastructure and development in border communities" had been completed within the, "HLED work stream". The Master Plans were in fact begun under the 21st Century Border Management framework as part of the Infrastructure element of that undertaking U.S Department of Commerce International Trade Administration 'Progress Report on the U.S.-Mexico High Level Economic Dialogue' <http://trade.gov/hled/hled-progress-report-06262014.asp> Accessed 10.08.14; U.S. DHS *Progress Report 2013* p.2 See the Border Master plan website at <http://www.borderplanning.fhwa.dot.gov/masterplans.asp>

⁹⁶ U.S. White House Office of the Press Secretary 'Remarks by President Obama and President Pena Nieto of Mexico in a Joint Press Conference' (May 2nd, 2013) <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/05/02/remarks-president-obama-and-president-pena-nieto-mexico-joint-press-conf> Accessed 17.08.14

⁹⁷ U.S. White House Office of the Press Secretary 'Fact Sheet: Key Deliverables for the 2014 North American Leaders Summit' (February 19th, 2014) <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/02/19/fact-sheet-key-deliverables-2014-north-american-leaders-summit> Accessed 17.08.14

Thus the HLED represents the rekindling, or in some cases the borne fruit, of longer-term U.S. goals in integrating further with a more liberalised Mexican political economy. As Stokes and Raphael show, the opening up of Mexico's energy sector especially has been a long sought prize for U.S. policymakers, policy commentators and investors alike for some time, albeit one they have pursued with care given how controversial it is within Mexican politics.⁹⁸ Highlighting this, WikiLeaks cables reveal that the aforementioned Transboundary Hydrocarbon Agreement may have been less about developing mutual deep-sea oil resources than they were about the energy debate in Mexico during Calderón's attempts at reform. According to the cable, International Oil Companies didn't think any transboundary reserves would be of great significance in size, and U.S. officials speculated that Mexican government pushed the issue as part of its attempts to reform the energy sector and open it up.⁹⁹ U.S. officials concluded that if negotiations for a Transboundary agreement, "promote a future opening of the Mexican oil sector to foreign participation, it would be a positive development for all involved", and sanctioned continued negotiation on this basis.¹⁰⁰ Prior to the reforms, U.S. investors were already expressing interest in the opportunities potentially afforded by them and the expectation that "sooner or later" they had to pass, interests that already appear to be strengthening as the reforms 'go online'.¹⁰¹

Security Necessity

In line with my argument throughout, all of this will require security within North America, and an improved security outlook within Mexico. Security will be key to investment in Mexico's energy sector. PEMEX pipelines and operations continue to be targeted by the cartels as sources of revenue, with taps on pipelines used to siphon oil increasing in number by 1548% from 2000 to 2013.¹⁰² In addition, (but of course relatedly) the Burgos Basin¹⁰³ - the area most coveted as of huge potential for oil and gas exploitation through fracking - is located within Nuevo León and Tamaulipas, two states that have struggled with an exceptional degree of violence (perpetrated in no small part by the highly organised and extremely ruthless *Zetas*). A U.S. report stated that accessing the large amounts of technically recoverable oil and gas there could be, "constrained by several factors", to include, "public security concerns in many shale

⁹⁸ Doug Stokes and Sam Raphael *Global Energy Security and American Hegemony* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010)p. 204, 206-207

⁹⁹ They did this by tapping into nationalistic concerns about the U.S. siphoning oil from Mexican territory, which added to worries about Mexico's declining easily accessible oil reserves (the second concern is more genuine than the first).

¹⁰⁰ U.S. Embassy Mexico *Transboundary Reservoirs*

¹⁰¹ *ibid*; Julian Aguilar 'Mexico's Energy Reform Drawing Interest in Texas' *The Texas Tribune* (March 6th, 2013) <http://www.texastribune.org/2013/03/06/mexicos-energy-reform-drawing-interest-texas/> Accessed 10.08.14; Adam Williams 'PEMEX CEO Begins Chevron-to-BP Talks as Production Slumps' *Bloomberg* (August 15th, 2014) <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-08-15/pemex-fine-tuning-data-ahead-of-potential-production-revisions.html> Accessed 15.08.14

¹⁰² Noé Cruz Serrano 'Crimen "Ordeña" Siete Ductos de Pemex al Día' *El Universal* (3rd February, 2014) <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/finanzas-cartera/2014/crimen--39ordenia-39-siete-ductos-de-pemex-al-dia-984493.html> Accessed 17.08.14

¹⁰³ This is part of the Eagle Ford Shale that extends into Texas, where it is already being commercially fracked.

areas”¹⁰⁴ Violence in the Burgos Basin has already affected PEMEX and oil and gas workers in the area for quite some time,¹⁰⁵ and some of the smaller companies that have been leaders in the U.S. ‘shale boom’ have apparently been discouraged from operating in the Basin due to security costs. The Peña Nieto government’s deployment of soldiers to the region has included those soldiers escorting oil and gas workers to and from work sites.¹⁰⁶ There are also concerns about corruption of both PEMEX, and U.S. companies who have purchased stolen oil.¹⁰⁷

These reforms then, and U.S.-Mexican reengagement on economic integration (or the ‘Prosperity’ arm of the SPP), *continue to necessitate a security underpinning*. The NAFTA-land Security drive exists *in tandem* with the priorities of the HLED, and both have connections to the policy reformulation within NAFTA after 9/11, and deeper roots in the integrative impulses spurred by neighborliness and U.S. economic expansion, and locked in by NAFTA. NAFTA-land Security sets out to secure U.S. interests in Mexican stability and the protection of the NAFTA space from internal and external threats and potential threats. Deepened economic integration and further capital friendly reform is likely to encourage further investment in Mexico, with the opening up of the energy market especially tempting to market involvement on the part of U.S. and transnational corporations.¹⁰⁸ Based on current trends production would increasingly be ‘North American’, and the U.S. administration is at least seriously talking about *North American* competitiveness, and even ‘North American energy security’.¹⁰⁹ Although still very much a potential rather than a foregone conclusion, this scenario only increases the need to stabilise Mexico and gird the North American economy. Discussing Secretary Kerry’s trip to Mexico in May 2014, a State Department official said it would reaffirm U.S. bilateral policy drives. Recalling the SPP, they stated that in the trip, “[W]hat you’ve got is basically a continuation of the economic *and* the security agenda.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ U.S. Department of Energy, Energy Information Administration *Technically Recoverable Shale Oil and Shale Gas Resources: An Assessment of 137 Shale Formations in 41 Countries Outside the United States* (Washington D.C., June 2013) p.II-2

¹⁰⁵ Tracy Wilkinson ‘Mexican Cartels Cripple Pemex Operations in Basin’ *Los Angeles Times* (September 6th, 2010) <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/sep/06/world/la-fg-mexico-pemex-20100906> Accessed 14.06.11

¹⁰⁶ Nacha Cattán and Adam Williams ‘Mexico’s Drug Cartels Scare Oil and Gas Investors’ *Bloomberg* (June 19th, 2014) <http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2014-06-19/mexicos-drug-cartels-scare-oil-and-gas-investors> Accessed 17.08.14

¹⁰⁷ The Economist ‘Black Gold on the Black Market’ *The Economist* (August 4th, 2012) *The Economist* <http://www.economist.com/node/21559962> Accessed 22.03.13

¹⁰⁸ The reforms had just become law at the time of writing, but the industry had given them a “fairly pro-market” grade. Negroponte ‘Energy Reforms Become Law’

¹⁰⁹ U.S. Embassy Mexico ‘Joint Statement between the U.S. and Mexico’ (2013); U.S. White House Office of the Vice President ‘Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden at the U.S.-Mexico High Level Economic Dialogue’ (September 20th, 2013) <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/09/20/remarks-vice-president-joe-biden-us-mexico-high-level-economic-dialogue> Accessed 20.07.14

¹¹⁰ U.S. DoS ‘Background Briefing on Secretary Kerry’s Visit to Mexico’

Conclusion

The economically integrative dynamo sent spinning in North America by NAFTA has deepened U.S. interests within Mexico and North America as an increasingly holistic regional political economy. In turn 'NAFTA-land' becomes crucial to U.S. economic success and global competitiveness. The events of 9/11 highlighted to U.S. policymakers the risks to North America's open political economy as posed by transnational cross-border incidents. The eagerness for policy responses that dealt with the threat whilst maintaining open economies thus set strategists, policy wonks, academics and officials on a path to implementing layered and projected HS concepts, and a nascent trilateral arrangement that would try to officialise these ideas to better protect the U.S. and its shared interests in North America under the SPP. Mexico came under increased scrutiny as the 'weak link in the chain' and the security spotlight that had emerged as Mexico entered NAFTA increased through this period. Additionally and relatedly, concern with brutal drug related violence also both inspired policy action, *and* provided a conduit for further cooperation on wider regional security issues. Crucially, the U.S. has both dictated the pace, direction and depth of this security drive, and this has meant that *U.S. interests* are key to the integrative effort. Thus, as the SPP reached political limits and was quietly shelved, the MI became a significant vehicle for NAFTA-land Security, and the SPP's priorities lived on, in no small part due to their strategic importance to the U.S., and the logics of capitalist economic integration between the U.S. and Mexico. Just as Cole encouraged above, Mexico's CN issues provided an aperture for more substantive security interaction to protect this ongoing arrangement.

Thus, we have seen over the last two chapters the historical backdrop and development of growing U.S. strategic interests in Mexico driving the NAFTA-land Security effort. In line with the historical materialist framework, I have shown how deep core continuities and impulses have driven U.S. policy towards Mexico, in line with logics within capitalist social relations and the state's prioritisation of its interests therein. In this chapter I have further revealed how interdependencies and integration have coalesced with these continuities, the contingency of 9/11, and novel security threats in North America to produce a NAFTA-land Security policy response that seeks first and foremost to secure North America's political economic status quo - open markets and increased economic interaction. I have shown the historical development of this substantive policy effort and highlighted its core underlying drivers. The SPP has been discussed in its proper context, which clearly indicates that it is part of a *process towards* regionalised security in North America based around NAFTA's borders. The next chapter shows empirically how Mérida takes up this NAFTA-land Security logic, and how it has deepened U.S.-Mexico security cooperation and U.S. security projection into Mexico further than ever before.

Chapter Six

Mérida Initiative: Policy Analysis

“...by 2011, there was little sign of change in the consumption of drugs in the United States or the trafficking of weapons or movement of illicit money across the border. If there were any operational results, they were in such areas as customs, ports, shipping, airports, public security systems...”¹

Introduction

This chapter aims to provide a deep, detailed and thorough breakdown of the MI and the bilateral U.S.-Mexican security engagement it is a part of. At its heart, it is an empirical presentation of the policy justification and detail that underpins the growing security relations between the U.S. and Mexico. As established in the Literature Review, analysts of the MI and U.S.-Mexican security relations have not overly concerned themselves with deep examinations of policy detail. I seek to fill that gap in the literature. However, I do so with the assertion that an informed familiarity with the ‘nuts and bolts’ of the MI will yield a more informed understanding of U.S. policy goals. The overriding goal is to show how the MI connects both in a general and deep sense to the wider context established in the previous chapters. It picks up from the preceding chapter in making clear that on *one level* the MI is part of a continuing, wider effort by the U.S. to improve bilateral security relations with Mexico, with the aim of dovetailing Mexico’s security policy and aims with those of the United States, improving the security production and maintenance capabilities of Mexican state institutions for a wide-spectrum of security contingencies, and thereby bolstering Mexican political economic stability. This includes, but is by no means limited to, security concerns over Mexico’s drug-related violence. In terms of motivating factors for the latter, there is evidence of concern on the part of U.S. officials about the threat of Mexico’s cartels to the monopoly of violence supposed to be held by the Mexican state, and their potential impact on Mexico’s economic and investment environment. As I have shown this is an effort motivated by core U.S. interests, which themselves emerge from historical developments within U.S. foreign relations, its capitalist development, and its associated regional hegemony.

However, this is increasingly subsumed by a sustained and wider U.S. policy goal to construct a *regionally integrated* security framework that conceptualises the NAFTA zone as a shared economic space that must be defended from potential threats. Thus, deeper justifications and connections revealed in this chapter show unequivocally that, to use the neat phrasing of Stokes and Raphael, Mérida and increased U.S. security aid in Mexico is about inculcating Mexico’s state institutions and security forces with, “a greater capacity to guarantee internal stability *across the board*”.² With regard to the drug related security crisis, this has been skewed heavily towards military solutions in arming military and federal police units with the equipment and

¹ Richard J. Kilroy Jr., Abelardo Rodríguez Sumano and Todd S. Hataley *North American Regional Security: A Trilateral Framework* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013) p. 156

² Doug Stokes and Sam Raphael *Global Energy Security and American Hegemony* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010) p.212 My emphasis.

training to confront armed drug traffickers. However, the U.S. has also sought to improve state capacities in other, complementary areas such as criminal justice, policing faculties, and urban governance. Moreover, as Chapter Five made clear, the security aims of the U.S. are far more expansive. As part of the multi-purpose and *regional* focus of the growing bilateral security relationship, the U.S. is concerned with the *wider* abilities of the Mexican state to maintain security and govern effectively. I will show the detail of this in this chapter. Whilst U.S. officials often call this “partner capacity building”, which increasingly represents a global security policy,³ what it represents *regionally* is the construction of NAFTA-land Security. This is a deeper and regionally unique expression based around NAFTA’s perimeter, flowing from uniquely deep economic regionalisation processes that create strategic pressures to secure resultant political economic interests.

Of course, such an argument fundamentally begs a central question - if the U.S. is improving Mexico’s state security apparatus to improve its abilities to produce and maintain security, why is Mexico’s security situation continuing to unravel by a number of indices? Is U.S. policy therefore failing? Why has it continued in a largely similar vein even as Mexico’s ability to maintain security has apparently spectacularly deteriorated? This chapter provides the empirical bedrock by which to consider this question. Put simply, it is crucial to understand *what the policy is* and *what it is aimed at doing* to answer whether it is actually ‘working’. By analysing U.S. policy at granular detail in the historical and theoretical context already established, we see that in terms of the U.S.’ wider strategic goals significant elements of the new security relationship have been successful enough to warrant its continuation, even as drug-related violence has vertiginously soared. On a macro-scale, U.S. interests within its regional hegemony mean deeper U.S.-Mexican interaction on regional security becomes a goal *in and of itself*, especially given historically low levels of cooperation. Bringing Mexico into a regional security configuration further cements U.S. regional hegemony, and means Mexico is increasingly *able and willing* to work towards ensuring regional security interests outlined throughout. This chapter pinpoints multiple pieces of evidence from the U.S. state that praises growing levels of security interaction, and shows in detail particular policies that connect to the regional security goals outlined in the previous chapter. In turn I will be able to link these back to political economic interests in Mexican and North American political economic security and stability, which remain the core motivator for U.S. policy. Thus, through the historical materialist framework I gain a better explanatory purchase on how the MI and NAFTA-land Security are working. However as explored in the Conclusion, the successes here do not completely erase concerns about high levels of violence and instability in Mexico continuing despite Mexico’s growing role in NAFTA-land Security.

Chapter Structure & Aims

This chapter is mostly built around a chronological overview and discussion of the official policy documents and explanations that have complemented Mérida and the U.S-Mexican security engagement. Through the analysis I aim to convince the reader that Mérida is part of a bigger strategy, and a wider context. Therefore also included is material released by the DoD that is either related to Mérida, CN in Mexico, and/or

³ Derek S. Reveron *Exporting Security: International Engagement, Security Cooperation, and the Changing Face of the U.S. Military* (Georgetown University Press, 2010)

the wider security engagement the Initiative is part of. The continuing activities and official discourse of USNORTHCOM are especially important in this regard. We will see in this wealth of policy justification a number of important consistencies regarding the aims of the U.S. as outlined by this project; the incipient construction of a NAFTA-land security space *a là* the SPP, a sense of the importance of border/security projection, and the role of U.S. strategic interests in galvanising this policy. I then drill down a little more into policy detail ‘on the ground’, i.e. how Mérida has been implemented. I will show how various policy strands link up here, focusing especially on how training provided *outside* of the Mérida framework connects up explicitly with Mérida itself. Through all of this it will be clear how Mérida policy is *directly related* to the policy *aims* of the SPP and NAFTA-land Security. Finally through this section I consider briefly some of the effects of the policy, especially regarding continuing militarisation of the Mexican drug war. I conclude by making clear how the project up to this point has answered what Mérida is aimed to do, and why it continues despite continuing security problems in Mexico itself.

The MI: A New Security Paradigm?

This first section of the chapter analyses the policy justifications that have accompanied the announcement, development, and delivery of the MI and improved U.S.-Mexican security relations. I initially aim to trace out an historical account of the policy history of Mérida, operationalised mostly through its legislative history. This allows me to bring in a variety of official documentation that was produced as part of the legislative process. Whilst the ‘most public’ official accompanying material may have focused on drugs, one does not have to dig particularly deeply to find a wealth of official policy material that gives a clear picture of a policy that is actually about dealing with a far wider set of security concerns as part of what Bush administration officials called, “a new security paradigm”.⁴ However, whilst ‘new’ in scope, the MI is firmly in line with the goals of the SPP and NAFTA-land Security. I will show that this policy intention survived the potentially transfiguring domestic political process intact, despite some important changes. Working through this history also gives us the opportunity to intelligibly pinpoint where we place CN concerns in the wider context of the U.S.’ drive to improve Mexico’s wide-spectrum security capabilities. I focus here on Mérida’s inception under the Bush administration, through to the launch and consolidation of the Obama administration’s ‘Beyond Mérida’ strategy. I argue the *overall* focus has not significantly changed at all under Obama, however I do look at the justification for the change in tack, and show how low-level state building has become more of an overt goal behind the MI.

Mérida: Policy Justifications & Legislative History: 2007-2009

The SPP and the Conception of the MI: 2007-2008

In terms of its original intention to create a legislative and binding tri-lateral agreement, the SPP is currently a defunct arrangement, with the Obama administration choosing not to pursue it upon their entrance to power. However, in

⁴ Thomas Shannon in *The Anti-Drug Package for Mexico and Central America: An Evaluation* Hearing before Senate Committee on Foreign Relations (Serial 110-311) 110th Congress (November 15th, 2007)

several ways the SPP continues to enjoy a kind of half-life. Its influence remains in the loose geographical understanding it helped to inculcate between the NAFTA countries to cooperate on security matters affecting their shared economic space.⁵ More concretely, the supposedly annual (but in actuality more inconsistent) North American Leaders Summit stemmed from SPP negotiations. More importantly for us, the issues it was concerned with, perhaps unsurprisingly, remain integral to relations of the NAFTA countries and the policy priorities of the U.S. Indeed, we will see that the overall focus of the ‘Security’ element of the SPP - treating North America as a shared economic space in need of trilateral protection, in line with Shannon’s comments around “armoring NAFTA” - is given *practical, policy life* in the U.S.-Mexico context by the MI. Mérida, and policies or programs that intersect with it in often complex ways, supports Mexican institutions in a huge number of specific but intertwining security areas, including (broadly) CT, maritime security, border security, port security, airspace control, criminal investigation and prosecution, and, of course, CN. In sum, and given the multi-applicability of some of these programmes Mérida seeks to increase the security capabilities of Mexico ‘across the board’, firmly in line with the goal of beginning to create a hemispheric security framework, and reflecting U.S. goals in projecting their borders outward to aid in the HS mission.

Thus, the MI has a clear familial relationship with the SPP. Indeed, in a diplomatic primer to the meeting between Presidents Bush and Calderón in the city of Mérida in March, 2007 that saw the two agree on the launch of the MI, the U.S. President was explicitly advised by his Ambassador Anthony Garza that the visit should, “reaffirm our [the U.S.’] security-related priorities and our continued commitment to the SPP framework”.⁶ Prior to this, and reinforcing points made in the previous chapter, another set of cables from Garza specifically concerned how to handle the transition of government in Mexico in 2006, and contained clear insights into U.S. priorities. One stated that one of the challenges for the U.S. in dealing with any incoming Mexican administration, “will be to get the new administration focused on a number of areas for improvement [of security abilities], including training efforts to increase Mexican capabilities”.⁷ Another made clear that it was important to focus the new administration on law enforcement cooperation, that the U.S. wanted Mexico to “*take the gloves off* in battling the cartels”, and that the, “goal should be a law enforcement relationship that is worthy of the North American partnership.”⁸ Placing Mérida in this context should give us pause when considering the oft-repeated claim that it was Calderón who convinced Bush of the need for an extensive aid package and stronger

⁵ Villarreal, M. Angeles and Lake, Jennifer E. *Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America: An Overview and Selected Issues* (Congressional Research Service, May 2009)

⁶ U.S. Embassy Mexico *Scene Setter for President’s Trip to Mexico, March 12-14th, 2007* Cable Reference: 001102 (5th March, 2007) Link: <http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=07MEXICO1102&q=merida%20mexico> Accessed 03.10.12

⁷ U.S. Embassy Mexico *Engaging the New Mexican Administration on Security and Counter-Terrorism* Cable Reference: 003296 (15th June, 2006) Link: <http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=06MEXICO3296&q=mexico%20spp> Accessed 10.10.12

⁸ U.S. Embassy Mexico *Engaging the New Mexican Administration on Law Enforcement* Cable Reference 003297 (15th June, 2006) Link: <http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=06MEXICO3297&q=michoacan> Accessed 22.06.14

partnership on security and CN.⁹ .

Just as importantly, the SPP negotiations both provided a context and partial (but important) direction for Mérida, and a wider political space in which the Calderón and Bush administrations could work on what was quite an ambitious bilateral agreement. Deputy Secretary of State John D. Negroponte gives us an insight into this with his comment that, “the Security and Prosperity Partnership has provided a framework for concrete initiatives that likely would not have taken shape otherwise.”¹⁰ The channeling of SPP priorities through the MI was also politically expedient. Whilst SPP negotiations had indeed happened in private (fuelling conspiracies about a ‘North American Union’), they were imbued with a good degree of diplomatic fanfare by the very fact that the SPP came into being at a trilateral summit of Presidents and Prime Ministers. Perhaps chastened by the kind of criticism the SPP had subsequently received from both the political left and right in the U.S. and Canada who opposed greater economic union between the NAFTA signatories, U.S. and Mexican governments held Mérida negotiations both in private *and* with no diplomatic fanfare. There was also no outside consultation, a move that itself disconcerted and angered (mostly Democrat) sections of Congress.¹¹

Additionally, as we shall see below, the legislation for Mérida funding was nestled amongst the more headline grabbing latest appropriation for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Finally, in its most direct announcements the focus of the MI was very much officially explained as ‘counterdrugs’, just as Mexico’s drug violence was in the early stages of a sickening spiral, and headlines were being made in the U.S. about the brutality of ‘drug cartels’. This is not to suggest a conspiratorial mindset amongst officials. Most of the information I present in this chapter, showing a far broader security goal behind the MI, is publicly available.¹² However it is contained within the kind of large Departmental reports and Congressional testimony that would limit the already unlikely possibility that the link between the SPP and Mérida would become a political controversy, and of course it was not as ambitious as the SPP in that it did not seek to create official and long-lasting trilateral connections in any institutional sense, and finally was focused on Mexico and issues of security rather than further trilateral economic integration.

⁹ Sidney Weintraub *Unequal Partners: The United States and Mexico* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010) p.74; Clare Ribando Seelke *MI for Mexico and Central America: Funding and Policy Issues* (Congressional Research Service, January, 2010) p.2;

¹⁰ U.S. Department of State Archive ‘Deputy Secretary of State John D. Negroponte: Remarks at the Fourth North American Forum’ (Washington D.C., June 17th, 2008) <http://2001-2009.state.gov/s/d/2008/105999.htm> Accessed 26.09.13

¹¹ Coleen W. Cook and Clare Ribando Seelke *Merida Initiative: Proposed U.S. Anticrime and Counterdrug Assistance for Mexico and Central America* (Congressional Research Service, March 2008 [a]) p.1; Bryce Pardo ‘Congress Has Mixed Feelings About the MI’ *Inter-American Dialogue* (January 14th, 2008) <http://www.thedialogue.org/page.cfm?pageID=32&pubID=1185> Accessed 03.09.12; *The Merida Initiative: Assessing Plans to Step Up our Security Cooperation with Mexico and Central America* Hearing before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs (Serial 110-135) 110th Congress (November 14th, 2007) In his testimony at the Committee hearing cited(p.37), Congressman David Scott told the two administration officials present that, “Congress is not a bank just for the President to come to and get money. We are appropriators. By the Constitution, we are it [sic] that determines where the money goes, how it goes. We are here to ask questions, to be deliberative, to have the oversight.”

¹² Though diplomatic cables released by WikiLeaks, never of course meant to be public knowledge, do play an important role in strengthening this case.

Launching the Initiative

Following an initial bilateral meeting between the Bush and Calderón in March 2007 where it was, “agreed to expand bilateral and regional CN and security cooperation,” officials negotiated and crafted the MI - officially known in its early stages as the Mexico and Central America Security Initiative¹³ - before its official bi-lateral announcement on October 22nd, 2007.¹⁴ To reiterate, we should place these negotiations in the context of the SPP and the diplomatic cables we cited above, but nonetheless the Initiative was presented and developed as a distinct bilateral policy. As mentioned, the official statement that announced it justifies the aid programme in quite specific and limited terms. It asserts that the agreement is a bilateral undertaking, rather than a traditional assistance program, and that the focus of this undertaking is fundamentally focused upon the fight against drug cartels or ‘organizations’ and the illegitimate businesses they control. It is clear that these criminal organisations are conceptualised or understood as “transnational”, and that they are increasingly operating a diversified portfolio of criminal activities. The statement explains that, “Our shared goal is to maximize the effectiveness of our efforts to fight criminal organizations so as to disrupt drug-trafficking (including precursor chemicals); weapons trafficking, illicit financial activities and currency smuggling, and human trafficking” and to, “allow our countries to better confront the common threat of drug trafficking and other transnational organized crime.”¹⁵ To achieve this, the Initiative aimed to, “1) bolster Mexican domestic enforcement efforts; 2) bolster U.S. domestic enforcement efforts; and 3) expand bilateral and regional cooperation that addresses transnational crime”.¹⁶

The statement goes on to praise the domestic efforts of Calderón’s government *prior* to Mérida and his focus on CN and security, and promises that U.S. domestic efforts will also continue its own efforts. Furthermore it makes a point of stressing the new era of “bilateral cooperation” on these issues that Mérida ushers in. Part of this cooperation is in increased foreign assistance, and the statement briefly sets out how the U.S. intends to aid Calderón and augment his state’s capacities to meet the shared goal of the respective governments:

To increase the operational capabilities of Mexican agencies and institutions, our strategies include enhanced transfer of equipment and technical resources, consistent with all appropriate standards in both countries of transparency and accountability of use. The strategies also include training programs and two-way exchanges of experts, but do not

¹³ Initially the MI included aid to Mexico and Central America, underscoring the regional focus in the package. However they would eventually split as Mérida for Mexico, and the Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI). This did not mean the regional thinking behind the policies went away though. According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) this was a response to Congressional keenness to acknowledge the uniqueness of challenges across the region See Clare Ribando Seelke and Kristin M. Finklea *U.S.-Mexican Security Cooperation: The Merida Initiative and Beyond* (Congressional Research Service, April 2014) p.6, footnote 26; U.S. Government Accountability Office *Mérida Initiative: The United States has Provided Counternarcotics and Anticrime Support but Needs Better Performance Measures* (Washington D.C., July 2010) p.5

¹⁴ Cook & Seelke *Merida Initiative* p.1

¹⁵ U.S. Department of State *Joint Statement on the Mérida Initiative* (Washington D.C. 22nd October, 2007)

¹⁶ *ibid*

contemplate the deployment of U.S. military personnel in Mexico.¹⁷

The justification for this approach is a stated concern for, “the health and public safety” of citizens of both countries (with a particular concern for youth populations) and, “the stability and security of the region.” Criminal organisations are deemed to threaten both areas.¹⁸ However, the original budgetary request for Mérida funding was clear that in fact the Initiative was originally envisioned to go *beyond* CN concerns and tackling criminal organisations. The DoS’ and U.S. Agency for International Development’s (USAID) Supplemental Appropriations Budgetary Justification document outlined that the proposed \$500 million in assistance would, “enhance Mexico’s ability to address trans-national threats, *including* criminal gangs and drug traffickers that have an impact on U.S. national security, as well as support strengthened justice systems and rule of law programs in Mexico”.¹⁹ It went on to outline that, “The Mexico and Central America Security Cooperation Initiative has *important implications for the Global War on Terror*.” These implications were described as stemming from, “Weak border security, weak rule of law and strong transnational crime networks” which coalesced to increase the risk of terrorism. In response, the proposed Initiative would, “facilitate the secure flow of goods, services, and people across one of the world’s most active borders” and “remove one of the major barriers to the region’s economic and political development”.²⁰

This sense that the MI was geared towards wider security concerns than CN in its original incarnation is confirmed by the contemporary testimonies of government officials, and reports on the make-up of the aid package. We can see this on two levels. Firstly, on a broad level, we gain some insight into the *strategic logic* underpinning the Bush administration’s budgetary request for aid to Mexico, a logic that goes beyond a contingent concern for rising drug violence and improved CN bilateral interoperability. Shannon explained that a key advantage of Mérida (and CARSI) was the chance it afforded the U.S. to:

[...] build new and enduring relationships with law enforcement institutions in the region, especially in Mexico and Central America. We have been approached by the Mexicans and by the Governments of Central America in an unprecedented fashion. We believe this is an opportunity to *break down longstanding taboos* in our national relationships and *build new levels of cooperation that will not only enhance security cooperation, but will enhance broader political and diplomatic cooperation throughout the region*”.²¹

Whilst Shannon clearly pointed out the threat of drug trafficking to U.S. interests in protecting populations and the stability of the region, he also conceptualised this

¹⁷ *ibid*

¹⁸ *ibid*

¹⁹ U.S. Department of State and Agency for International Development *Supplemental Appropriations Justification Fiscal Year 2008* (Washington D.C., 2008) p.26 My emphasis.

²⁰ *ibid* p.27 My emphasis.

²¹ Shannon in *Anti-Drug Package for Mexico* My emphasis.

threat as a political opportunity to achieve those wider strategic goals alluded to above, and improved relations between the U.S. and Mexico on security and military issues, which as we have seen saw had (for the large part) relatively frosty in comparison to other Latin American states.²² Thus, discussing the “shared threat” of drug trafficking, Shannon argues that it has also opened up a space for progress on those wider fronts, and that, “it was the commitment from President Calderon and concomitant commitment from President Bush to recognize our responsibility in addressing this shared threat that really opens this unique and important space”.²³ This is something we will see repeated, especially by military officials.

On another level, we can see that this strategic opportunity is about more than just CN concerns even with regard to specific Mérida policy. As the proposed Initiative was being researched and contemplated by Congress, David T. Johnson, then Assistant Secretary for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), told the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations that, “Through the Merida Initiative [sic], the United States seeks to strengthen our partners' capacities in three broad areas: 1) Counter-Narcotics, *Counterterrorism, and Border Security*; 2) Public Security and Law Enforcement; and 3) Institution Building and Rule of Law”.²⁴ In a report for the Foreign Relations Committee member Richard Lugar²⁵ (R-Ind), a Congressional staffer relied on DoS information to provide a budget breakdown of the then proposed aid. Nine broad items were listed as being aimed towards, “Counternarcotics, *Counterterrorism and Border Security*”.²⁶ This included the provision of, “eight BH 412 EP medium-lift utility helicopters to support a variety of *counternarcotics and counterterrorism* missions.” The report states that “most importantly” this provision would mean Mexico had a full complement of Bell 412s that would, “provide mobility to rapid-reaction forces”.²⁷

This multi-applicability is important given the low but quite consistent level of political violence in Mexico from a number of groups, especially in restive, impoverished states in the south like Guerrero and Michoacán (often mentioned explicitly in diplomatic cables for their instability), and the increasingly militarised risk posed by certain drug trafficking groups (often in those same states but much more widespread). For example, whilst U.S. diplomatic cables deemed the activities of Mexico’s left-wing political insurgents the EPR as limited in threat and scope, they also designated the group and its actions as ‘terrorist’ in nature.²⁸ The bombings of oil

²² Of course the point on Central American / U.S. security relations may well have been directed towards the more controversial recent histories of U.S. security aid to many Central American states during civil wars and insurgencies. Shannon may well have been referring to an opportunity to reset security relations and move on from associations between U.S. military aid and Central American political oppression.

²³ *ibid*

²⁴ Johnson in *Anti-Drug Package for Mexico*

²⁵ Lugar was then senior Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, but has since left the Senate.

²⁶ *The Merida Initiative: “Guns, Drugs and Friends”* A Report to the Members of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations U.S. Senate, 110th Congress (S. Prt 110-35) (Dec, 2007) .16-26

²⁷ *ibid* p.17 My emphasis. More detail on this provided below.

²⁸ U.S. Embassy Mexico *Scene Setter for the Visit to Mexico of FBI Director John S. Pistole, May 21-23, 2008* Cable Reference 001487 (16th May, 2008)

Link: <http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=08MEXICO1487&q=epr%20mexico> Accessed 16.10.12

and gas pipelines in July and September 2007 claimed by the EPR were troubling for Mexican and U.S. officials as the fear was that a sustained campaign could seriously affect investor confidence alongside the more immediate economic impact of the well coordinated attacks.²⁹ Calderón sent military forces to the difficult environment of Michoacán in December 2006 as the first offensive of his crackdown on drug trafficking groups, and effectively these troops were intended to militarily engage *La Familia Michoacána*, the cult-like cartel that many have argued exercised *de facto* control over large areas of the state.³⁰ The threat of these trafficking groups is emphasised most strongly in the fact that by the end of 2007 there were 34 military fatalities, and by the end of 2008 a further 52.³¹ The ability of the Mexican state to successfully disrupt groups that challenge the state and / or are engaged in violence that affects stability (be they politically or ‘financially’ motivated) already appears to be a key rationale for U.S. policy. Thus we begin to see that the potential applicability of MI aid is by no means exhausted by pure CN concerns in terms of interdicting drugs, and instead covers a broader array of security contingencies.

This locks into the wider contention that U.S. interests as expressed in the policy priorities of the SPP are being met through the MI. Another cable from Anthony Garza in October 2007 to then Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte in advance of the latter’s trip to Mexico sums up the variegated but interlinked concerns of the U.S. In this cable Garza specifically draws connections between the U.S. anxieties over domestic terrorism, drug related violence, and Mexico’s “porous” southern border. This is also of course NAFTA’s southern border, and crossing it forms part of the journey that many of the illicit goods (and the people deemed to be illicit) take on their way to the U.S. It also speaks to *why* the U.S. is concerned about some of these activities in terms of Mexico’s “investment climate”, something we draw out further below. The cable is worth quoting at length:

EPR attacks on Pemex pipelines in July and early September have added another dimension to Mexico's security concerns, raising the specter of home-grown terrorism. Despite GOM protests to the contrary, it seems inevitable that the military and civilian security forces will divert resources to protect the pipelines and other major assets from future attacks, which *might also contaminate the investment climate*.

²⁹ U.S. Embassy Mexico *PEMEX Pipeline Attack Causes Economic Damage* Cable Reference 004980 (14th September, 2007) Link: <http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=07MEXICO4980&q=epr%20mexico> Accessed 22.06.14; Hector Tobar ‘A Small Guerrilla Band is Waging War in Mexico’ *Los Angeles Times* (September 20th, 2007) <http://articles.latimes.com/2007/sep/20/world/fg-guerrilla20> Accessed 22.06.14 There was also a triple bombing of PRI buildings and the ScotiaBank in Mexico City in 2006 under Fox’s tenure that was apparently politically motivated. See U.S. Embassy Mexico *Three Bombs Explode in Mexico City* Cable Reference 006313 (7th November, 2006) Link: <https://cablegatesearch.wikileaks.org/cable.php?id=06MEXICO6313&q=bombing%20car%20mexico> Accessed 08.07.14

³⁰ For example, Vanda Felbab-Brown *Calderón’s Caldron: Lessons from Mexico’s Battle Against Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking in Tijuana, Ciudad Juárez, and Michoacán* (Brookings Institute, September, 2011) p. 24-30 Michoacán and Guerrero are mentioned directly and frequently in a number of diplomatic cables from Mexico

³¹ Paul Kenny & Monica Serrano ‘Conclusion: Authoritarian Evolution’ in Paul Kenny, Mónica Serrano, and Arturo Sotomayor (eds.) *Mexico’s Security Failure: Collapse into Criminal Violence* (Routledge, 2011) p.201, 203

Continued criminality and violence countrywide (directed with virtual impunity) and now a new spate of guerilla activity will pressure the government to show it retains the upper hand and can overcome these threats. Calderon also recognizes that Mexico's own southern border remains extremely vulnerable to immigration, trafficking in persons, and the smuggling of contraband, and *that securing this border is of vital importance to U.S. security.*³²

Finally an interview highlighted by Kilroy *et al* helps to reinforce the interconnectedness of U.S. strategic thinking here. Just before the launch of the MI, then Commander of USNORTHCOM General Victor Renuart stated that the EPR's pipeline attacks provided a, "bellweather" as an example of the potential strategic threats both transnational criminal groups (or drug cartels) *and* terrorists could achieve in Mexico. As well as discussing transnational crime and drug traffickers more generally, he stated this meant that NORTHCOM would, "try to build exchanges, training opportunities, cooperation opportunities, discussion forums, to allow us to share ideas with the Mexican military and reach a common ground, a common understanding and a common view of how we can work together."³³ Renuart also discussed other avenues of bilateral cooperation and the strategic thinking behind them, in line with "theater security cooperation", and indeed with the treatment of the NAFTA zone as a shared security space. It is worth quoting this at greater length than Kilroy *et al*. Renuart asserts that at this point Mexico was:

... looking at ways to take advantage of new technologies to support the key centers of gravity that they see in their country. Energy security is a perfect example. [The Mexicans] have offshore drilling areas. When [they], like many other nations, hear al Qaeda say, 'We will attack the energy resources of countries which are sympathetic to the West,' it makes people nervous, because they've demonstrated at least an ability to have an impact there ... [The Mexicans] are looking at ways to modernize their naval components, their air and surface defense of key infrastructure elements--the way they do force protection around critical infrastructure within the country. So there is potentially a traditional foreign military sales, foreign military funding, education, training, theater security cooperation relationship here.³⁴

A final complementary logic should also be made clear here. The equipment transfer not only provided large one off contracts to several large arms / aircraft manufacturers, but Mérida as a whole strengthened the interconnected institutional ties between Mexico, the U.S., and the U.S. arms trade, something we will see a little more of below. Thus, as the Initiative launched it was explicitly aimed to go beyond just CN, and we can clearly place in it a wider strategic context, whereby the U.S. was

³² U.S. Embassy Mexico *Scenesetter for Deputy Secretary's Trip to Mexico October 28 - November 1* (20th October, 2007) Cable Reference 005535 Link:

<http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=07MEXICO5535&q=epr%20mexico> Accessed 25.06.14

³³ Renuart quoted in Kilroy *et al North American Regional Security* p.151

³⁴ Martin Edwin Andersen 'Top Gun: Gene Renuart Moves out Smartly as Senior U.S. Domestic General; Extends Hand to Mexico' Originally hosted at *U.S. Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies*, found here <http://www.offnews.info/verArticulo.php?contenidoID=9327> Accessed 23.07.14

seeking to bolster Mexican security capabilities (with all attendant benefits to the U.S. arms industry) across a wide spectrum of threats and threat potentials.

'Civilian' Aid

In addition to the large-scale transfer of military equipment there was significant funding proposed for institutional reform and wider questions of Mexican 'law and order'. An indicative and important example is the U.S. support for Mexico's proposed move from inquisitorial to adversarial criminal trials. As further testimony from David T. Johnson makes clear this is a complex undertaking³⁵ on the part of the Mexico and the U.S, and involves reforms, expert input and aid at many more levels than just the courtroom proceedings themselves:

The reforms go far beyond trial methodology—these require a fundamental shift in how crimes are investigated, how evidence is collected and analyzed, and how defendants are brought to trial, including amended standards of proof that previously rested on confessions. For example, key to supporting human rights concerns, the reforms adopted to date also require that defendants be represented by legal counsel.³⁶

Thus, "U.S. Government assistance to Mexico (\$79.1 million) would support a stronger prosecutorial system and a more efficient judicial system, including programs to improve transparency and support respect for human rights".³⁷ Using blunter language not afforded to U.S. diplomats, supporting these reforms showed U.S. resolve to help tackle some of the myriad problems affecting Mexico's judicial system. These problems straddle the criminal and judicial process from police investigation through to trial, and include the prevalence of torture to extract confessions, hearsay as permissible evidence, systemic corruption and bribery, and of course the (related) staggeringly high number of unsolved and unprosecuted crimes.³⁸ There is a very clear sense here that this proposed portion of the MI encourages long-term steps to ameliorate some of these issues - issues that many have argued perniciously feed security challenges in Mexico through their connection to impunity and corruption.³⁹ The weakness of Mexican institutions - not least security forces and the police - and their continued hollowing out through the corrupting power of drug profits contributes to Mexican instability.

A Regional Focus

What also came through strongly in the testimony and reporting on the incipient MI was the regional focus of the package. Again drawing upon Shannon's indicative Committee testimony, there seems to be at least a rhetorical emphasis on the

³⁵ The complexity is highlighted by progress in Mexico on this issue, which has been patchy at best. For example, see David A. Shirk 'Justice Reform in Mexico: Change & Challenges in the Judicial Sector' *Trans-Border Institute* (May, 2010); Matthew C. Ingram; Octavio Rodríguez Ferreira & David Shirk 'Assessing Mexico's Judicial Reform: Views of Judges, Prosecutors, and Public Defenders' *Special Report Trans-Border Institute* (June, 2011)

³⁶ Johnson in *The Merida Initiative* p.35

³⁷ DoS / USAID *Supplemental Appropriations 2008* p.28

³⁸ For useful overviews of these issues and the reform process see Shirk 'Justice Reform in Mexico'; Ana Laura Magaloni 'Arbitrariness and Inefficiency in the Mexican Criminal Justice System' in Kenny *et al Mexico's Security Failure* p.89-106

³⁹ *ibid*, and see the Literature Review

integrative nature of the policy, which is argued to plug into existing CN programs in the U.S., throughout South and Central America, and into the Caribbean. Shannon described the Initiative as a point, “where each nation’s domestic efforts are combined with regional cooperation and collaboration to multiply the effects of our actions, and that this was a necessity given that, “drug trafficking and criminal organizations do not respect political boundaries and that we must synchronize our tactics and confront the problem together”.⁴⁰ We see mention again of the “transnational” nature of the threat of criminal drug-trafficking organizations, and the need therefore to respond in kind with regional policies. Thus the language and detail shown here prefigures three important issues with regard to this chapter’s overall argument. Firstly, when we take the stated rationale for the original Mérida request as a whole, we can see that it was at least conceived as a *strategic multi-purpose security package* rather than a purely CN orientated plan. Secondly, despite the fact that the Bush administration’s request for Mexico was indeed heavily weighted towards expensive military procurements, it was not exclusively a military package. Thirdly, there is a strong regional justification running through official documentation that is at pains to highlight the transnational nature of the security issues currently affecting Mexico.

Mérida’s Appropriation: 2008

Of course, the funding the Bush administration sought still had to be confirmed through the Congressional Appropriation process, and unsurprisingly what was finally signed into law was by no means identical to what was requested. Mérida went through a complicated legislative history in which the legislation that it was packaged in started life as the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act, before that proposed legislation became, “the vehicle” for the Bush Administration’s Emergency Supplemental Request for the GWOT.⁴¹ Despite the obvious original intention to provide a multi-purpose security package, the Supplemental Appropriations Act that President Bush signed on the 30th June 2008 was clear that Mérida funding should *only* be applied to CN, law enforcement and institutional reform. Both the House and Senate earliest versions of the bill did not include any references to terrorism with regards to Mexico in their text.⁴² Whilst the House bill referred to ‘border security’, this was in the stated sense of drug interdiction and violence, as opposed to the more abstract version presented in the DoS/USAID budget request and by government officials.⁴³ The final version read as follows:

...Of the funds appropriated under the headings “International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement” [INCLE], “Foreign Military Financing Program” [FMF], and “Economic Support Fund” [ESF] in this chapter, not more than \$352,000,000 of the funds appropriated in subchapter A and \$48,000,000 of the funds appropriated in subchapter B⁴⁴ may be made available for

⁴⁰ Shannon in *Anti-Drug Package for Mexico*

⁴¹ Coleen W. Cook and Clare Ribando Seelke *Merida Initiative: Proposed U.S. Anticrime and Counterdrug Assistance for Mexico and Central America* (Congressional Research Service, July 2008 [b]) p.5

⁴² *ibid* p.5-6; ‘Merida Initiative to Combat Illicit Narcotics and Reduce Organized Crime Authorization Act of 2008’ H.R. 6028 Proposed Bill, 110th Congress (2008); ‘Supplemental Appropriations Act 2008: Engrossed Amendment Senate 2’ 110th Congress (2008)

⁴³ ‘Merida Initiative to Combat Illicit Narcotics’

⁴⁴ The \$48 million referred to here would become available to spend on October 1st, 2008 as a ‘bridge fund’ assistance for FY2009. See below for reference.

assistance for Mexico, *only to combat drug trafficking and related violence and organized crime*, and for judicial reform, institution building, anti-corruption, and rule of law activities.⁴⁵

Other more substantive changes to what the administration had originally requested took place. As indicated in the quote above, Congress divided aid between a number of mechanisms, whereas the executive had sought to channel all official Mérida aid (including aid to the Mexican military) through INCLE accounts.⁴⁶ \$263.5 million was provided through INCLE, whilst \$116.5 and \$20 million went through the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and Economic Support Fund (ESF) mechanisms respectively.⁴⁷ In addition, sections of Congress (notably Sen. Patrick Leahy [D-Vt], an important figure in human rights and foreign aid legislation)⁴⁸ attempted to introduce a number of checks and human rights limits to the funding, to the apoplexy of White House officials and the Mexican government. The Bush administration's request had contained no human rights conditionality, beside that which is provided automatically by U.S. foreign assistance law.⁴⁹ Congress' attempts to go beyond these basics with fairly significant human rights stipulations fused to any aid stimulated Mexican officials to cite affronts to their country's sovereignty,⁵⁰ and administration members to engage in surprisingly caustic public pressure in an attempt to cow

⁴⁵ Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2008, Pub L. No. 110-252, 122 Stat. 2323 (2008) My emphasis.

⁴⁶ Seelke *Funding and Policy Issues* p.3 The Bush administration may have sought to direct funds through INCLE because, as of 2006, there was an explicitly CT justification within the INCLE fund. The 2006 Bureau of International Narcotics And Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) Budgetary Justification explained that, "To deal with the increasing linkage and overlap among drug, crime, and terrorist groups, INL has begun shifting from separate programs for counternarcotics and anticrime to a broader and more integrated law enforcement effort to combat the full range of criminal, drug, and terrorist threats" (U.S. Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs *Fiscal Year 2006 Budget Congressional Justification* (Washington D.C., 2006) p. 5; Just the Facts: International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Assistance http://justf.org/Program?program=International_Narcotics_Control_and_Law_Enforcement Accessed 29.09.12 Please note the Center for International Policy's Just the Facts website U.S. security assistance to Latin America is now part of the Security Assistance Monitor project <http://securityassistance.org>)

⁴⁷ I provide more detail on this and the various mechanisms below. For a useful table of Mérida appropriations up to date to April 2014, see Seelke, Clare Ribando and Finklea, Kristin M, *U.S.-Mexican Security Cooperation: The MI and Beyond* (Congressional Research Service, April 2014) p.7

⁴⁸ Leahy is the longest serving member of the U.S. Senate (and therefore President pro tempore), and a veteran advocate for human rights legislation and consideration in U.S. foreign policy. He is the author of the important 'Leahy Amendment' that has applied to U.S. foreign military aid since 1997. See footnote below.

⁴⁹ Since 1998 the so-called Leahy laws, named after their sponsor Patrick Leahy, have been in place. They prohibit the furnishing of assistance to, "any foreign security force that is credibly believed to have committed a gross violation of human rights" under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 as amended (FAA) and the Arms Export Control Act as amended (AECA). A separate rolling provision preventing any training being provided to a security unit by the DoD has also been in place, and in FY2014 this has been expanded to include equipment. This has built on country-specific human rights legislation (as in Mexico's case) and some earlier human rights provision upon foreign assistance, but is the most expansive 'permanent' human rights legislation. See Nina M. Serafino, June S. Beittel, Lauren ploch Blanchard and Liana Rosen "*Leahy Law*" *Human Rights Provisions and Security Assistance: Issue Overview* (Congressional Research Service, January, 2014) p.1

⁵⁰ Cook and Seelke *Merida Initiative* [b] p.6; Dunn, Emily 'Mexico and the Merida Initiative - A Difficult Call' *Council on Hemispheric Affairs* (June 5th, 2008) <http://www.coha.org/mexico-and-the-merida-initiative-a-difficult-call/> Accessed 07.09.12

recalcitrant lawmakers.⁵¹ Despite this pressure, Congress was able to secure a 15% conditionality waiver on the INCLE and FMF funds, dependent on Mexico's ability and effort to improve police force transparency, improve liaisons between human rights groups and government on Mérida, ensure judicial/civilian authorities investigations of military and federal police human rights abuses, and prohibit torture in line with international law.⁵²

However, we should exercise caution in determining how much weight we assign these Congressional changes to the overall direction of Mérida. Firstly, the human rights stipulations Congress attached to aid fell far short of their original aims, and the advice of human rights analysts and NGOs. Earlier iterations of the Act had made 25% of aid reliant upon Mexico's government and institutions meeting more stringent requirements than were set out in the final version of Mérida. Congress rolled back language seeking to ensure that Mexico's National Human Rights Commission was strengthened, and that military personnel accused of human rights abuses would be tried in civilian courts.⁵³ These are key measures for improving Mexico's human rights records according to a number of expert sources.⁵⁴ Of more import in terms of the aims of this current discussion is the fact that whilst Congress may have understood or presented the Supplemental Appropriations Act as, "only" combating drug trafficking and, "related" crime and violence, it did very little to change how the money was *actually* spent. Those items that had been described by the DoS as fulfilling, "Counternarcotics, Counterterrorism and Border Security" roles, as the policy detail sets out below attests, were all part of the eventual Mérida package.

This is also borne out in a DoS spending report provided to Congress following the passage of the Supplemental Appropriations Act. The report at times matches up with the focus of Mérida as described in the Act, claiming the policy is, "designed to build on activities already underway in the region and to complement U.S. efforts here at home to reduce drug demand, to stop the flow of narcotics as well as arms and

⁵¹ John Walters, then head of the Office of National Drugs Control Policy (ONDCP), suggested members of Congress attempting to condition the MI were guilty of trading on an insulting, "cartoon view" of Calderón and his government, "fighting and dying in order to get U.S. money so they can violate human rights". Lara Lakes Jordan 'White House: Congress "Sabotaging" Mexico Aid Deal' *Associated Press* (June 3rd, 2008)
http://www.foxnews.com/printer_friendly_wires/2008Jun03/0.4675.MexicoDrugAid.00.html Accessed 08.09.12

⁵² Supplemental Appropriations Act 2008

⁵³ Cook and Seelke *Merida Initiative* [b] p.6; 'Supplemental Appropriations Act 2008: Engrossed Amendment Senate 2'

⁵⁴ Stephanie Erin Brewer 'Rethinking the Mérida Initiative: Why the U.S. Must Change Course in its Approach to Mexico's Drug War' *Human Rights Brief* 16, 3 (2009) p.12; Human Rights Watch 'Uniform Impunity: Mexico's Misuse of Military Justice to Prosecute Abuses in Counternarcotics and Public Security Operations' *Human Rights Watch* (2009) Recently, under pressure from the Inter-American Court on Human Rights (IACHR), the Mexican Supreme Court has made a number of independent rulings increasing the likelihood of civilian trials for military members in human rights cases as standard practice (see Amnesty 'Mexico: Supreme Court Limit on Military Jurisdiction Must Become Binding Precedent' *Amnesty International* (August 22nd, 2012)
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/mexico-supreme-court-limit-military-jurisdiction-must-become-binding-precedent-all-courts-2012-> Accessed 12.09.12). I look more deliberately at human rights issues below.

weapons, and to confront gangs and criminal organizations”.⁵⁵ However, soon the language of CT, border security and wider security concerns reappears. Once again, the planned provision of Bell helicopters is seen in both a CT and CN light. The provision of CASA 235 maritime patrol aircraft will help SEMAR, “deny the use of Mexican waters to transnational criminals and terrorists.” The U.S. would, “support the development of the Government of Mexico's institutional capacity to detect and interdict illicit drugs, explosives and weapons, trafficked/smuggled persons and individuals seeking to enter the United States to conduct terrorist activities.” Ion scanners would help, “detect illicit drug and arms trafficking through remote areas of Mexico” (whoever these illicit arms belong to or are destined for).⁵⁶ There is also a clear indication that Mérida as a whole (including aid to Central America) is a wide ranging package that extends the concept of HS across the hemisphere, much in line with the goals of the SPP:

Much as the United States has recognized the need to secure its borders, so have Mexico and the nations of Central America. *It is not enough for us to focus solely on the Southwest border of the United States.* By supporting our southern neighbors' efforts to secure their territory, we are able to create a much more *secure area* that extends to Panama and *denies the use of this territory* by drug traffickers, terrorists, or smugglers for illicit purposes.⁵⁷

Further Requests, and a Continuing Regional Focus

The sense that the U.S. is seeking to construct a regional security integration running through Mexico via the MI was reinforced by the Bush administration's request for further Mérida aid for FY2009. In asking for \$450 million for Mexico (again through INCLE accounts only), the DoS again emphasised the threat of drug trafficking and transnational crime to joint U.S.-Mexican and regional security, but also highlighted improved military-to-military cooperation on CT.⁵⁸ General ‘border security’ across the region is focused upon frequently in the document, often in relation to CT, but also in terms of other threats and goals. For example, there is mention of the “shared interest” between Mexico, the U.S. and other Central American nations in improving border security, with a direct reference for the opportunities to, “develop closer cooperation in counter-terrorism”.⁵⁹ In discussing Belize, the document outlines that the U.S. will support its, “border security capabilities by providing equipment to the border police to tighten security on unmonitored borders with Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico that facilitate the movement of drugs, trafficked persons, and illegal immigrants”.⁶⁰

As policy detail attests, there is a concomitant *but deeper* focus on Mexico's side of its southern border. Here we see another clear traceable line between the details and policy of the MI, and the broader security concerns expressed by U.S. officials in

⁵⁵ U.S. Department of State *FY2008 Supplemental Appropriation Spending Plan: Mexico, Central America Haiti and the Dominican Republic* (Washington D.C. 2008) p.3

⁵⁶ *ibid* p.5-6

⁵⁷ *ibid* p.17 My emphasis

⁵⁸ U.S. Department of State *Congressional Budget Justification: Foreign Operations Fiscal Year 2009* (Washington D.C, 2008) p.xxi, 707

⁵⁹ *ibid* p.743

⁶⁰ *ibid* p.658

relation to the importance of pushing forward with the SPP. As we saw previously, diplomatic cables reveal Mexico's southern frontiers as an area of some weight in U.S. thinking. Former Ambassador Antonio Garza repeated in a cable prior to the visit to Mexico of then U.S. Attorney General Michael Mukasey, "Calderon also recognizes that Mexico's own southern border remains extremely vulnerable to immigration, trafficking in persons, and the smuggling of contraband, and that *securing this border is of vital importance to U.S. security*".⁶¹ This is one of a series of diplomatic references to the perceived vulnerability of the southern border to a number of real and potential illicit activities. Here the MI is attuned explicitly to the U.S. goal of projecting its approach to border security onto Mexico, and creating a secure, shared economic space in line with the concepts of HS, or, more holistically, 'NAFTA-land Security.'

To highlight this point, and to show how Mérida policies are directly aimed to help Mexico to achieve greater border security, the Initiative builds on previous U.S. programs by financially assisting Mexican institutions such as the National Migration Institute (INM, previously INAMI) and Secretariat of Communications (SCT) to help improve their security, IT, inspection, verification and database systems. Mérida funds were also to be directed to Mexico's intelligence service, *Centro de Investigación y Seguridad Nacional* (CISEN) for, "enhanced data management and analysis capabilities".⁶² Mérida policy detail confirms that these programs went ahead, and once again we can see the focus on regional border security in that detail. Another report of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee confirmed that Mérida funds were pending for Biometric equipment and Biometric sites for INM, including for 10 locations along the Southern border.⁶³ This equipment was used to log persons crossing the border and has been touted for its part in allowing INM to track these individuals more efficiently, and potentially, "identify individuals in immigration detention centers who might pose a threat to national security".⁶⁴ In terms of Mérida's intersection with wider programs and border security interests, the Export Control and Related Border Security (EXBS) Program and its, "strategic vision for the Western Hemisphere [...] to strengthen border security, including the legal and regulatory frameworks that affect trade" gets a specific mention.⁶⁵ The EXBS grew out of nuclear nonproliferation efforts in former Soviet satellites, and has since expanded to a number of geographical areas, and added more general export controls and

⁶¹ U.S. Embassy Mexico *Scene Setter for the Visit of Attorney General Michael Mukasay to Mexico, January 15th-16th, 2008* Cable Reference: 000081 (11th January, 2008) Link:

<http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=08MEXICO81&q=epr%20mexico> Accessed 13.10.12

⁶² DoS *FY2008 Supplemental Appropriations Spending Plan* p.6

⁶³ *Common Enemy, Common Struggle: Progress in U.S.-Mexican Efforts to Defeat Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking* A Report to the Members of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations U.S. Senate, 111th Congress (S. Prt 111-??) (2010) p.20

⁶⁴ U.S. Embassy Mexico 'U.S. Delivers New Biometric Technology to INM To Help Strengthen Mexico's Southern Border' Press Release (November 3rd, 2011) <http://mexico.usembassy.gov/press-releases/ep111004-inami.html> Accessed 03.10.12 Mexico has become somewhat of a world leader in the use of biometric technology. Despite concerns about privacy and its prototypical use on youth and, "casual labourers" (presumably at Southern border sites) it is rolling out a biometric I.D. card system, which is the first to use iris scans as part of its information package (Manuli, Gabriela 'Despite Privacy Concerns, Mexico Continues Scanning Youth Irises for ID Cards' *Electronic Frontier Foundation* (August 31st, 2012) <https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2012/08/despite-privacy-concerns-mexico-continues-scanning-youth-irises-id-cards> Accessed 03.10.12).

⁶⁵ U.S. Embassy Mexico 'Biometric Technology'

conventional weaponry to its remit.⁶⁶

DoD Involvement

Whilst I will go on to look at the role of the DoD in greater specific detail below, at this point it is worth highlighting that alongside further Mérida budgetary requests, non-Mérida funding was also increasing in tandem with Mérida. Under DoD aid programs such as Section 1004 Counter Drug Assistance and Section 1206 Train and Equip Authority,⁶⁷ the Pentagon increased its involvement in aid provision to Mexico. For example in FY2008, the DoD provided just under \$12.5 million for Mexico in a “CT package” designed to provide, “Equipment and training to reduce ungoverned territories that could be exploited by terrorists as safe havens and transit points”.⁶⁸ This DoD aid has been administered through USNORTHCOM. NORTHCOM’s Commander General. Renuart did not draw a particularly sharp distinction between his comments on Mexico’s CN concerns related to, “organized violent criminal networks” and the rationale for the 1206 ‘CT’ package, explaining that its equipment provision, “includes personal protective equipment, digital media forensics equipment, night vision devices, and equipment needed to board suspect vessels at sea”.⁶⁹

Thus military aid programs reinforce the sense of a multi-purpose security package being provided to Mexico, with a focus on a number of potential threats, including, but not exhausted by, CN. Again, the wider strategic advantages offered by Mérida are clear to see in official thinking, and a layering effect of influence is seen from the increased cooperation leading up to the SPP, through the SPP itself, and now through the MI. The Congressional Research Service (CRS) reported that, “According to DOD officials in Mexico City, Mérida has, “opened doors” for U.S.-Mexican military cooperation, and may result in increased DOD and State Department-funded training and equipment for the Mexican military.⁷⁰ Another later CRS study discussed the view of Admiral James Winnefeld⁷¹ in seeing a, “‘tremendous opportunity’ to strengthen ties between the U.S. and Mexican militaries” in the Mérida context.⁷² These two policy strands - official Mérida aid and increased U.S. military assistance from the DoD - are happening concomitantly, and indeed they are meant to complement each other.

Further Appropriations, and What Place CN Concerns?

On its final passage through Congress as the Omnibus Appropriations Act March 11th, 2009, the Bush administration’s final Mérida request had been divided up amongst FMF, ESF and INCLE accounts. Whilst Congress also added the same human rights

⁶⁶ U.S. Department of State: The EXBS Program <http://www.state.gov/t/isn/ecc/c27911.htm> Accessed 29.05.13; U.S. Department of State: A Resource on Strategic Trade Management and Export Controls <http://www.state.gov/strategictrade/> Accessed 29.05.13

⁶⁷ More detail is provided on these particular programs below.

⁶⁸ U.S. Department of Defense *Section 1209 and Section 1203(b) Report to Congress on Foreign Assistance Related Programs for Fiscal Years, 2008, 2009 and 2010* (Washington D.C. 2012) p.100

⁶⁹ Statement of General Victor E. Renuart Jr. USAF Commander United States Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command Before the Senate Armed Services Committee, 111th Congress (March 17th, 2009)

⁷⁰ Seelke *Funding and Policy Issues* p.15

⁷¹ NORTHCOM Commander May 2010 - August 2011

⁷² Clare Ribando Seelke and Kristin M. Finklea *U.S.-Mexican Security Cooperation: The Merida Initiative and Beyond* (Congressional Research Service, August 2011) p.37

conditionality as had been placed on the Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2008, it excluded “judicial reform, institution building, anti-corruption and rule of law activities”.⁷³ It also reduced total aid to \$300 million from the requested \$450 million.⁷⁴ The table below sets out all the appropriations up to this point:

Table 1: Mérida Appropriations under Bush (in millions of \$)

Account	FY2008	FY2009 Bridge	FY2009
INCLE	215.5	48	246
FMF	116.5	0	39
ESF	20	0	15
Total	352	48	300
		Overall Total	700

Sources: Clare Ribando Seelke *MI for Mexico and Central America: Funding and Policy Issues* (Congressional Research Service, August 2009) p.6

However, once more there was little Congressional involvement in the final detail of Mérida aid, and little change on the overall multi-purpose security direction of the policy. As just one example, the INL’s 2009 Program and Budget Guide⁷⁵ stated that it would be helping, “support the development of the GOM’s [Government of Mexico’s] institutional capacity to detect and interdict *inter alia* illicit drugs, explosives and weapons, trafficked/smuggled persons and individuals seeking to enter the United States to conduct terrorist activities”.⁷⁶

In the Budgetary Justification for FY2009, the DoS groups Mexico together with a number of other challenging areas for U.S. foreign policy, often of crucial strategic importance, in outlining that with regard to INCLE that, “Resources are also focused in countries that have specific challenges to overcome to establish a secure, stable environment, such as Mexico, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, and Indonesia”.⁷⁷ This specific challenge is namely the activities and increasing violence of “criminal elements” (cartels) and indeed their challenge to the state and, “virtual dominion” of certain areas within Mexico.⁷⁸ At first blush, it appears credulity stretching to include Mexico amongst states with such serious issues of

⁷³ Clare Ribando Seelke and Kristin M. Finklea *U.S.-Mexican Security Cooperation: The Merida Initiative and Beyond* (Congressional Research Service, July 2010) p.27

⁷⁴ Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2009, Pub. L. No. 111-8, 123 Stat. 524 (2009); Seelke *Funding and Policy Issues* p.4-5 Despite the author’s best efforts, he was unable to locate an exact breakdown for the original Mérida request of \$450million for this piece of legislation, and so it is hard to say definitively what was ‘cut’ between request and appropriation by Congress.

⁷⁵ It should be noted that the legislative history becomes a little complex here, as the requests for 2008 and 2009 were actually submitted fairly close together, and at the time of the publication of this particular document both what would become the Supplemental Appropriations Act and the Omnibus Appropriations Act were still at their request stage. It therefore becomes hard to disentangle a clear chronology, and assign which particular policy point belongs to which budget request. However, as the chapter argues, we should see the separate appropriations as parts of an integrated policy in any case.

⁷⁶ U.S. Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs *Fiscal Year 2009 Program and Budget Guide* (Washington D.C., 2008) p.320-321

⁷⁷ U.S. Department of State *Congressional Budget Justification: Foreign Operations Fiscal Year 2009* (Washington D.C, 2008) p.53

⁷⁸ DoS INL *Fiscal Year 2009 Program and Budget Guide* p.319

violence, effective governance and poverty as Afghanistan⁷⁹ and Haiti.⁸⁰ However it does also hint at the level of official U.S. concern about rising *drug-related* bloodshed and its impact on stability in the country. This flags another of the central arguments of this chapter, namely that drug activity and violence in Mexico is a genuine motivating factor for policy, and therefore CN programs that attempt to mitigate it are an essential element of Mérida and bilateral U.S.-Mexico security relations.

This assertion demarcates me from that section of the Critical literature that has underplayed the ‘drug threat’ as a Trojan horse for securing ‘genuine’ strategic and economic interests.⁸¹ However it does raise an immediate question - what is the move to a security relationship and Mérida aid more motivated by: CN and stemming drug violence, or the U.S. interest in establishing efficacious security relations with the Mexican state and its concurrent drive to improve the wide spectrum security competencies of Mexico’s state institutions? The simple answer is the two are not mutually exclusive, and indeed share a symbiotic relationship. They are both driven by the broad U.S. concern (one, as we’ve seen, with significant historical roots) in helping to foster and encourage a secure and stable Mexico, whose overall political-economic environment dovetails as closely as possible with U.S. strategic preferences and interests, most especially economic ones. U.S. planners increasingly see Mexico’s continuing drug violence as one of a number of current or potential threats to Mexico’s stability, and by extension the economically important free trade NAFTA-zone it is part of. The U.S.’ Strategy to Combat the Threat of Criminal Gangs from Central America and Mexico document summarised the threat of violent gangs that operate in Mexico and across the Central American region, asserting that they endangered, “the U.S. regional interest in fostering *stable democracies with free and vibrant economies*”.⁸²

It is in the context we should understand this excerpt from the Embassy cable that prepared Bush for his meeting with Calderón that spawned the MI in March 2007. Discussing the security drive the new Mexican President had engaged on since the start of his tenure, the cable related that:

His security efforts *are designed to reassure foreign investors* and Mexicans worried about drug-related crime and lawlessness that organized criminals will no longer act with impunity. He knows that attracting investment, *particularly from the U.S.*, is pivotal to curbing migration and narrowing the social and economic inequalities that undercut Mexican society and result in bitter

⁷⁹ This is not the last time we will see connections in official parlance and policy concerning similarities between Afghanistan and Mexico. See below.

⁸⁰ To a certain extent, this chimes with the 2008 Joint Operating Environment report’s controversial assessment that Mexico was to be understood as a weak and/or failing state, as we mentioned in the Introduction. U.S. Joint Forces Command *The Joint Operating Environment 2008: Challenges and Implications for the Future Joint Force* (Virginia, 2008) Whilst this assertion has largely disappeared from official public discourse, interestingly, Presidential candidate Mitt Romney used the term to describe Mexico, grouping the country with Somalia, Yemen, Pakistan and Afghanistan in a campaign white paper. Joshua Hersh ‘Mitt Romney’s Mexico Problem’ *The Huffington Post* (January 14th, 2012) http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/01/14/mitt-romney-mexico_n_1206096.html Accessed 30.09.12

⁸¹ See Literature Review

⁸² U.S. Department of State *U.S. Strategy to Combat the Threat of Criminal Gangs from Central America and Mexico* (Washington D.C. 2007) p.1 My emphasis.

political divisions. Calderon also recognizes that his vision of Mexico becoming a more prosperous country and a regional leader *depends on security and the rule of law*.⁸³

There is some debate as to whether drug violence has in actuality had a *tangible* effect on investment and growth in Mexico. Both have continued to rise (other than in the U.S. credit-crunch affected year of 2009) despite the concomitant rise in drug violence. Investment levels remain markedly high in several of those states most affected by drug violence.⁸⁴ U.S. diplomatic cables from the 2006-2008 period reflect the somewhat confused picture on this issue. In 2006, the U.S. Embassy in Mexico discussed a meeting with important Mexico investors, and cited both the study of the private NGO *Instituto Mexicano para la Competividad* (IMC) that asserted crime issues cost Mexico 1.5% of GDP annually (around \$1.8 billion), and the opinions of several of those investors that security concerns affected operating costs and, potentially, their continued investment. However it also noted that no company was willing or able to offer an example where violence had *actually* affected an investment, which the U.S. interpreted in itself as possibly the result of those present not wanting to add to a perception of insecurity that could dissuade investors from considering Mexico.⁸⁵

Despite the complexity of the investment environment's relations with violence, other cables attest to U.S. concern about the relationship between Mexico's state security capabilities, drug violence, and continuing growth and FDI. A cable referring to Mexico's investment climate in 2008 included drug violence in the section on, "Political Violence". Whilst concluding that political violence should, "not be a major concern" (despite the previously mentioned limited activities of the EPR and violent scenes at protests in Oaxaca in 2006) in discussing drug violence the cable states, "Though not political in nature, the Embassy has noticed that general security concerns remain an issue for companies looking to invest in the country".⁸⁶ Another cable specifically discussing the state of San Luis Potosi suggested that if security officials were willing to meet, "narco-violence" head on this could increase attractiveness for investors, as could a relative increase in such violence in the neighboring Nuevo Leon, through making Potosi the comparatively better option.⁸⁷

⁸³ U.S. Embassy Mexico *Scene Setter for President's Trip to Mexico, March 12-14th, 2007* Cable Reference: 001102 (5th March, 2007) Link:

<http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=07MEXICO1102&q=merida%20mexico> Accessed 03.10.12

⁸⁴ June S. Beittel *Mexico's Drug Trafficking Organizations: Source and Scope of the Rising Violence* (Congressional Research Service, August 2012) p.27

⁸⁵ U.S. Embassy Mexico *Effect of Violence on Mexican Investment* Cable Reference: 001536 (22nd March, 2006) Link:

<http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=06MEXICO1536&q=investment%20mexico%20security>

Accessed 04.10.12 The cable also directly referenced the "paradox" of areas with the highest growth rates also experiencing relatively more security issues. This, as we have seen, is a theme taken up academic studies. However it warrants further research given the supposed anathema that violence represents for investment and business. As we also saw previously, there have since been more direct attacks on business interests.

⁸⁶ U.S. Embassy Mexico *Mexico's 2008 Investment Climate Statement - Part 2 of 2* Cable Reference 000152 (22nd January, 2008) Link:

<http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=08MEXICO152&q=epr%20mexico> Accessed 01.10.12

⁸⁷ U.S. Consulate Monterrey *San Luis Potosi Growing Economically but not Enough to Provide Needed Jobs* Cable Reference: 000100 (27th February, 2008) Link:

Whatever the veracity of these claims, the key is the U.S. response is not just to ‘actual,’ universally agreed upon, bona fide threats (if such threats exist), but also to *perceived* and *potentially plausible* threats. The ability of the Mexican state to counter such threat scenarios, whether they stem from drug trafficking or other potential security contingencies and destabilising influences, is at the heart of the U.S.’ security policies in Mexico and the growing bilateral security relationship.

There is a further element to this threat stemming directly from CN concerns. In 2008 former Ambassador Anthonio Garza warned that, “Deteriorating security conditions throughout the country will further erode the electoral chances of moderate leaders in Mexico and could eventually open the door to less democratic challengers.” Garza acknowledged that the left in Mexico had been harmed by the protests of the PRD following the fractious knife-edge election of Calderón, and consoled that no Chávez was, “waiting in the wings”. However he did contend that, “The more immediate threat to political stability comes from narco-traffickers and other organized crime elements who challenge security and cause the government to divert precious resources to fight rampant crime throughout the country.” This threat could potentially be magnified by the looming energy crisis spurred by PEMEX’s dwindling oil reserves and the exhaustion of the Cantarell oil field, and its apparent lack of capital ability to invest in the highly challenging technological projects required to boost production and discovery.⁸⁸ As Mexico’s federal government relies on oil revenues for 40% of its budget,⁸⁹ this is a potentially very serious slow-motion economic crisis. Garza cautions that, “Mexico will likely endure a protracted fight against the cartels with detrimental effects on *foreign investment*, tourism and *internal stability*. Without a formal strategy that reduces the country’s heavy reliance on oil revenues, security costs will bleed the Mexican treasury for many years to come”.⁹⁰ This is a recurrent theme in the Mexico cables.

As the testimony of Thomas Shannon indicated, CN acts as a convenient access point for security integration for the U.S., but it is also an important element of a multipurpose security strategy for Mexico (constructed through that access point) precisely because drug violence is now *amongst the threats* to U.S. economic and strategic interests in that country (and indeed the region).⁹¹ This recurrent argument will continue to be reinforced as I proceed. For now, it suffices to reiterate the key argument of this section, namely that the policy justification for Mérida demonstrates that from the outset it represented a *regionally-focused multi-purpose security*

<http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=08MONTERREY100&q=investors%20mexico%narcoti>
cs Accessed 12.10.12

⁸⁸ For more on this issue see, for example, Michael T. Klare *The Race for What’s Left: The Global Scramble for the World’s Last Resources* (Picador, 2012), p.19-22

⁸⁹ The figure cited in this particular cable.

⁹⁰ U.S. Embassy Mexico *Economic Conditions in Mexico* Cable Reference 000033 (7th January, 2009) Link: <http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=09MEXICO33&q=china%20mexico> Accessed 13.10.12 As we saw in the previous chapter, Mexican reforms have tried to address this federal reliance on oil profits, but this is likely to take a long time to succeed.

⁹¹ However, this is *not* to argue that the GOM and its security forces have *not* used CN instrumentally to target political and civil society opponents (including insurgent movements), that the Mexican federal and local authorities and security forces have not attempted to silence dissidents and human rights complainants, that U.S. training and equipment has not been used in these efforts (whatever its intended use), and that the U.S. has not supplied certain aid to the GOM that has a social control purpose.

package, with clear ties to the intentions of NAFTA-land Security. Within this overarching framework there is a clear CN element, which was fairly heavily slanted towards militarised options in improving Mexico's capacity to improve wide-spectrum security. However, it also contained important social-institutional aid and reform that was designed to help fulfill long-term security and governance efficacies of several state institutions. I have traced this conclusion from Mérida's conception, to its appropriation, through to its planned delivery. I now move onto the evolution of Mérida policies as the Obama administration moved into power. Does this assessment hold true through this period? Were the Obama administration's priorities and goals any different to those of the Bush administration? Were the justifications of this administration any different, and how did they relate to actual policy?

Mérida Under Obama: More of the Same? (2009-2012)

Early Requests and Appropriations

The Obama administration has continued to seek elevated levels of aid to Mexico through its tenure. Partially this was a working through of the appropriations and planning secured in Bush's second term. Interestingly, the new administration's first stand-alone budgetary request for Mexico was a \$66 million supplemental to provide the Mexican Secretariat of Public Security and Federal Police (*Secretaría de la Seguridad Pública - SSP*)⁹² with three UH60M Sikorsky Blackhawk helicopters. Democrat-controlled Congress, instead appropriated \$420 million in the FMF and INCLE accounts in the FY2009 Supplemental Appropriations Act. Congress removed any human rights conditionality from the FMF funds to provide aircraft to SEMAR that made up \$260 million of the appropriation, but kept it on INCLE aid.⁹³ The administration's second Mérida request was for \$450 million in FY210. Again this was requested entirely through the INCLE mechanism. The INL Budget Guide for that year couched the request in very familiar terms. Connecting the Mexican and Central American elements of the MI to reinforce the regional focus and 'border projection' element of the package, the document states:

The overall objectives of the assistance are to break the power and impunity of criminal organizations; *strengthen border, air, and maritime controls from the Southwest border of the United States to Panama*; improve the capacity of justice systems in the region to conduct investigations and prosecutions; consolidate the rule of law, protect human rights, and reform prison management; curtail criminal gang activity; and reduce the demand for drugs throughout the region.⁹⁴

⁹² This state institution was one of the key elements of Calderón's security reforms, as it took over responsibility for Mexican 'internal security' from the often-controversial Secretariat of the Interior (*Secretaría de Gobernación - SEGOB*). However, in the latest round of musical chairs with regard to Mexico's security policy, the Peña Nieto administration formerly shifted 'internal security' powers and remit back into SEGOB in January 2013.

⁹³ Specifically maritime helicopters and CASA air and maritime surveillance planes. See *Funding and Policy Issues* (2009 and 2010) p. 5 It is interesting to consider what part politics played in this larger appropriation, with a Democrat in the White House and a Democrat controlled Congress in place.

⁹⁴ Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement Affairs *Fiscal Year 2010 Program and Budget Guide* (Washington D.C., 2009) p.29 My emphasis.

Discussing Mexico specifically, the distinction between Mérida and other U.S. security and domestic priorities was again non-existent. The INL Guide focused on “Border and Port Security” and repeated previous years’ justifications in terms of, “detection and interdiction of illicit narcotics, contraband (including explosives and weapons), trafficked/smuggled persons and individuals seeking to enter the United States to conduct terrorist activities.”⁹⁵ Those concerns over the ‘border paradox’, which animated U.S. policymakers through the 90s and more pressingly after 9/11, again appear. The request seeks to ensure, “More effective and rapid screening of cargo and vehicles [...] for contraband, illicit drugs and smuggled aliens” and, “reduced delays of legitimate traffic moving north towards our common border.”⁹⁶ Whilst these overall *aims* were once again unaffected by the legislative process, actual figures were again reduced. Eventually Congress appropriated \$210.3 million in the FY2010 Consolidated Appropriations Act. Members argued the extra funding provided in the 2009 act made up for the shortfall from the Obama administration’s original request.⁹⁷ Again funding was divided, although the vast majority (\$190million) went through INCLE, and it was all subject to the 15% conditionality (minus institution-building, anti-corruption, judicial reform and ‘rule of law’ aid).⁹⁸ In any case, the FY10 Supplemental Appropriations Act saw Congress appropriate a further \$175 million in the INCLE account (all with the 15% stipulation), taking 2010 funding to \$385.3 million.⁹⁹ A table clearly setting out these mounting different appropriations up to this point in Mérida’s history is provided below:

Table 2: Mérida Appropriations by end FY2010 (in millions of \$)

Account	FY2008*	FY2009 (Bush)	FY2009 (Obama)	FY2010 (1)	FY2010 (2)
INCLE	263.5	246	160	190	175
FMF	116.5	39	260	5.3	0
ESF	20	15	0	15	0
Total	400	300	420	210.3	175
				Overall Total	1505.3

Sources: Seelke *Funding and Policy Issues* p.6; Seelke and Finklea *MI and Beyond* (Jun, 2010) p.7

*Please note that the FY2008 includes the FY2009 Bridge - see Table 1 above

The Beyond Mérida Framework

However whilst Mérida funding remained high under Obama, the Initiative did go through somewhat of a rebranding. In March 2010, following a meeting of the Mérida High-Level Consultative Group (itself a creation of the Initiative), the two administrations publicly announced the ‘Beyond Mérida’ framework.¹⁰⁰ This announcement reflected the less public release of the DoS’ Congressional Budget

⁹⁵ *ibid* p.311

⁹⁶ *ibid*

⁹⁷ Seelke *Funding and Policy Issues* p.6

⁹⁸ Seelke and Finklea *MI and Beyond* (Jun 2010) p.27 However Congress did not specify the amounts for these activities in this piece of legislation (Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2010, Pub. L. 111-117, 123 Stat. 3034 (2009)) so the amount under conditionality would have depended on how the DoS actually used the money.

⁹⁹ Seelke and Finklea *MI and Beyond* (August 2011) p.9, 35

¹⁰⁰ *ibid* p.19

Justification for Foreign Operations, published a fortnight prior, which outlined that Mérida would re-focus from providing military hardware, to building and strengthening several Mexican state institutions in FY2011. To do this, the ‘Beyond Mérida’ agenda would concentrate, on “four pillars of cooperation”.¹⁰¹ In discussing the policy evolution, Secretary of State Clinton outlined these four pillars as, “disrupting the capacity of the criminal organizations, reforming and strengthening security and justice institutions, creating a 21st century border that advances citizen safety and commerce, and building stronger, more resilient communities that can resist the influence of the cartels”.¹⁰² Whilst there was an institution-building element in what we could crudely call ‘Mérida 1’, the oft-repeated justification behind this new agenda was that it would more definitively focus on building institution capacities, and concentrate renewed efforts to tackle socioeconomic problems that were argued to underlie Mexico’s drug-related security crisis.¹⁰³

Of course, preparations for this shift in focus were underway well before these official pronouncements. A cable from October 2009 detailed bilateral discussions under the, “rubric of a ‘Beyond Merida’ joint planning effort.” The four-pillar strategy was already in place at this point, so clearly discussions pre-dated even this cable. The discussion focused on the fact Calderón had “officially tapped” CISEN Director Guillermo Valdez to coordinate Mexico’s side of the discussions, showing the high-level importance that continued to be attached to the MI, and the role of Mexico’s intelligence service in the strategy.¹⁰⁴ Further cables show that this was not just a rhetorical exercise. In an information piece for the Secretary of State prior to her meeting with her Mexican counterpart, new Ambassador Carlos Pascual¹⁰⁵ pinpointed the strategic thinking behind the fresh policy approach. Whilst praising interdiction efforts and the important groundwork laid down by ‘Mérida 1’, he stated that, “we [the U.S.] recognize the limitations on confronting criminal groups without the effective institutional backing to support *the lasting disruption of these elements*. We must help Mexico build its most key institutions with seamless integration of operations, investigations, intelligence, prosecutions, and convictions.” Effectively, then, ‘Beyond Mérida’ was more of an *evolution* of the security policy initiated by the Bush administration, and it was still targeted on improving Mexico’s state security capacities. Pascual continued, “We also need to develop new programs to build an intelligence capability, foster the Federal Police’s own institutional development and

¹⁰¹ U.S. Department of State *Congressional Budget Justification: Foreign Operations Fiscal Year 2011* (Washington D.C. 2010) p.96

¹⁰² U.S. Department of State ‘Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton: Remarks with Mexican Foreign Secretary Patricia Espinosa’ (March 23rd, 2010)
<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/03/138963.htm> Accessed 18.10.12

¹⁰³ For example, Seelke and Finklea *The MI and Beyond* (Aug 2011) p.21-30

¹⁰⁴ U.S Embassy Mexico *Valdez, Tello Peon Team Up on Beyond Merida* Cable Reference 002913 (7th October, 2009)

Link: <http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=09MEXICO2913&q=beyond%20merida%20mexico> Accessed 16.10.12

¹⁰⁵ Pascual was a key progenitor of Mérida’s new direction one of the big-name scalps for WikiLeaks, as his frank assessments of Calderón’s government’s achievements on tackling organized crime were argued to have lost him his job. Pascual resigned under intense pressure from Calderón, who took umbrage at Pascual’s claims of institutional inefficiencies and rivalries in Mexico. However there were also theories Pascual’s relationship with the daughter of a prominent PRI leader had been an additional factor. Associated Press ‘U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Resigns over WikiLeaks Cables’ *Guardian* (March 20th, 2011) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/20/us-ambassador-mexico-resigns-wikileaks> Accessed 15.06.11

training capacity, promote swifter implementation of judicial reform, and prompt greater inter-institutional coordination and cooperation”.¹⁰⁶

Comparatively more resources *have* been poured into institutional and socio-economic aid programs in the Obama administration, whilst official Mérida military equipment transfers have been scaled back. Appropriations and requests in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 were lower than for the three previous years, and more skewed to ‘Social and Economic Aid’, especially for wider support for justice sector reform already under way. The INL Budget Guide for FY2011, as a typical policy document, highlights that the program for that year, “builds on efforts begun under the Merida Initiative, *with a shift away from* expensive equipment and towards supporting Mexican government institutional reforms and strengthening rule of law”.¹⁰⁷ The aid figures bear that assertion out. In the original INCLE request for FY2011 \$78 million and \$20 million was proposed for ‘CN’ and ‘Transnational Crime’ respectively, whilst ‘Rule of Law and Human Rights’ and ‘Good Governance’ were due to receive \$144 million and \$35 million.¹⁰⁸ Whilst these categories are broad, they represent a shift in focus. In the FY2011 appropriation Congress spread \$143 million of Mérida funds over the INCLE, FMF and ESF accounts, of which \$105 million was deemed as economic / social aid (with \$87 million of the \$117 million from the INCLE account being reported as part of the Rule of Law and Human Rights programme, the rest as military / police aid in ‘Counternarcotics’).¹⁰⁹ Compare this with the FY2010 Budget Guide, where almost 90% of the requested \$459,325,000 INCLE funds were for CN “interdiction”.¹¹⁰ In FY2012 \$281.8 million was appropriated, of which \$201.8 million was demarcated as economic and social aid.¹¹¹ The table below sets out the amounts in broad terms:

¹⁰⁶ U.S. Embassy Mexico *Your Meeting with FM Espinosa at UNGA* Cable Reference: 002766 (23rd September, 2009) Link:

<http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=09MEXICO2766&q=beyond%20merida%20mexico>

Accessed 21.10.12 My emphasis

¹⁰⁷ U.S. Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs *Fiscal Year 2011 Program and Budget Guide* (Washington D.C., 2010) p.170

¹⁰⁸ *ibid* p.173 These are broad categories of course. Although its not all that simple a task, I try to add a little more detail below.

¹⁰⁹ U.S. Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs *Fiscal Year 2013 Program and Budget Guide* (Washington D.C., 2012) p.222

¹¹⁰ DoS INL *Fiscal Year 2010 Budget Guide* p.319 Congress of course altered these amounts through appropriation, see above.

¹¹¹ Clare Ribando Seelke and Kristin M. Finklea *U.S.-Mexican Security Cooperation: The MI and Beyond* Congressional Research Service, (April 2014) p.7; Security Assistance Monitor: Mexico Aid Data http://www.securityassistance.org/data/program/economic/Mexico/2008/2015/is_all/ Accessed frequently

Table 3: Mérida Appropriations by end FY2012 (millions of \$)

Account	FY2008	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012
INCLE	263.5	406	365	117	248.5
FMF	116.5	299	5.3	8	N/A*
ESF	20	15	15	18	33.3
Total	400	720	385.3	143	281.8
				Overall Total	1930.1

Sources: 1 See above and Seelke and Finklea *Mérida and Beyond* (Apr 14) p. 7

* As explained below, FMF money was moved out of official Mérida appropriations in this year.

There are some semantics involved here. There is not all that much of a definitional leap involved in separating CN from some of the activities covered in the Beyond Mérida recalibration. Indeed DoS officials told the U.S. GAO that the four pillars framework would apply to all law enforcement and CN interaction with Mexico, through Mérida officially or otherwise.¹¹² However there was an emphasis on ‘demilitarising’ the CN effort. Thus the 2011 INL Budget Guide stated that the institutional pillar of the Beyond Mérida strategy would support, “Law enforcement training and professionalization at the federal level, and increasingly at the state and local level,” which would, “enable the military to stand down from its law enforcement and counternarcotics role.”¹¹³ It also suggested the focus was on bringing drug enforcement cases more effectively through the criminal process from investigation to trial, an understandable goal given Mexico’s aforementioned criminal impunity rate. This included aims to improve human rights observance, evidence collection, using evidence for oral trials and anti-corruption through training and equipment, as well as continued support for judicial reform begun under the ‘original’ MI (in support of Mexico’s move in this direction).¹¹⁴ There was also funding for demand reduction and community projects in especially violent and problematic cities like Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez.¹¹⁵ Thus whilst we may still justifiably label these efforts as CN in their own way, as expensive equipment transfers to the police and military began to wind down, these Beyond Mérida tranches began to more heavily support (relatively speaking) institutional reform and improvement in Mexico.

However, it is crucial to stress that despite the policy shift (or, more accurately, evolution) *Mérida is still driven by U.S. security concerns and interests*. These interests are themselves underpinned by a clear U.S. interest in achieving broad *stability and security* in Mexico, through the Mexican state apparatus, not least to gird the shared investment and trade environment created through NAFTA. Some particularly helpful cables released by WikiLeaks highlight this point. In a meeting concerning Mexico’s competitiveness in June 2009, President Calderón justified his CN strategy as, “a way of strengthening the rule of law and providing legal certainty for local and foreign investors.” The same cable discussed the problem of ‘Security’ and ‘Rule of Law’, outlining that, “The government's challenge has been to overhaul and rebuild Mexico's security institutions, as there cannot be economic development

¹¹² GAO *Merida Initiative* p.7

¹¹³ DoS INL *Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Guide* p.171-172

¹¹⁴ *ibid*

¹¹⁵ For example see Diana Negroponte ‘Pillar IV of Beyond Mérida: Addressing the Socio-Economic Causes of Drug-Related Crime and Violence in Mexico’ *Mexico Institute at the Woodrow Wilson Center* (May, 2011); Seelke and Finklea *MI and Beyond* (Aug 2011) p. 28-30

without trustworthy institutions”.¹¹⁶ In another very telling cable, John D. Feeley¹¹⁷ outlined that the U.S. saw institutional ineffectiveness and the Mexican state’s long-term resistance to transparency (especially in the Mexican army [SEDENA]) as barriers to achieving U.S. strategic goals in this light. It states, “Mexican security institutions are often locked in a zero-sum competition in which one agency’s success is viewed as another’s failure, information is closely guarded, and joint operations are all but unheard of.” It goes on to assert that the U.S. needs, “to ensure that we help Mexico build its most key institutions with seamless integration of operations, investigations, intelligence, prosecutions, and convictions.”¹¹⁸ In this context it makes clear that the Mexican military alone could not achieve crucial security aims when it came to the CN element of Mérida, and the federal police would have to continue to be bolstered, girded against corruption, and professionalised.

The continuity is highlighted in Congressional Budget Justifications released by the DoS. Whilst they are not the most remarkable or arcane words in U.S. diplomatic language, it is interesting to note that the 2011 Budget Justification recalled the SPP in asserting that, “The security and prosperity of the United States is directly linked to Mexico.”¹¹⁹ This section of the Budget Justification also discusses how the U.S. will invest in higher education and health programs to help reduce the numbers of those in Mexico who seek to leave for the U.S. for better opportunities, but also, “help mitigate social inequity and the pressures that drive youth to criminal activities.”¹²⁰ Whilst of course these Budget documents utilise a broad brush to summarise a huge number of global activities, it is also revealing to see how the U.S. DoS categorises broad goals with regard to Mexico in this period. The MI is placed under the larger heading of ‘Peace and Security’. Also under this heading are several aid programmes that are not officially part of the MI, including in ‘Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related Programs’ (NADR), the aforementioned EXBS, and IMET. There is deep interconnectivity between these programmes and those that are officially parts of the MI. We can begin to see the joined-up logic *between* aid programmes in service of the NAFTA-land Security agenda.

Thus, this particular section of the FY2011 request states that an aim within the NADR is to use ‘Anti-Terrorism Assistance to, “deliver cyber security training to Mexican federal law enforcement to allow them to better counter and investigate cyber related threats *and* assist the GOM Attorney General’s Office and the Public Security Office in their efforts against drug trafficking.”¹²¹ There is further material here that is worth exploring at length. With regard to the projection of U.S. HS

¹¹⁶ U.S. Embassy Mexico *GOM Focuses on Mexico’s Competitiveness* Cable Reference 001841 (26th June, 2009) Link:

<http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=09MEXICO1841&q=investment%20law%20mexico%20of%20rule> Accessed 22.10.12

¹¹⁷ Then Deputy Chief of Mission in Mexico, managing the implementation of the MI.

¹¹⁸ U.S. Embassy Mexico *Scenesetter for the Opening of the Defense Bilateral Working Group, Washington D.C., February 1* (29th January, 2010) Cable Reference 000083 Link:

<https://cablegatesearch.wikileaks.org/cable.php?id=10MEXICO83&q=institutions%20merida%20mexico> Accessed 29.07.14

¹¹⁹ U.S. Department of State *Congressional Budget Justification Foreign Operations Annex: Regional Perspectives Fiscal Year 2011* (Washington D.C., 2010) p.725

¹²⁰ *ibid*

¹²¹ *ibid* p.726

concepts to Mexico, the document outlines that through the EXBS programme¹²² the U.S. intended to, “help the GOM [Mexican government] to procure radiation detection equipment for Mexico’s largest ports and computer equipment to ensure real time access to U.S. information on suspicious travelers.” There is a clear sense of border security depth within ‘NAFTA-land’ being expressed here. On the protection of critical *North American* infrastructure, there was an aim to provide assistance to, “improve GOM capability to protect critical petroleum assets in the Bay of Campeche.” Of course this has great consequence for U.S. interests in energy security. On a more general note, the outlining of EXBS goals in this Budget Request notes how it will play a “critical role in enhancing military-to-military relationships that are critical in *developing partnerships for the security of North America*.”¹²³ Meanwhile, the section on IMET states that its training would help Mexico counter trafficking of “all kinds”, whilst enhancing “interoperability”.¹²⁴ Whatever the intention of putting these different programmes together was, it reveals a truth about the inter-relatedness of U.S. policy towards Mexico in terms of the wider goals of NAFTA-land Security.

Clearly this strategic aim is continued under the Beyond Mérida framework. The FY2012 Budget Justification again included Mérida under the ‘Peace and Security’ heading and alongside aid mechanisms that were not strictly part of the MI. In addition, despite a real pecuniary shift to institution-building over equipment transfers to security forces, the Mexican military is still paramount in U.S. thinking. Thus, IMET funds, amongst other goals, were justified as being used to, “improve and expand the military’s capacity to fight transnational crime.”¹²⁵ Linking the terrorist threat with cartel activities, the NADR aid for this year is slated to include improving Mexico’s ability to protect VIPs. The Justification explained that as, “organized crime syndicates have increasingly targeted political figures, this VIP protection training is vital.”¹²⁶ Within the EXBS’ purview, Mexico’s, and NAFTA’s, southern border is again an area of concern, and therefore, “Enhancing enforcement will also be a priority on Mexico’s southern border chokepoints in partnership with and to leverage the Department of Homeland Security’s Customs and Border Protection efforts on the northern (U.S.) border.”¹²⁷ An EXBS document expresses the impetus provided by the MI to encourage Mexico to engage on other issues of concern to the U.S, fundamentally underlining the interconnectivity of policy around the overarching regional logic. Stating that initially EXBS efforts were slow, it praised the progress made since 2007, and that, “The U.S.-sponsored Merida Initiative, helped to *set the conditions for development* in the nonproliferation arena in Mexico, and the Department of Energy’s [DoE] Megaports and Second Line of Defense [SLD] programs, *in concert with Merida*, also complemented the EXBS program and facilitated its success.”¹²⁸

¹²² Funded through the NADR mechanism.

¹²³ All quotes here from *ibid*

¹²⁴ *ibid*

¹²⁵ *Congressional Budget Justification Foreign Operations Annex: Regional Perspectives Fiscal Year 2012* (Washington D.C., 2011) p.795

¹²⁶ *ibid*

¹²⁷ *ibid* p.796

¹²⁸ U.S. Department of State *EXBS Newsletter, Volume II, Issue 3* (Washington D.C., July 2011) <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/170969.pdf> Accessed 29.05.14 My emphasis

The wider rationale here is clear. Diplomatic cables through the 2007-2010 period continually emphasise that not only are U.S. economic links with Mexico crucial through trade and energy, but the future competitiveness of North America as a whole will be key to mutual economic growth. One cable neatly summarises the interconnectedness of the U.S.-Mexico economy. After stressing that, “As we institutionalize the security agenda [with Mexico] we will also need to give more attention to the economic and social agendas” (again, *exactly* what the SPP was about, and now taken up in the HLED in reaction to Peña Nieto’s reform agenda), the cable continued:

Efforts to strengthen *mutually beneficial competitiveness* in 2010 will focus on identifying new cross border production opportunities, spurring innovation, *building a modern 21st century border*, and supporting an energy and environment agenda that is atop priority for the Calderon administration and *offers huge potential* for future investment and economic development. Our economic recovery and Mexico's go hand in hand, and U.S. export-led successes are depending increasingly on partnering with Mexico's manufacturing capability.¹²⁹

There is a global significance to ‘North American competitiveness’. “Given the challenges from China and other emerging economies, it is essential for Mexico and the U.S. to align views in order to establish a framework for sustainable growth”.¹³⁰ Security is viewed as a key prerequisite for investment, competitiveness, and economic activity, and Mérida and associated security engagements is designed, as we have seen, to improve security in a *number* of areas, including CN. This brings us right back to the priorities of the SPP. As Shannon contested in 2008, the SPP of course combined a, “very strong commitment to free trade” with a view to, “deepening the economic relationship but also protecting it” and thereby ensuring, “that by linking security and prosperity we are in a position to protect a common economic area.”¹³¹ Understanding the NAFTA area as key to U.S. economic strategic thinking, helps us to understand further why the U.S. was so keen to “armor” it, and why Mérida carried the torch for these priorities as the SPP stalled.

Maintaining this focus in our understanding of Mérida is especially important as we consider the genuine but subtle changes in official policy justifications around the Beyond Mérida security package. Official documentation was more uniformly focused on the CN element of Mérida, separating it out as focused on CN compared to the more wide-ranging assistance provided in the Bush era,¹³² and the FMF

¹²⁹ U.S. Embassy Mexico *U.S.-Mexico Relations: Progress in 2009, Challenges in 2010* Cable Reference 000202 (21st January, 2010) Link: <http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=10MEXICO202&q=beyond%20merida%20mexico> Accessed 21.10.12 My emphasis

¹³⁰ U.S. Embassy Mexico *New Finance Secretary Meets with Ambassador, NSC* Cable Reference 000198 (21st January, 2010) Link: <http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=10MEXICO198&q=china%20mexico> Accessed 21.10.12

¹³¹ DoS Archive ‘Discussion on the Security and Prosperity Partnership’

¹³² For example, whereas the DoS INL Program and Budget Guide in FY2008 and 2009, 2010 discussed terrorism and port / border security, the FY2011 document focused on the ‘four pillar’

component of Mérida was moved out from the Initiative to stand alone in aiding both, “homeland defense and counternarcotics efforts”.¹³³ It appeared that the U.S.’ concerns during Obama’s Presidency had shifted to the increasing levels of drug violence in Mexico, and / or the administration was keen to show that Mérida was now a dedicated CN operating framework. This sense was brought most publicly to the fore by Secretary of State Clinton’s comparison of the situation in Mexico to an insurgency.¹³⁴ Diplomatic cables, meanwhile, referred to the ‘drug war’ as just that: a genuine armed conflict.¹³⁵ Other cables demonstrated alarm at the “guerilla-like tactics employed by La Familia [Michoacana]” in their battles with federal forces in the state of Michoacán, highlighting, “the ability of this crime syndicate to not only mobilize bands of its members quickly in response to an event but also conduct operations with tactical precision”.¹³⁶ Other areas were witnessing the continuing growth of military like tactics in the ‘drug war’ in Mexico.¹³⁷ There was also growing *direct* threats to U.S. interests in Mexico through this period. Cables warn of intelligence that cartels were planning to target the U.S. Consulate in Monterrey¹³⁸ and Border Patrol reports that they were facing increased violence.¹³⁹ These were not specious threats; on March 10th, 2010 (the same month ‘Beyond Mérida’ was announced) two U.S. consulate workers, and the partner of a consulate worker, were

Beyond Mérida approach attuned to CN and aiding Mexican institutions better deal with the security crisis and its fallout. This has continued in later Budget Guides.

¹³³ U.S. Department of State *Executive Budget Summary: Function 150 & Other International Programs: Fiscal Year FY2012* (Washington D.C., 2011) p.113 Note that the DoS had used the exact same description in FY2011 (after the launch of Beyond Mérida), and FMF funds were included in the Initiative. U.S. Department of State *Congressional Budget Justification Volume II: Foreign Operations Fiscal Year 2011* (Washington D.C., 2010) p.128

¹³⁴ Frank James ‘Obama Rejects Hillary Clinton Mexico-Colombia Comparison’ *NPR News* (September 9th, 2010) <http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2010/09/09/129760276/obama-rejects-hillary-clinton-mexico-colombia-comparison> Accessed 03.08.13 U.S. Undersecretary for the Army James Westphal also publicly opined on his fears of insurgency in Mexico and the potential “takeover of a government that’s right on our border.” Mexican government officials publicly rebuked the remarks. Nacha Cattán and Stephen Kurczy ‘Mexico Drug War an ‘Insurgency’? US Officials Gaffe Sparks US-Mexico Row’ *The Christian Science Monitor* (February 10th, 2011) <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Americas/2011/0210/Mexico-drug-war-an-insurgency-US-official-s-gaffe-sparks-US-Mexico-row> Accessed 30.08.12

¹³⁵ U.S. Embassy Mexico *Your Meeting with FM Espinosa*

¹³⁶ U.S. Embassy Mexico *La Familia Continues Rampage in Michoacan* Cable Reference 002093 (17th July, 2009) Link:

<http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=09MEXICO2093&q=familia%20la%20mexico>

Accessed 21.10.12; U.S. Embassy Mexico *La Familia Cartel Retaliates for Arrest of High-Ranking Leader* Cable Reference 002039 (13th July, 2009) Link:

<http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=09MEXICO2039&q=familia%20la%20mexico>

Accessed 21.10.12

¹³⁷ For example ‘satchel IEDs’ were used in an attack on police stations in Nuevo Laredo, overheard by Consulate officials U.S. Consulate Nuevo Laredo *Nuevo Laredo Emergency Action Committee Meeting* Cable Reference 000056 (27th February, 2010)

<https://cablegatesearch.wikileaks.org/cable.php?id=10NUEVOLAREDO56&q=bombing%20car%20mexico> Accessed 08.07.14

¹³⁸ Secretary of State *Diplomatic Security Daily* Cable Reference 117930 (5th November, 2008) Link:

<https://cablegatesearch.wikileaks.org/cable.php?id=08STATE117930&q=bombing%20car%20mexico>

Accessed 08.07.14 This specific threat came from *los Zetas*, specifically by Miguel Ángel Treviño Morales (arrested in 2013), but was amongst others mentioned in the cable.

¹³⁹ U.S. Consulate Tijuana *Report from La Frontera: Border Patrol’s Battles with Traffickers* Cable Reference 000883 (22nd August 2009) Link:

<https://cablegatesearch.wikileaks.org/cable.php?id=09TIJUANA883&q=bombing%20car%20mexico>

Accessed 08.07.14

shot dead in Ciudad Juárez.¹⁴⁰ Taking these changes and developments in conjunction, one could be encouraged to think that Mérida *had* shifted further towards the ‘pure’ CN policy it had been (most publicly) touted as, albeit one motivated by U.S. interests in promoting Mexican stability and responding to increased violence.

Nonetheless, the logics of bilateral security re-engagement remained clearly multi-focused in scope, and cables and other documents continue to affirm this fact. For example, the importance placed on generalised improved border security, especially in Mexico’s south, remained a primary concern. Another diplomatic cable outlined that then Mexican Undersecretary for Population, Migration and Religious Affairs Alejandro Poire Morena¹⁴¹ told U.S. officials that his government sought to ensure that it could, “foster greater formality, increase security levels, impose more customs controls, and expand cooperation with the neighboring governments” on the “porous” Southern border. It added that, “He looked to cooperation with the U.S. under Merida to deliver essential training and infrastructure equipment.”¹⁴² Another cable noted the concerns here went beyond CN, indicating that, “USG and GOM officials noted the entrance of Somalis, Eritreans, and even Iranians through the southern border”.¹⁴³ This is reflected in policy documentation once again. A Beyond Mérida Fact Sheet released by the DoS in September 2011 still refers to the helicopters provided to various police and military institutions in Mexico as being able to support, “rapid transport of personnel for counternarcotics and *other security operations*.”¹⁴⁴

Nevertheless, there is a qualitative change here in *how* these wider goals were pursued. Essentially what the U.S. is increasingly doing in Mexico is akin to *low-level state building*, or at least state support. Though this has run through the policy’s history from its inception, it has been made more explicit in the Obama administration (though of course not explicit in the sense of actually using that term). The focus on building the military, judicial, institutional and developmental capacities of the state (and, in cities where social projects have been undertaken civil society)¹⁴⁵ increasingly looks like a sustained effort to bring several state capacities up-to-speed

¹⁴⁰ Marc Lacey and Ginger Thompson ‘Two Drug Slayings in Mexico Rock U.S. Consulate’ *New York Times* (March 14th, 2010) http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/15/world/americas/15juarez.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 Accessed 08.07.14

¹⁴¹ Poire would go on to become Mexico’s Interior Minister, an important position with regards to the ‘drug war’, following the death of Francisco Blake Mora in a helicopter crash in November 2011. Mora was the second Interior Minister to die in an aviation accident, prompting conspiracy theories in Mexico.

¹⁴² U.S. Embassy Mexico *Presidential Security Assistant Brennan Stresses Commitment to Deeper Cooperation* Cable Reference 003634 (28th December, 2009) Link: <http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=09MEXICO3634&q=beyond%20merida%20mexico> Accessed 15.10.12

¹⁴³ U.S. Embassy Mexico *DHS Secretary Napolitano’s Meeting with President Calderon, February 17* Cable Reference 000111 (18th February, 2010) Link: <http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=10MEXICO111&q=investment%20law%20mexico%20of%20rule> Accessed 12.10.12

¹⁴⁴ U.S. Department of State ‘The Merida Initiative: Expanding the U.S./Mexico Partnership Fact Sheet’ (September 19th, 2011) <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/pl/172874.htm> Accessed 08.08.14 My emphasis

¹⁴⁵ DoS *Congressional Budget Justification FY2011* p.96; U.S. Department of State *Joint Statement of the Merida Initiative High-Level Consultative Group on Bilateral Cooperation Against Transnational Criminal Organizations* (Washington D.C., 18th September, 2012)

with a modern, capitalist, liberal democracy. Mexico's profound socio-economic shift to an open, competitive neoliberal economy from an economy previously organised around capitalist, state-led development, and the further consequential transition from single-party, corporatist PRI rule to a nominal electoral democracy, was not matched by complementary reforms of Mexico's state institutions. As many have convincingly argued, the continuation of the deep-rooted authoritarian, secretive, client-based, bureaucratic culture of several Mexican institutions that grew through 70 plus years of single party rule into the 'democratic' era, combined with the accelerated concentration of elite wealth and economic power that has proceeded under Mexico's 'neoliberalisation', has directly fed (and fed off) corruption, inefficiency, socioeconomic inequality and vulnerability, and, in turn the drug-fuelled security crisis.¹⁴⁶

What we must conclude with at this point is that Mérida and its associated bilateral security engagement remains a multi-purpose security-led approach, and is based on the long-term U.S. interests detailed throughout. In this sense, Mérida under Obama was indeed 'more of the same'. Reinforcing this conclusion further, the U.S. military was significantly stepping up its role and aid distribution in Mexico. Under older, non-Mérida mechanisms, the DoD was expanding its involvement in Mexico, especially in military-to-military training. The type of training provided not only continued the clear militarisation of Mexico's CN strategy (despite 'Beyond Mérida's claims), it also bolstered NAFTA-land Security through a myriad of courses that took in CN, but also CT, maritime security, border security, base defense, air reconnaissance, airspace defense, infrastructure protection, and more. Thus we can connect DoD actions in the Mérida era with the broader policies of influence seeking post-NAFTA, and more pertinently post 9/11. In many ways, the Pentagon's role in training and aid provision acts as the web that connects the various elements of the multi-purpose security package together. This will become clearer as we encounter the specifics of these military programs. However it is worth taking a chronological step back at this juncture to consider how the U.S. military was conceiving its broad role within Mérida and wider U.S.-Mexican security integration.

The Military View: A New Security Relationship & The Role of NORTHCOM

As we saw previously, military officials were discussing increasing security arrangements with (and aid to) Mexico well before the MI was announced. As we also saw, much of this discussion was generated through U.S. NORTHCOM, the Operational Command created in the wake of 9/11. Just to refamiliarise ourselves with this context, in March 2004, then U.S. NORTHCOM and NORAD commander Ralph E. Eberhart told the Senate Armed Services Committee that his commands were, "leveraging existing relationships with the Mexican military" and "pursuing efforts to expand assistance to Mexico using counterterrorism and counterdrug funding".¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ See previous chapters, and for further examples Jo Tuckman *Mexico: Democracy Interrupted* (Yale University Press, 2012) p.2-6; Magaloni 'Mexican Criminal Justice System' p.89-106; Paul Kenny and Mónica Serrano 'Introduction: Security Failure Versus State Failure' in Paul Kenny, Mónica Serrano, and Arturo Sotomayor (eds.) *Mexico's Security Failure: Collapse into Criminal Violence* (Routledge, 2011) p.1-25 and 'The Mexican State and Organized Crime' in *ibid* p.29-53; Watt and Zepeda *Drug War Mexico* p. 141-178, 188, 214

¹⁴⁷ U.S. Northern Command 'Statement of General Ralph E. Eberhart, USAF, Commander North American Aerospace Defense Command and United States Northern Command Before the Senate

Just prior to the announcement of Mérida on October 3rd, 2007 another NORTHCOM/NORAD commander, General Renuart, spoke highly of his recent discussions with Mexican military officials in which, “We had the opportunity to talk about the challenge of narcotics as a threat to the government and to the citizens of Mexico and how the United States can partner with Mexico to help defeat those threats”.¹⁴⁸ In this light the consistent praise for the positive outcomes of the MI from NORTHCOM and the wider DoD is very interesting. In a January 2013 interview with NORTHCOM’s director for strategy, plans and policy Army Major General Francis G. Mahon the American Forces Press Service repeated that, “The Merida Initiative opened the door to *increased* engagement”.¹⁴⁹ Thus the U.S. began to see some of its aims and methods undertaken in the years leading up to Mérida, built around pulling Mexico into regional security arrangements, bear fruit. Mérida is integral to this wider process. USNORTHCOM’s descriptions of its activities bolster this argument still further.

NORTHCOM, the MI, and NAFTA-Land Security Projection

Unsurprisingly, then, following Mérida’s official announcement, both NORTHCOM’s policy role in Mexico, and the tendency of its officials to highlight and discuss that role, increased considerably. In March 2008, General Renuart referred to the MI as, “an opportunity with our critical neighbor to jointly confront the threat of narcotics trafficking and organized crime” as he urged Congress to enact the aid package.¹⁵⁰ However, Renuart also discussed the wider security relationship with Mexico, and related policy there to global U.S. strategies. He stressed how NORTHCOM’s Theater Security Cooperation strategy had fostered improved relationships with Mexico’s military, and provided the context in which U.S. officials could ‘improve’ their Mexican counterparts “understanding” of NORTHCOM’s homeland defense mission. Renuart also praised Congressional measures that had allowed the Command’s ability to “build partner capacity” in Mexico to, “effectively counter threats *such as terrorism* and narcotics trafficking”.¹⁵¹ He thus encouraged more Congressional moves to make it easier for the DoD to improve capacities through aid to partner nations, claiming, “Building partner capacity is fundamental to our national security strategy and will make our nation safer”.¹⁵² In the interview cited above, Francis Mahon was summarised as insisting, “*The bottom line - for the Merida Initiative and for all other theater security cooperation - is about building partnership capacity*”.¹⁵³

Armed Services Committee’ (March 24th, 2004)

<http://www.northcom.mil/News/Transcripts/032504.html> Accessed 13.09.12

¹⁴⁸ U.S. Northern Command ‘Remarks by General. Gene Renuart Homeland Defense Symposium, Colorado Springs, 3rd Oct 07’ (October 3rd, 2007)

http://www.northcom.mil/News/Transcripts/100307_a.html Accessed 13.09.12 It seems likely that the talks referred to here were part of final Mérida negotiations and planning.

¹⁴⁹ Donna Miles ‘Northcom Pursues Closer Engagement with Mexico’ *American Forces Press Service* (January 22nd, 2013) <http://www.defense.gov/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=119074> Accessed 27.07.13 My emphasis

¹⁵⁰ ‘Statement of General Victor E. Renuart Jr. USAF Commander United States Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command’ Before the Senate Armed Services Committee, 110th Congress (March 6th, 2008) p.23

¹⁵¹ *ibid* My emphasis

¹⁵² *ibid*

¹⁵³ Miles ‘Northcom Pursues Closer Engagement’ My emphasis

In a particularly revealing document provided by NORTHCOM to Congress in October 2009, General Renuart once more emphasises NORTHCOM's role in helping to, "build long-term partnership capacities and defense strategies to counter shared transnational threats and security concerns".¹⁵⁴ These transnational threats are not fully defined - again, drug trafficking is mentioned, but amongst a number of other security concerns. The document discusses the fact that multiple SEMAR activities, such as, "interdiction of maritime transnational threats, protection of cruise ships and ports used by foreign visitors, as well as the protection of critical infrastructure" show, "that the U.S. and Mexico share many areas of mutual interest that are vital to the security of each country and the continent".¹⁵⁵ Once more, the sense that U.S.-Mexico security cooperation envisions North America as a shared security space that must be defended, in line with the SPP and border / security projection, comes through strongly. The document outlines that, "USNORTHCOM's long-range security cooperation vision focuses on establishing a *continental defense architecture* where the U.S. works with its neighbors in deterring, preventing, and if necessary, defeating *mutual threats*".¹⁵⁶

To reiterate, drug trafficking is conceptualised *amongst* the threats the shared security space faces. However, as well as being a threat, drug trafficking is also presented as an incredibly useful instrument allowing NORTHCOM to prize open the previously recalcitrant Mexican military to improve bilateral military relations and understanding to help tackle a variety of continental security issues, in line with the arguments we saw Cope make in Chapter Five:

The *greatest enabler* for security cooperation with Mexico is the focus on defeating violent criminal drug trafficking networks and battle for control of areas in Mexico that are currently ungoverned. This focus provides USNORTHCOM with a *unique opportunity to significantly increase military-to-military cooperation*, which focuses mainly on building the *counterterrorism and counterdrug capabilities* of the Mexico Armed Forces.¹⁵⁷

The message of this drug-provided opportunity, the sense of a HS being shared across borders, and the use of the amorphous 'transnational' threat is further driven home in the final sentences of the document, "The success of our mission to protect the U.S. relies heavily on the effectiveness of our neighbors. We have an unprecedented opportunity presented by the Mexican government to help them defeat the growing transnational threat to both of our homelands".¹⁵⁸ The testimony of NORTHCOM commanders has largely suggested that this unique opportunity has been seized. In his Posture Statement in 2009, General Renuart claimed that, "Our relationship with Mexico has never been better and continues to strengthen every day" and that it

¹⁵⁴ U.S. Northern Command *USNORTHCOM's Interaction with the Mexican Military: Congressional Fact Sheet* (October, 2009)

¹⁵⁵ *ibid*

¹⁵⁶ *ibid* My emphasis

¹⁵⁷ *ibid* my emphasis

¹⁵⁸ *ibid*

involved, “open, frequent, and frank discussions on how we can improve our collective security from common threats”.¹⁵⁹

More current testimony from NORTHCOM commanders further confirms that U.S. security relations with Mexico have significance beyond CN and the current drug-fuelled security crisis. Speaking again to the Senate Armed Services Committee in his final posture statement in 2010, General Renuart was unambiguous in discussing the strategic, durable interests being secured through CN interactions:

It is important to recognize that while we are *currently* working with Mexico to develop and strengthen its military’s capability to defeat the drug trafficking organizations, our *long-term goal* is to establish an enduring relationship - built upon trust and confidence—so that we can cooperate in the future on *other mutual security issues*.¹⁶⁰

NORTHCOM testimony provides a publicly available record of some of these, “other mutual security issues”. For indicative recent examples, the 2012 Posture Statement of current NORTHCOM commander General Charles H. Jacoby Jr. discusses maritime security at length. He cites joint exercise QUICKDRAW, “a tactical-level exercise that tests the capability of U.S., Canadian, and Mexican maritime forces in a joint response against illicit activity threatening North American Maritime Security.” He also points to North American Maritime Security Initiative (NAMSI), “an information-sharing and cooperation arrangement among USNORTHCOM, Canada Command, the Mexican Navy and the United States Coast Guard”.¹⁶¹ Mexico’s southern border is also focused upon.¹⁶² The policy detail I discuss below shows that not only does military training provided by the DoD speak to these security goals, but that it does so through CN channels, *and* connects up with official Mérida policy.

Again, in keeping with the argument throughout, this is not to deny the CN element in NORTHCOM and DoD thinking. There are real reasons cartels and the wider drug related security crisis in Mexico threatens U.S. economic and strategic interests. The military’s approach on this is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, there has been a definitive focus on the applicability of asymmetrical warfare techniques to Mexico’s drug gangs. Again, in this sense, links with Afghanistan have once more been made.

¹⁵⁹ ‘Statement of General Victor E. Renuart Jr. USAF Commander United States Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command’ Before the Senate Armed Services Committee, 111th Congress (March 17th, 2009) A note of interest here. Shannon K. O’Neil reported that whilst the U.S. DoD consistently reported that bilateral military relations were the best they had ever been, a senior military official told her that to say this was his “policy”, despite the fact that “in his estimation, it was not”. However, I think through Chapters Four, Five, and Six I make a strong case that the military-to-military relationship, whilst still marked by insufficiencies from the U.S. perspective, *has* never been closer. The comment is more likely to be reflective of frustration that is not closer still. See Shannon K. O’Neil *Two Nations Indivisible: Mexico, the United States, and the Road Ahead* (Oxford University Press, 2013) p.165-166

¹⁶⁰ ‘Statement of General Victor E. Renuart Jr. USAF Commander United States Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command’ Before the Senate Armed Services Committee, 112th Congress (March 11th, 2010) p.26 My emphasis

¹⁶¹ ‘Statement of General Charles H. Jacoby Jr. United States Army Commander United States Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command’ Before the Senate Armed Services Committee, 113th Congress (March 13th, 2012) p.19

¹⁶² *ibid* p.20

In an interview with U.S.A Today in June 2010, General Renuart claimed that, "We've learned and grown a great deal as we've conducted operations against networks of terrorists and insurgent fighters [in Iraq and Afghanistan] [...] Many of the skills that you use to go after a network like those apply ... to drug-trafficking organizations".¹⁶³ Lest we consider this the personal view of an influential commander, the 2012 Posture Statement outlined that NORTHCOM were aiming to, "share [their] experiences in asymmetric conflict, to include intelligence-driven operations, law of land warfare, whole-of-government solutions and rule of law challenges" with Mexico.¹⁶⁴ Again, although concrete information is hard to come by, special operations training, and training applicable to COIN situations (such as psychological warfare [PSYOPS], information operations, and foreign internal defense) is being provided to Mexico. Such tactics are in keeping with the assessment that at some level Mexico is facing a military threat and has to battle to regain (or gain) control of 'ungoverned space'.

This is a good point to provide a brief overview of the 'material' role played by the DoD (through NORTHCOM) within the MI. Importantly, we also need to consider the role it plays in *supporting* Mérida's goals that clearly complements the Initiative, but is separate to the official policy. The MI is administered mainly through the U.S. DoS. However the DoD does work as an 'implementing agency' on the FMF accounts, through which of course a lot of the hardware to Mexico has been provided, especially in terms of aircraft (15 as of April 2014).¹⁶⁵ It has also provided the majority of the military training provided to Mérida in recent years. Again, more detail is coming, but for now let's look at the numbers. The following table attempts to provide a simple overview of the breakdown of direct DoD funding to Mexico between 2007 and 2012. It uses a variety of the more detailed information from DoD reports and the *Security Assistance Monitor* website:

¹⁶³ Jim Michaels 'U.S. Military Works with Mexico to Fight Drug Traffickers' *USA Today* (April 6th, 2010) <http://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=michaels+renuart&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8> Accessed 08.08.12

¹⁶⁴ 'Statement of General Charles H. Jacoby Jr.' (2012) p.19

¹⁶⁵ Seelke and Finklea *Merida and Beyond* (April 2014) p.32 As previously mentioned FMF is no longer included in official Mérida totals.

Table 4: Direct DoD Assistance to Mexico 2007-2012 (\$)

Fiscal Year	CN Assistance	Other Assistance	Total Assistance
2007	15,508,000	1,000,000	16,508,000
2008	12,171,000	13,213,493	25,384,493
2009	34,164,000	329,580	34,493,580
2010	71,625,000	4,614,646*	76,239,646
2011	84,690,000	1,142,977†	85,832,977
2012	70,660,816	1,952,480*	72, 613,296
Total	288,818,816	22,253,176	311,071,992

Sources: *Security Assistance Monitor* website. U.S. DoD Section 1209 and Section 1203(b) Report to Congress on Foreign Assistance Related Programs for Fiscal Years, 2008, 2009 and 2010 (Washington D.C. 2012); U.S. DoD Section 1209 and Section 1203(b) Report to Congress on Foreign Assistance Related Programs for Fiscal Year 2011 (Washington D.C, 2012); U.S. DoD Section 1209 and Section 1203(b) Report to Congress on Foreign Assistance Related Programs for Fiscal Year 2012 (Washington D.C. 2013)¹⁶⁶

* These figures includes aid under Section 2561 of Title 10, United States Code, which covers DoD supplied humanitarian assistance. Assistance includes aid for firefighting capabilities, flood preparation and prevention, Urban Search and Rescue and dealing with hazardous materials (including at the Border Points of Entry)

† This figure includes aid under Section 166a (b) 6 of Title 10, United States Code. Again this relates to humanitarian relief, but in this authority for “urgent or unanticipated” situations. Again it was used here for “fire-fighting support”. See 1029 and 1023c citations for Table above.

What is clearly notable here is the increase in funding from the DoD in the Mérida period, with the vast majority being provided in CN channels. The real jump comes in 2010 of course, and we should keep this very much in the forefront of our minds when we consider the ‘Beyond Mérida’ strategy of the Obama administration, and its claims to move away from military aid towards institutional programmes and governance solutions. The continued and *growing* active role of the DoD in Mexico is emphasised by the Department itself. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Counternarcotics and Global Threats William F. Wechsler told the Senate Armed Services Committee’s Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities that to support Mexico in training, equipment, intelligence and indirect help in, “counter-narcoterrorism” missions, as well as southern border security and interaction there between Mexico and its Central American neighbours, the DoD would allocate approximately \$51 million in FY2011 to support Mexico.” He continued to make clear, “This allocation is a dramatic increase from previous funding levels for Mexico. Before 2009, for example, funding for Mexico was closer to \$3 million a year.”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ It should be noted that these figures are accurate to the best of my knowledge, but there are some potential problems with achieving accuracy in terms of DoD aid. We look at this briefly in the Policy Detail section.

¹⁶⁷ ‘Statement for the Record: William F. Wechsler Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Counternarcotics and Global Threats’ Before the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities *Counterterrorism, Counternarcotics, and Building Partnership Capacity* 112th Congress (April 12, 2011) p.7 It is not clear why the discrepancy exists in the totals here compared to the information gleaned from the 1209 reports above and below, Wechsler possibly was discussing the role of his agency (the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense [DASD] for Counternarcotics and Global Threats [CN>] operating under the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict and Interdependent Capabilities and the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, but then as he makes clear *all* DoD CN aid is administered through the DoD

The DoD also provides further evidence of the U.S. official concern over the *direct* destabilising effects of drug-related violence in its Counternarcotics & Global Threats Strategy, stating that, it would “support interagency efforts to surge support to meet the growing emergency” in the country.¹⁶⁸

Of course the dollar amount provided directly by the DoD is still relatively small compared with the official Mérida funding channelled through the DoS. However, focusing on the finances of DoD assistance can be misleading. For example, when we consider who specifically has trained *military* personnel in Mexico in this period,¹⁶⁹ we can see how important the DoD programs are. Of the Mexican military personnel trained by the DoS, DHS and DoD between FY2007-10, the DoD trained 85%. The table below illustrates these stark differences:

Table 5: DoD and DoS Trainees Mexico 2007-10

Fiscal Year	DoD Trainees	DoS Trainees	DHS Trainees	Total
2007	484	39	104	627
2008	879	27	58	964
2009	590	125	1	716
2010	649	85	0	734
Total	2602	276	163	3041

Source: DoS U.S. Foreign Military Training Reports 2007-2011 These totals represent those who completed training within a Fiscal Year, rather than when the funding for this training was appropriated or provided.

NORTHCOM were also early and eager adopters of the new official parlance of TOC in the Mexican context. The DoD and NORTHCOM work with understandings of the threat within and emanating from Mexico as part of a larger problem presented by networked, transnational and ‘narco-terrorist’ actors.¹⁷⁰ NORTHCOM Commanders have highlighted that they consider there to be links between TOC and terror. For example, Admiral Timothy J. Keating told the Senate Armed Services Committee in 2007 that, “Federal laws and policies allow us to support law enforcement agencies by conducting operations to deter and prevent transnational threats” and that within this there was a special focus, “on terrorist organizations with a nexus to drug

Counternarcotics Central Transfer Account (CTA) (p.2) The other possibility for future totals could be that they were upgraded.

¹⁶⁸ U.S. Department of Defense *Counternarcotics & Global Threats Strategy* (April, 2011) p.14

¹⁶⁹ Information on military trainees is in fact easier to come by than wider training figures (police, prison guards etc.), even though the latter forms such a large part of the MI. I discuss this further below.

¹⁷⁰ For example see the mission of Joint Task Force North, a component of NORTHCOM based at Fort Bliss in El Paso, Texas. It was recalibrated as NORTHCOM came into being, officially expanding beyond CN to assist, “federal law enforcement agencies protecting U.S. borders from transnational threats, which ‘include international terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, delivery systems for those weapons and organized crime.’” Steve Bowman *Homeland Security: Establishment and Implementation of the*

United States Northern Command (Congressional Research Service, August, 2006) p.3 Its mission is currently described as, “support[ing] Drug Law Enforcement Agencies in the conduct of Counter Drug/Counter Narco-Terrorism operations in the USNORTHCOM theater of operation to disrupt transnational criminal organizations and deter their freedom of action in order to protect the homeland.”

Joint Task Force North ‘Joint Task Force North Mission’

<http://www.jtfn.northcom.mil/subpages/mission.html> Accessed 06.08.14

trafficking.”¹⁷¹ Commander Winnefeld began uniformly using ‘TCOs’ - Transnational Criminal Organisations - to describe his adversaries in Mexico early in his tenure. His 2011 Posture Statement outlined that, “The TCOs are vicious, well-financed and heavily armed [...] By fighting one another and the government for the impunity to pursue their illicit trade, the TCOs are confronting Mexico with a complex, but not unprecedented, blend of trafficking activities and challenging security problems”.¹⁷² Current NORTHCOM commander General Jacoby has repeated this definition and discussed the TCO threat in a similar manner, stating that, “TCOs represent a globally-networked national security threat.”¹⁷³

Thereby the U.S. military discourse on the nature of the threat in Mexico mirrors the official adoption of the Strategy to Combat TOC in 2011. Discussing the DoD’s Counternarcotics and Global Threats Strategy, the Department’s *own* strategy document for countering transnational threats, William F. Wechsler told the the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee hearing cited above that it would, “more clearly align our efforts with President’s National Security Strategy, [and] the National Drug Control Strategy”.¹⁷⁴ That aforementioned strategy claims that, “The emergence of amorphous, adaptable, and networked threats has far-reaching implications for the U.S. national security community”. It points to the example of, “An adversary destabilizing a friendly country with intent to penetrate our sovereign borders to fuel illicit trafficking activities”, a clear allusion to Mexico in the context of new, transnational threats.¹⁷⁵

Bringing the Policy Up to Date: 2013-2014

Like most of the Obama administration’s legislative agenda in recent years, continued Mérida funding has fallen afoul of the Congressional ‘deadlock’ on Capitol Hill.¹⁷⁶ Appropriations through 2013 and 2014 were severely delayed and achieved through consolidated and continuing Acts, as regular appropriation activities were caught up in the bipartisan fight over federal spending, deficit reduction and debt-ceiling limits.¹⁷⁷ However, whilst Congress may have been severely delayed in

¹⁷¹ ‘Statement of Admiral Timothy J. Keating’ (2007) p.12-13

¹⁷² ‘Statement of Admiral James A. Winnefeld Jr. U.S. Navy Commander United States Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command’ Before the House Armed Services Committee 113th Congress (March 30th, 2011) p.5

¹⁷³ ‘Statement of General Charles H. Jacoby Jr.’ (2012) p.17

¹⁷⁴ ‘Statement for the Record: William F. Wechsler’ p.3

¹⁷⁵ DOD *Counternarcotics & Global Threats Strategy* p.3

¹⁷⁶ Of course one’s position on this might be politically informed, but I use scare quotes here as it looks to this author less like deadlock and more like a political-ideological attempt to undermine the Obama administration and assert (Republican) Congressional power, as well as being the product of the last round of Congressional elections in which a number of ambitious political hardliners with a conservative voting base entered Congress. Of course the ‘strategy’ has also involved a fight within the GOP.

¹⁷⁷ Of which the fallout included the Budget Control Act of 2011 and mandated budget sequestration. For a useful summary of this ongoing ‘process’ (or perhaps debacle would be more accurate), see Dylan Matthews ‘The Sequester: Absolutely Everything you Could Possibly Need to Know, in One FAQ’ *The Washington Post* (February 20th, 2013) <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2013/02/20/the-sequester-absolutely-everything-you-could-possibly-need-to-know-in-one-faq/> Accessed 15.07.13 Regarding the strategic political element of this, for their part the Obama administration has made great pains to highlight the great pain sequestration would bring, and blamed the situation on the GOP or Congress. However Bob Woodward

appropriations, it has also essentially followed the DoS' Budget requests in terms of numbers since FY2012, whilst managing to re-highlight the issue of human rights in Mexico.¹⁷⁸ Here is a breakdown of Mérida appropriations up to FY2014:

Table 6: Mérida Appropriations Up to FY2014 (in millions of \$)

Account	FY2008	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013	FY2014 (est)
INCLE	263.5	406	365	117	248.5	195.1	148.1
FMF	116.5	299	5.3	8	N/A	N/A	N/A
ESF	20	15	15	18	33.3	32.1	46.1
Total	400	720	385.3	143	281.8	227.3	194.2
						Overall Total	2351.6

Sources: Seelk and Finklea *Merida and Beyond* (2014) p. 7

In addition, the 2015 DoS Budget Request reduces the funding for the MI to its lowest yearly level since its inception, with 'only' \$80 million for INCLE, and \$35 million for ESF, for a total of \$115 million. Were U.S. aims consistent in the most recent years of Mérida?

Mérida Rationale in a New Context

In terms of the stated rationale of the continuing MI, the terms expressed in the DoS' Budget Justifications were very familiar, to the point of standardisation. The Initiative still works around the four pillars of 'Beyond Mérida'. In FY2013 the MI was once again grouped with other aid programs under the broad rubric of 'Peace and Security' assistance, wherein alongside the specific efforts to tackle 'TCOs' through INCLE monies, the EXBS programme continued to look to improving Mexican import and export controls at ports, and the NADR sought to assist in, "building effective border security measures, including land, air, and maritime border security, in order to prevent terrorists or other criminals from entering or transiting Mexico en route to other countries, particularly the United States."¹⁷⁹ Institutional support, especially for justice sector reform, also continued as Mexico moved towards a deadline for implementing jury trials in 2016.¹⁸⁰ Whilst similar priorities are expressed in the FY2014 and FY2015 budgets, some subtle changes are also notable. The 'Peace and

has claimed that the sequestration element of the Congressional deadlock was designed by the Democrats as a bargaining tool to avoid U.S. default in 2011. Bob Woodward 'Obama's Sequester Deal Game-Changer' *The Washington Post* (February 22nd, 2013) http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/bob-woodward-obamas-sequester-deal-changer/2013/02/22/c0b65b5e-7ce1-11e2-9a75-dab0201670da_story.html Accessed 15.07.13 Also see PolitiFact.com 'Hagel Says Congress Responsible for Defense Cuts, Not Obama' *PolitiFact* (March 5th, 2014) Accessed 10.08.14

¹⁷⁸ The numbers for 2014 remain an estimate at the time of writing, but this estimate largely correlates with the FY2014 request. However in the ESF account there is in fact an *increase* from \$35 million requested for FY2014 to \$46.1 million. This would appear to be a DOS internal reconfiguring of funds, as no specification for funding to Mexico in terms of figures is given in the *Consolidated Appropriations Act 2014*. See DoS *Regional Perspectives FY2014* p.683; DoS *Regional Perspectives FY2015* p.681; Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014, Pub. L. 113-76, 128 Stat. 5 (2014) Led once again by Senator Patrick Leahy, Congressional acquiescence to the monetary amounts requested by the Executive has been tempered in the most recent appropriations by new human rights conditionality.

¹⁷⁹ DoS *Regional Perspectives FY2013* p.819

¹⁸⁰ *ibid* p.819-820

Security' sub-section is gone, and Development Assistance is pushed to the top of the aid programs explained. Plus, of course, the request for FY2015 is much reduced.¹⁸¹

This reflects the change in administration in Mexico, and a renewed focus on economic interaction between the two NAFTA countries.¹⁸² There is a practical element to this; as the DoS Justification for FY2015 explains, there has been a delay in Mérida funds being allocated by Mexico as the new Peña Nieto administration reviewed Mérida whilst it formalised its policies.¹⁸³ According to the DoS, it has since completed this process, and Mérida funds are flowing once again, alongside an increased domestic security spending commitment on the part of Mexico.¹⁸⁴ This helps explain the reduction in the INCLE request for FY2015.¹⁸⁵ However, the PRI administration has also sought to actively change Mexico's international image from a country associated with drug violence to an emerging economic powerhouse. Peña Nieto's election campaign ran on a security policy that emphasised improving citizen security over cartel kingpin takedowns and narcotics eradication and seizure,¹⁸⁶ part of a wider stated focus on the domestic economy and Mexico's continuing social challenges. He formally announced more detailed elements of his administration's strategy in February 2013. These changes included (yet another)¹⁸⁷ institutional overhaul, plans for the creation of a national *gendarmérie*, and increased funds for social projects aimed at tackling the perceived root causes of crime.¹⁸⁸ Nieto and the PRI have also employed a national and international PR strategy, hiring firms to 'promote' Mexico to the world (and its investors), and effectively moving the national conversation away from the security crisis afflicting significant parts of the country to structural changes in Mexico's political-economy.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸¹ DoS *Regional Perspectives FY2014* p.683-688; DoS *Regional Perspectives* p.681-687

¹⁸² With the proviso of course that economics can never be truly severed from security, and vice versa

¹⁸³ It also appears the U.S. took the opportunity to initiate reviews and evaluations. See DoS *Regional Perspectives FY2014* p.687-688 Indeed it seems that some of this process was bilateral, see the testimony of Assistant Secretary for the INL Brownfield in *The Future of U.S.-Mexico Relations* Hearing Before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs (Serial 113-167) 113th Congress (May 20th, 2014) p.16

¹⁸⁴ DoS *Regional Perspectives FY2015* p.684

¹⁸⁵ Brownfield testimony in *The Future of U.S.-Mexico Relations* p.33 The Assistant Secretary stated he expected funding to rise again.

¹⁸⁶ Albeit these changes were not all that well drawn out. Hope refers to them as "adjustments" rather than an overhaul, of which more below. Alejandro Hope 'Peace Now? Mexican Security Cooperation After Felipe Calderón' Working Paper *Latin America Working Group* (January, 2013) p. 1, 6 He did promise, however, to cut violence by 50%. See David A. Shirk '2013: The State of Security in Mexico' *Woodrow Wilson Center Mexico Institute* (2013) p.2

¹⁸⁷ The cyclical reconfiguration of Mexican security institutions in response to various corruption scandals, and U.S. pressure, is covered well up to the early 2000s in Laurie Freeman & Jorge Luis Sierra 'Mexico: The Militarization Trap' in Coletta A. Youngers & Eileen Rosin (eds.) *Drugs and Democracy in Latin America: The Impact of U.S. Policy* (Lynne Rienner, 2005) p.263-302 The institutional overhauls undertaken by Calderón are covered and placed next to Presidents Zedillo and Fox's reforms in Daniel Sabet 'Police Reform in Mexico: Advances and Persistent Challenges' in Eric L. Olsen, David A. Shirk and Andrew Selee (eds.) *Shared Responsibility: U.S.-Mexico Policy Options for Confronting Organized Crime* (Mexico Institute at the Woodrow Wilson Center and the Trans-Border Institute at the University of San Diego, 2010) p.253-263 I look at Peña Nieto's changes a little more below.

¹⁸⁸ Associated Press 'Mexico Unveils New Strategy in War on Drugs and for Preventing Crime' *Guardian* (February 13th, 2013) <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/feb/13/mexico-strategy-drug-war> Accessed 13.05.14

¹⁸⁹ For example see Tania Lara 'Mexican National Media Have Reduced Coverage of Crime and Violence, says Report' *Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas* (April 10th, 2013)

A further change in context has been a more robust attitude from Mexico towards U.S. involvement in its actions against drug trafficking. There are also some correlated signs of renewed distrust and friction within the bilateral relationship on security issues. Priest reported in April 2013 just how incredibly close U.S.-Mexican interaction had become, especially in targeting leading figures within the cartels, and how the Peña Nieto security plan would involve the scaling back of this interaction.¹⁹⁰ Another report suggested that the Peña Nieto administration was concerned with how the U.S. had, “burrowed too deeply into its bureaucracy” under the Calderón administration, and “wanted to regain some control.”¹⁹¹ Both these reports cite anonymous U.S. officials frustrated in a decrease in extraditions, reduced access to Mexican security institutions, and Mexico deciding who receives sensitive intelligence.¹⁹² An indicator of these changes is provided in the reduction of U.S. agents in Mexico, reported to have decreased by 60% since 2012.¹⁹³ Part of this is the result of Peña Nieto’s institutional changes, whereby his administration has re-centralised ‘public security’ issues away from the SSP into the Secretariat of the Interior (*Secretaría de Gobernación* - SEGOB) - which also houses the CISEN intelligence services. This effectively undoes 12 years of reform under the PAN administrations of 2000-2012 by dissolving the SSP as an independent institution, and revivifying centralised governmental power in security areas.¹⁹⁴ This change is the

<https://knightcenter.utexas.edu/blog/00-13495-mexican-national-media-have-reduced-coverage-crime-and-violence-says-report> Accessed 12.04.13; Bill Conroy ‘Mexico’s Peña Nieto Hires US Propaganda Firm’ *The Narcosphere* (July 22nd, 2012) <http://narcosphere.narconews.com/notebook/bill-conroy/2012/07/mexico-s-pe-nieto-hires-us-propaganda-firm> Accessed 23.07.12 There was particular controversy over a very positive TIME story on Peña Nieto’s reforms. Bill Conroy ‘TIME Magazine’s Pay-to-Play Puff Piece on Mexican President Provokes Widespread Ridicule in Mexico’ *The Narcosphere* (February 17th, 2014) <http://narcosphere.narconews.com/notebook/bill-conroy/2014/02/time-magazines-pay-play-puff-piece-mexican-president-provokes-widesprea> Accessed 01.03.14 The implication or specific charge of these stories, backed with significant evidence, is that the aim is to ‘bury bad news’. Shirk has referred to this and Mexican security changes as an ‘ostrich strategy’ whereby the violence problem is not confronted, and public perceptions can be manipulated. Shirk quoted in Damine Cave ‘Drug War Apparently has Mexican President’s Attention’ (August 18th, 2013) http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/19/world/americas/drug-war-apparently-has-mexican-presidents-attention.html?_r=1& Accessed 12.08.14

¹⁹⁰ Dana Priest ‘U.S. Role at a Crossroads in Mexico’s Intelligence War on the Cartels’ *The Washington Post* (April 27th, 2013) http://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/us-role-at-a-crossroads-in-mexicos-intelligence-war-on-the-cartels/2013/04/27/b578b3ba-a3b3-11e2-be47-b44febada3a8_story.html Accessed 28.04.13

¹⁹¹ Joshua Partlow ‘A Different U.S.-Mexico Partnership Under President Peña Nieto’ *The Washington Post* (February 18th, 2014) http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/a-different-us-mexico-partnership-under-under-president-pena-nieto/2014/02/18/dd356ac8-98d7-11e3-b88d-f36c07223d88_story.html Accessed 17.06.14

¹⁹² The opinions often come from DEA agents. The situation was not helped when Rafael Caro Quintero was released on a technicality by a state court in Jalisco in August 2013. Quintero is wanted in the U.S. for his alleged involvement in the kidnap, murder and torture of DEA agent Enrique ‘Kiki’ Camarena. There is, at the time of writing, a potential of a \$5million reward offered by the DEA for information leading to his arrest.

¹⁹³ Gustavo Castillo García ‘Disminuye Estados Unidos 60% número de agentes en sus oficinas de México’ *La Jornada* (August 10th, 2014) <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2014/08/10/politica/006n1pol> Accessed 10.08.14

¹⁹⁴ Washington Office on Latin America ‘One Year After Enrique Peña Nieto’s Election’ *WOLA* (July 2nd, 2013) http://www.wola.org/commentary/one_year_after_enrique_pena_nieto_s_election Accessed 14.07.13; Christopher E. Wilson; Eric L. Olsen; Miguel R. Salazar; Andrew Selee & Duncan Wood

root of reduced access and influence for U.S. agencies, and policy analysts have expressed fears about the consequences of greater centralised control.¹⁹⁵

The MI and NAFTA-land Security: The Rationale Continues

Despite a changed context in Mexico, a renewed focus on the economic aspects of the integrative relationship, and a more assertively independent Mexican administration, the rationale behind U.S. policy remains largely intact. I can highlight this in two inter-related ways. Firstly, the security relationship, despite recent changes, continues. In fact, in many ways Peña Nieto's strategy shift has thus far proved a 'dog that didn't bark'.¹⁹⁶ Hits on cartel leaders have continued,¹⁹⁷ most dramatically exemplified of course by the capture of alleged Sinaloa cartel leader Joaquín 'El Chapo' Gúzman Loera, but also (amongst others) alleged top *capo* of *los Zetas* Miguel Ángel Treviño Morales (Z40). U.S. cooperation was apparently key to both arrests, and they were both carried about by SEMAR, whom the U.S. has touted as the most cooperative Mexican security force.¹⁹⁸ Alongside the continued use of military units in these high-level operations, Peña Nieto has deployed the Mexican military to the continually violent states of Michoacán, Tamaulipas and Guerrero, all areas Calderón repeatedly deployed his troops to.¹⁹⁹ Perhaps a more accurate assessment of Peña Nieto's strategy would be that he has not tried to stop the U.S. backed 'drug war', but to stop

New Ideas for a New Era: Policy Options for the Next Stage in U.S.-Mexican Relations (Woodrow Wilson Center, Mexico Institute, May, 2013) p. 22-23; Sabat 'Police Reform in Mexico' p.253-263
¹⁹⁵ Nathan P. Jones 'Mexico Drug Policy and Security Review' *Small Wars Journal* (January 11th, 2013) <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/mexico-drug-policy-and-security-review-2012> Accessed 08.07.14; 'Peña Nieto's New Security Strategy: We Need to Talk' *Small Wars Journal* (January 8th, 2014) <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/peña-nieto-s-security-strategy-we-need-to-talk> Accessed 08.07.14 Jones is a postdoctoral fellow at the James Baker III Institute for Public Policy. Also see Hope 'Peace Now?' p.7

¹⁹⁶ WOLA 'Peña Nieto's Election'; Shirk 'State of Security in Mexico' p.3

¹⁹⁷ Albeit without the media fanfare of public parades of the accused that happened under Calderón.

¹⁹⁸ Patrick Radden Keefe 'The Hunt for El Chapo' *The New Yorker* (May 5th, 2014)

<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/05/05/the-hunt-for-el-chapo> Accessed 06.05.14; Patrick Corcoran 'What Z40's Arrest Tells Us About Mexico's Security Policy' *Insight Crime* (July 22nd, 2013) <http://www.insightcrime.org/news-analysis/what-trevinos-arrest-tells-us-about-pena-nietos-security-policy> Accessed 13.08.13; U.S. Embassy Mexico *Mexican Navy Operation Nets Drug Kingpin Arturo Beltran Leyva* Cable Reference 003573 (17th December, 2009) <https://cablegatesearch.wikileaks.org/cable.php?id=09MEXICO3573&q=mexico%20semar> Accessed 14.05.13

¹⁹⁹ Joshua Partlow 'Mexican Army Has Taken Control of Major Port in Effort to Combat Drug Cartel' *The Washington Post* (December 1st, 2013)

http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/mexican-army-has-taken-control-of-major-port-in-effort-to-combat-drug-cartel/2013/11/30/ee768458-523b-11e3-9ee6-2580086d8254_story.html

Accessed 09.08.14; Nacha Cattan and Eric Martin '22 Killed in Western Mexico Shootout in Test for Pena Nieto' *Bloomberg* (July 24th, 2013) <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-07-24/22-killed-in-western-mexico-shootout-in-test-for-pena-nieto.html>

Accessed 07.08.14; CNN México 'El Ejército Toma la Seguridad de dos Municipios de Guerrero' *CNN México* (30th May, 2013)

<http://mexico.cnn.com/nacional/2013/05/30/el-ejercito-toma-la-seguridad-de-dos-municipios-de-guerrero> Accessed 08.08.14; Council on Hemispheric Affairs 'Is Tamaulipas Becoming Peña Nieto's Ciudad Juárez?' *Council on Hemispheric Affairs* (May 27th, 2014) <http://www.coha.org/is-tamaulipas-becoming-pena-nietos-ciudad-juarez/>

Accessed 08.08.14 Some of these deployments appear to be partly motivated by the rise of 'self-defense groups in Guerrero and Michoacán, a complex phenomenon I don't have the space to cover here. See Patricio Asfura-Heim & Ralph Espach 'The Rise of Mexico's Self-Defense Forces: Vigilante Justice South of the Border' *Foreign Affairs* 92, 4 (July August, 2013) for an introduction.

talking about it.²⁰⁰ This is not to downplay those areas of real friction and change mentioned above, but to consider them in light of the continuity of Mexico's aggressive and militarised CN strategy and the still high levels of U.S. involvement in that. As Shirk noted in the *New York Times* the deeper connections established and ossified in the MI are now difficult to 'walk back'.²⁰¹ This is in fact a key aim within NAFTA-land Security, representing the extension of regional hegemonic relations into security areas, mirroring the 'lock-in' of economic logics under NAFTA.

In addition, the underlying rationale of U.S. policy remains intact, and state officials continue to make this clear. The 'four-pillar' Mérida framework remains the paradigm under which both governments continue to work.²⁰² Reinforcing DoS Budgetary Requests, Assistant Secretary of the INL Brownfield described that following the evaluative pause undertaken as the Peña Nieto administration bedded in, there was now "\$438 million worth of 78 new programs" agreed with the Mexican government under the MI. The focus on NAFTA's perimeter - Mexico's southern border with Belize and Guatemala - was as strong as ever. Assistant Secretary Brownfield responded to a question on Mexico's southern border security by outlining that it:

...is already an area where we have agreed on several specific projects that total nearly \$11 million in terms of assistance and equipment that would support the ability of the Mexican Government to link together their drugs, customs, border, and police personnel on their border with Guatemala and Belize.²⁰³

This focus is justified or mentioned in terms of allaying Congress' concerns and questions about the U.S.-Mexico border and *its* security. However Assistant Secretary Brownfield made clear that the aim here was motivated by the fact that, "the overwhelming majority of the bad stuff that starts in South America and eventually enters the United States crosses that southern border before it crosses the border with the United States".²⁰⁴ Finally, Brownfield provided a useful and succinct summary of the '21st Century Border' and how it aims to overcome the 'border paradox' through inspection equipment, "that allows your authorities to verify what is coming through or to the border in a way that does not create 50-mile backlogs and 2-week delays in order to cross."²⁰⁵ When we combine this with some of the specific aid we have seen above it clearly fits into a 'layered' HS paradigm that attempts secure open trade. USNORTHCOM commander Jacoby also provided a similar but somewhat deeper logic at a different Senate hearing:

Defending the homeland in depth requires partnerships with all of our neighbors -- Canada, Mexico and the Bahamas. Our futures are inextricably bound together, and this needs to be a good thing in the security context. The stronger and safer they are, the stronger our partnerships, the safer we all are collectively. And this creates

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²⁰¹ Shirk referenced in Cave 'Drug War Apparently Has Mexican President's Attention'

²⁰² *The Future of U.S.-Mexican Relations* p.16

²⁰³ *ibid* p.40

²⁰⁴ *ibid*

²⁰⁵ *ibid* p.49

our common competitive security advantage for North America.²⁰⁶

Clearly, then, North American security remains an integral element of U.S. thinking, and the MI continues under the aims already set out in this chapter. As I argued in Chapter Five, nascent developments around the Bilateral HLED and Mexico's liberalising reform programme, which themselves are based on the remarkable economic dynamics of NAFTA and long term goals on issues like North American energy, have only served to deepen U.S. interests in ensuring North America's security. Within wider developments in U.S. strategy to reinvigorate 'global' trade liberalisation with initiatives like the TPP, North America and North American production looks increasingly strategically placed to act as a holistic productive engine as well as a regional marketplace. The MI is crucial in this context as a direct delivery vehicle for security aid that seeks to protect the North American economic space, and a wider framework for cooperation on deeper security integration between the U.S. and Mexico. It has, therefore, taken up the baton from the SPP, and interconnects with other bilateral and North American policy initiatives designed to 'secure the openness' of North America under a incipient NAFTA-land Security framework. I now show this in further detail still by looking at some of the indicative policy detail 'on the ground'.

Indicative Policy Detail: Training & NAFTA-land Security in Action

I have built this section around some indicative examples that show how Mérida intersects with wider programmes that are clearly attuned to provide greater security for the North American economic space. These examples are port and critical infrastructure security, Mexico's border security in a broad sense (both southern, northern and around the NAFTA zone perimeter), and the militarised approach to cartel violence. Moving through particular subject areas like this allows the interconnections between official Mérida assistance and wider security assistance mechanisms to be brought out without getting too bogged down in bureaucratic detail. However a generalised introduction explaining in brief how aid under the MI works is a necessary starting point.

DoS Remit & Programmes

The DoS is the managing and lead implementing U.S. government agency for the MI. U.S. Aid, the WHA and the INL all are involved 'lower down the chain' at the operational level of Mérida, and the U.S. Embassy in Mexico also plays a key role. As we saw, funds are provided through three aid mechanisms in the MI; the FMF, INCLE and ESF accounts. However, since FY2012 FMF has not been part of the official MI, and was in fact implemented by the DoD (it may be that the separation occurred for this very bureaucratic reason).²⁰⁷ In any case, other DoS programmes interact with the MI, and the wider goals of NAFTA-land Security. For example, I have shown how IMET, the EXBS and the FMF programme itself all lend themselves

²⁰⁶ Jacoby quoted in *U.S. Northern Command and U.S. Southern Command* Hearing Before the Senate Armed Services Committee 113th Congress (March 13th, 2014) p.5 It is worth noting that the frustration of the two commanders (U.S. Southern Command [SOUTHCOM] commander General John F. Kerry was also in attendance) regarding sequestration and a perceived lack of resources is palpable at this hearing.

²⁰⁷ I reached out to some experts on this point but was unable to find a definitive answer on the switch.

to wider missions around North American security. The FMF request for 2014 states that it aims to, “provide resources to help the Mexican military play a crucial, supporting role to civilian security forces in the fight against transnational criminal organizations.”²⁰⁸ The only way to truly understand the repetition we have already encountered through and across these aid programmes is to consider U.S. assistance holistically within NAFTA-land Security. This same conclusion also extends to some DoD administered funding mechanisms that I have not considered in as much detail thus far.

DoD Remit & Programmes

Whilst the DoD was involved in implementing FMF accounts, it is officially only a supportive partner to Mérida, not involved with planning, administering or overseeing any Mérida aid. However, we have already seen that this ‘supportive’ role extends further than the brief description suggests, and it is in this section that this will be truly brought to the fore. Thus under a number of Congressionally mandated authorities, the DoD has been stepping up its role in Mexico. This is in line with more global trends, as U.S. assistance moves increasingly under the DoD’s purview. The FAA ’61 and AECA ’76 (as amended) are the legislative bedrock of U.S. foreign assistance as provided by the DoS. The FAA ’61 originally legislated for foreign assistance solely as the responsibility of the DoS. However, by designating the DoD as the “lead agency” in countering narcotics entering the United States from abroad in 1989 (under U.S. code 10 U.S.C. 124), Congress opened a channel, separate from the FAA ’61 and outside of the DoS, through which the DoD could engage with other nations in stopping these illicit flows. This was an important moment for U.S. foreign assistance, creating an aperture for the DoD to enter what had previously been DoS areas of responsibility. In 1991 Congress legislated for the first program that would allow the DoD to use its own budget for a military foreign assistance program (Section 1004 Counterdrug Assistance) to train and equip foreign militaries in CN. Other DoD counterdrug programs followed - Section 1031 in 1996²⁰⁹ and Section 1033 in 1997.²¹⁰ As we saw after 9/11 Congress authorised the CTFP in 2002²¹¹ and Section 1206 Train and Equip Authority in 2005.²¹²

Section 1004, Section 1206, CTFP and Section 1033 have all been used in Mexico, with 1004 being the most active programme. The GAO stated in 2010 that these authorities, “provide [...] support to [...] foreign agencies with counternarcotics responsibilities” and that the aid is, “separate from that provided under Mérida.” However separating these programmes out from Mérida, even in a more bureaucratized sense, in fact becomes impossible when we delve into the Delphian world of the U.S. Foreign Military Training Report (FMTR). The FMTR shows the

²⁰⁸ DoS *Regional Perspectives* p.685

²⁰⁹ Specifically for Mexico, expired 1998.

²¹⁰ Initially a similar short-term program for Colombia and Peru, since extended through 2013 and now available to 35 countries.

²¹¹ Become permanent law in 2004

²¹² George Withers, Adam Isacson, Lisa Haugaard, Joy Olsen, and Joel Fyke ‘Ready, Aim, Foreign Policy: How the Pentagon’s Role is Growing, and Why Congress - and the American Public - Should be Worried’ *Center for International Policy, Latin America Working Group, Washington Office on Latin America* (March, 2008) p.4-8 It should be noted that Congress blocked certain provisions that the Bush administration pushed for, including more than halving the funds available for Section 1206 from the levels desired (*ibid* p.5).

extent of DoD training in Mexico.²¹³ In fact, as I highlight here, the training role of the DoD is in a very real sense *the glue that binds* the MI to the NAFTA-land Security project. I can illustrate this in a crude way by looking at the overall figures for military trainees in Table 6 below. Of course this does not capture the very large numbers of non-military trainees that have received U.S. instruction through the MI. There is a lack of easily obtainable, collated and clear information on non-military Mérida training (a troubling issue in terms of oversight and an informed citizenry, and one that makes life difficult for the researcher).²¹⁴ Nonetheless the official figures that show the increased number of non-Mérida military trainees gives us a keen insight into the militarised element of what Mérida forms a significant part of, the NAFTA-land Security project. Moreover, looking past the numbers and at training detail shows the deep connective points between this military training, Mérida, and wider U.S. goals.

The following table set out *total* numbers of military trainees from FY2007 to FY2013 (Table 6). It includes *all* trainees because the fundamental argument here is that we should see this in *holistic* terms, as per the thesis' core claims. Relatively few Mérida trainees appear here (again, Mérida's training is mostly non-military), but the training both actually and potentially connects up with official Mérida aid, and more pertinently reflects the same goals as Mérida i.e. the improvement of Mexico's security capacities in line with the aim of improving its security producing abilities 'across the board'. The majority of this training is thus aimed at better protecting Mexico's political economy, and thereby North America's, as well as projecting the U.S. security outwards. It should be noted that:

- I have used the figure provided in the FMTR under the courses themselves, rather than the summary figure at the beginning of the report. There are occasionally discrepancies between the two.
- Table 6 uses FMTR information. In recent years (2012-2013 and 2013-2014 reports) this has been divided into two volumes, with the second including ongoing training and planned training. I use Volume I here to only include completed training, but this means totals may be different from those indicated.

²¹³ Specifically U.S. Department of State and U.S. Department of Defense *Foreign Military Training Joint Report to Congress Fiscal Years 2007 - 2008: Vol I: Country Activities* (Washington D.C., January 31st, 2008) Section IV-VI p.85-91; U.S. Department of State and U.S. Department of Defense *Foreign Military Training Joint Report to Congress Fiscal Years 2008-2009: Vol I* (Washington D.C., 2009) Section IV-VI p.104-116; U.S. Department of State and U.S. Department of Defense *Foreign Military Training Joint Report to Congress Fiscal Years 2009-2010: Vol I* (Washington D.C., 2010) Section IV-VI p.114-127; U.S. Department of State and U.S. Department of Defense *Foreign Military Training Joint Report to Congress Fiscal Years 2010-2011 Vol I* (Washington D.C., 2011) Section IV-VI p.142-156; U.S. Department of State and U.S. Department of Defense *Foreign Military Training Joint Report to Congress Fiscal Years 2011-2012 Vol I* (Washington D.C., 2012) Section IV-VI p.79-85; U.S. Department of State and U.S. Department of Defense *Foreign Military Training Joint Report to Congress Fiscal Years 2012-2013: Vol I* (Washington D.C., 2013) Section IV-VI p.69-77; U.S. Department of State and U.S. Department of Defense *Foreign Military Training Joint Report to Congress Fiscal Years 2013-2014: Vol I* (Washington D.C., 2014) Section IV-VI p.62-70

²¹⁴ Through the research I tried to glean as much information as possible from disparate sources. The best *detailed* information on non-military training is provided in the Congressional report *Common Enemy*

- This information also may not be exhaustive in terms of numbers because sections of the FMTR are classified.
- Separating out official Mérida trainees is difficult, but they are most likely to be represented by the INL and DHS / U.S. Coast Guard totals (though the DoD also has USCG ties).²¹⁵

With those caveats in mind (and information on programmes cited in Table 6 in footnote below),²¹⁶ here is the table:

Table 6: Military Trainees in Mexico FY2007-2013

Year (Prog)	DoD							DoS			DHS/USCG	Total	
	CTFP	Service	Exchange	Regional	1004	ALP	PME	IMET	INL	GPOI	DHS/USCG		
2007	51	N/A	N/A	188	245	N/A	N/A	15	24	N/A	104	627	
2008	39	5	4	422	409	N/A	N/A	27	N/A	N/A	58	964	
2009	51	N/A	N/A	115	424	N/A	N/A	120	5	N/A	1	716	
2010	55	N/A	N/A	156	437	1	N/A	61	24	N/A	N/A	734	
2011	72	N/A	N/A	180	1774	1	N/A	49	98	N/A	N/A	2174	
2012	79	12	4	207	2207	2	N/A	47	96	2	N/A	2656	
2013	27	6	N/A	171	2366	1	2	41	42	N/A	N/A	2656	
Total	374	23	8	1439	7862	5	2	360	289	2	163		
Dep Total								9713			651	163	
Overall												10527	

Sources: DoS / DoD U.S. Foreign Military Training Reports 2007-2014

Some important points immediately leap out at us from this information. First of all, what is underlined here is the unprecedented level of U.S.-Mexican military interaction in comparison to the discussion in Chapter Four. In addition, 92% of the military training provided to Mexico in this period has come through the DoD, and this means the *vast* majority of *military* training is extraneous to Mérida. This once again emphasises the jump in military training as ‘Beyond Mérida’ was supposed to be moving the Initiative away from militarised solutions. Section 1004 is extremely important here, providing almost 75% of the overall total. Only Colombia, Thailand and Afghanistan have comparable levels of 1004 training.²¹⁷ It is therefore crucial to

²¹⁵ See footnote 212

²¹⁶ Of those DoD programmes not briefly explained elsewhere in this thesis, ‘Service’ refers to ‘Service Academies’, through which student exchanges between the U.S. Military, Naval, and Airforce academies and the equivalents in a particular nation are organised; ‘Exchange’ refers to a similar process but outside of the Academy structure and within the professional military. This includes ‘PMEs’ - Professional Military Exchange - but for a reason unknown to the author a separate PME section is provided in the 2013-2014 FMTR; ‘Regional’ refers to the DoD’s ‘Regional Centers for Security Studies’, where academic military courses are undertaken or provided. The William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies hosts and arranges Mexican activities; ‘ALP’ refers to the ‘Aviation Leadership Program’, funded by the U.S. Airforce to provide training to pilots from “less developed, friendly nations”. Of the DoS programmes here not already referred to elsewhere, GPOI refers to the ‘Global Peace Initiative’ DHS / USCG funding appears below, but the USCG operates as a partner to the DoD and DoS here. The USCG has no foreign funding authority so funding comes from various DoS / DoD programmes. For further information see DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2013-2014* p.II-1 to II-7

²¹⁷ Tens of thousands of Colombians were trained under Section 1004 from 1999 to 2007 (the Plan Colombia period, although levels have dropped since then). Although fitfully, Afghanistan has had large numbers of personnel trained under this authority. Thailand has steadily high numbers of trainees,

note at this point out that any provision of assistance or training under Section 1004 must *legally* be within a CN remit. The DoD summarises the legislation as allowing it to:

[...] provide support for the counternarcotics activities of U.S. and foreign security forces and law enforcement agencies, including for maintenance and repair of equipment, transportation, training, providing infrastructure, detecting and monitoring drug trafficking, establishing command, control, communications and computer networks, aerial and ground reconnaissance, and provisions of linguist and intelligence analysis services.²¹⁸

This will be important as we move on, because we will see that the almost 8000 trainees under Section 1004 from FY2007 to FY2013 now have skills that pertain to CN, but that those skills are also applicable to multiple situations.

Also, whilst all of these programmes comprise military training of course, there are interesting points to note on *who* is getting *what* training. SEMAR has been trained under the DHS / USCG strand of aid in, for example, anti-smuggling operations.²¹⁹ Meanwhile the SSP has received extensive training in areas related to helicopter operations, repair and maintenance, likely to support the UH-60 Blackhawks received by the Federal Police.²²⁰ This reflects how training connects up with Mérida's goals, provides the necessary expertise to use Mérida equipment, and how it girds and supports a militarised approach *across* Mexican institutions. However, to get to the importance of this, I need to look at what this training comprises in more detail in some specific areas. This will show definitively how interconnected these various training programmes are, and make it even clearer how much more accurate it is to consider the MI as part of a NAFTA-land Security undertaking.

Interconnected Aid: Three Key Areas of NAFTA-land Security

Port & Critical Infrastructure Security

I showed above how the MI intersected with EXBS programme in supporting its effort to monitor and prevent the flow of WMD and more conventional weaponry. This also joined up with the 'Megaports Initiative' as part of the SLD framework within the DoE. As a National Nuclear Security Administration factsheet points out, "The Second Line of Defense Megaports Initiative is a key component of a multi-agency, multilayered, defensive network that strengthens the overall capability of partner countries to deter, detect, and interdict illicit trafficking in special nuclear and other radioactive materials at key international seaports."²²¹ However the wider drive

and Peru and Ecuador also have respectable amounts. Interestingly Lebanon has emerged as a high-level recipient, with 2400 trainees in FY2013 (*ibid* Section IV-IV p.36) See Security Assistance Monitor website for further information.

²¹⁸ DoD *Section 1209 / 1203(b) Report* p.4

²¹⁹ DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2007-2008* Section IV-VI p.86-87

²²⁰ DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2011-2012* Section IV-VI p.80-82

²²¹ U.S. Department of Energy National Nuclear Security Administration, Office of the Second Line of Defense *Megaports Initiative* (Washington D.C, 2010) p.1 Thus, also connected to this effort are, for example, the CBP's 'Container Security Initiative' and 'Secure Freight Initiative'. However the former has not been accepted by Mexico, not least as it involves direct deployment of U.S. CPB at foreign

to monitor and prevent illicit trafficking into and through Mexico as part of the layered HS and NAFTA-land Security approach also intersects with this specific aim. Thus Mérida equipment inspection equipment was provided in support of the EXBS and SLD mission. Discussing the completion of the Megaports Initiative at four Mexican ports (including at Mazanillo, Colima, Mexico's busiest port), U.S. Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission Laura Dogu affirmed "Here [...] we find equipment donated by the United States under the Merida Initiative, the Megaports Program, and the Export Control and Related Border Security [...] Program, as well as Mexican customs and navy personnel who have benefitted from specialized training provided under these programs."²²² In 2011, 711 individuals were trained in the use of Non Intrusive Inspection Equipment (NIIE) also provided under Mérida, including personnel from SEMAR, SEDENA, SSP and the *Servicio de Administración de Tributaria* (SAT - Mexico's tax and customs body).²²³ Unfortunately it is not clear if all this training was undertaken under Mérida funds or otherwise.²²⁴

There is also wider focus on port security more broadly conceived. Ports are obviously strategic in many senses. Economically, they are key because of the trade that comes through them, and, logically, this means their physical security is also important. They are also (and relatedly) important as monitoring sites. The FMTR is full of courses pertaining to port security and inspection, much of it (unsurprisingly given how this aid is overwhelmingly from the DoD) coming outside of the MI proper. For example, in FY2010 a Mobile Training Team (MTT) course in "Container Inspection" was undertaken for 24 SEMAR pupils under Section 1004. Even though this course could clearly be catered towards drugs interdiction, it also can be attuned to the specific requests/needs of the host nation, to potentially include, "primary dangerous goods shipping regulations, radioactive shipments, explosive shipments, shipboard stowage and segregation of dangerous goods, multi-agency strike force operation planning and execution, government/industry partnership training, safety awareness training, and dangerous goods material communications for response personnel".²²⁵ The same course was provided to 22 more students in FY2011.²²⁶ Thus we begin to see the multi-applicability of Section 1004 funds.

Similarly to the 'Container Inspection' course, FY2008's Section 1004 course in 'Port Physical Security' has a stated CN component, but also, "provides tools" to its twenty students to help them promote general security and, "deter theft". Students also complete a task in, "developing a physical security plan within a port area assessed during the physical security survey or port vulnerability assessment exercises."²²⁷

ports, and the latter has been scaled back. Instead the U.S. and Mexico have worked on building Mexico's internal capacity.

²²² U.S. Embassy Mexico 'U.S.-Mexico Cooperation Strengthens Port Security and Capacity to Intercept Weapons of Mass Destruction' (Mexico City, July 24th, 2012)
<http://mexico.usembassy.gov/press-releases/us-mexico-cooperation-strengthens-port-security.html>
Accessed 25.07.12

²²³ U.S. Embassy Mexico *U.S.-Mexico Border Cooperation Under the MI:*

Non-Intrusive Inspection Equipment: Fact Sheet (Mexico City, May, 2012)

²²⁴ There is not a clear reference in the FMTRs - presumably the SEMAR and SEDENA training should appear here.

²²⁵ DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2009-2010* Sec IV-VI p.151-152; Sec V. p.154

²²⁶ DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2010-2011* Sec IV-VI p.84

²²⁷ DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2008-2009* Sec IV-VI p.114; Sec V p.156 Another 20 students completed this course under the CTFP arrangement. *ibid* Sec IV-VI p.104

This has a potential CT applicability. Much more clearly designed for CT though is the ‘MTT Port SEC [Security] Risk Assessment Tool (PSRAT) Seminar’. PSRAT was the risk assessment security model developed after 9/11 by the USCG. The GAO summarised the model as, “a rudimentary risk calculator that ranked maritime critical infrastructure and key resources [...] with respect to the consequences of a terrorist attack and evaluated vessels and facilities that posed a high risk of a transportation security incident”.²²⁸ 17 SEMAR personnel took this course in FY2013.²²⁹ The Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School (NAVSCIATTS) has trained 49 officers for Patrol Craft operations in both riverine / littoral and coastal environments (as well as other supportive courses) since FY2010.²³⁰ Again, whilst there is an obvious CN rationale to this kind of training that should not be ignored or thought of as a ‘pretext’ - multi-applicability is key. The NAVSCIATTS description for the riverine course states it will provide training for officers to, “safely and effectively plan and execute patrol craft operations in riverine and littoral environments supporting interdiction, counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics operations.”²³¹ The U.S. Navy deploys Patrol Boats in variegated missions, including to, “escort other ships, provide maritime security,” and “protect infrastructure”.²³² Coastal oil infrastructure in the Gulf of Mexico and delta environments in Campeche / Tabasco spring to mind here in terms of Mexican infrastructure protection and CT, although it remains necessary to confirm whether those trained were then deployed in this context. Riverine forces do, however, operate on Mexico’s southern border.²³³

Continuing on this CT theme, in FY2010, 29 SEMAR members undertook a ‘Naval Law Enforcement Seminar’ under 1004, seemingly conducted by the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS).²³⁴ These have continued through FY2013.²³⁵ The NCIS exists to investigate crime within the U.S. Department of the Navy, with its primary (but not only) focus on CT in terms of protecting Naval forces from attack.²³⁶ Reflecting the emergent strategy against TOC, the NCIS ‘Strategic Vision’ document

²²⁸ U.S. Government Accountability Office *Coast Guard: Security Risk Model Meets DHS Criteria, but More Training Could Enhance Its Use for Managing Programs and Operations* (Washington D.C., November, 2011) p.9 Interestingly the USCG now operates the Maritime Security Risk Analysis Mode (MSRAM) for the same purposes, which is supposed to be more robust.

²²⁹ DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2013-2014* Sec IV-VI p.68

²³⁰ *ibid* p.69; DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2010-2011* Sec IV-VI p. 152; DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2011-2012* Sec IV-VI p.84; DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report* Sec IV-VI p.76

²³¹ U.S. Department of the Navy Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School ‘Patrol Craft Officer Riverine’ <http://www.public.navy.mil/nsw/navsciatts/html/course-PCO-R.html> Accessed 21.11.13 The same description is provided for the Coastal course.

²³² Hendrick Simoes ‘Challenges, Close Quarters and Camaraderie: Inside the Navy's Coastal Patrol Mission’ *Stars and Stripes* (May 4th, 2014) <http://www.stripes.com/news/challenges-close-quarters-and-camaraderie-inside-the-navy-s-coastal-patrol-mission-1.281260> Accessed 15.08.14 The Mexican Navy has been updating and adding to its patrol boat fleet, for example in a contract with Dutch firm Damen, who also provide ships to the USCG. Damen ‘Fourth Damen Stan Patrol for Mexican Navy (August 22nd, 2013) <http://www.damen.com/en/news/2013/08/fourth-damen-stan-patrol-for-mexican-navy> Accessed 12.10.13

²³³ U.S. Department of Defense *Section 1209 and Section 1203(b) Report to Congress on Foreign Assistance Related Programs for Fiscal Year 2012* (Washington D.C., May 2013) p.23

²³⁴ DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2010-2011* Sec IV-VI p.152

²³⁵ DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2011-2012* Sec IV-VI p.84; DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2012-2013* Sec IV-VI p.75; DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2013-2014* Sec IV-VI p.68

²³⁶ Such as that which befell the USS Cole in harbour at Aden in October 2000.

outlines that, “The growing nexus of crime, terrorism, and conflict will require a special focus on irregular threats and insurgencies”, with the implication that they must focus on enhancing cooperative relationships to obtain and share relevant, time-critical information with decision makers.” On terrorism, it states in terms by now familiar that it, “will aggressively seek to develop partner-nation counterterrorism capacity by building on our existing law enforcement relationships. The training NCIS provides partners and allies plays an important role in combating terrorism through the Theater Security Cooperation program.” Whilst we should exercise caution in assuming this to be directly applicable to this training (especially given the lack of information provided by the FMTR), it is plausible to assume this wider rationale is relevant. In any case, the conflation of security issues around TOC is again relevant here. There is a focus on how, “Transnational criminal elements exploit maritime security weaknesses to further their criminal enterprises”, and that partner capacity building in response can, “promote the rule of law by countering terrorism, weapons proliferation, piracy, drug trafficking, and other illicit activities”.²³⁷ These priorities are also supported by other aid mechanisms, for example with courses in ‘Maritime Crisis Management’ and ‘Seaport Sec[urity] / Anti-Terrorism’ under CTFP in FY2010.²³⁸

Border Security

Of course much of the above also comes under a broad heading of border or HS. It is clear that as part of NAFTA-land Security the U.S. has aimed to export HS and mindsets and capacities to its neighbour. Unsurprisingly some of the NIIE and associated training provided under the MI has been deployed to Mexico’s southern border. The Mexican military’s role here is high-profile enough to be mentioned by CRS Reports, although they miss its depth and connection to Mérida.²³⁹ DoD reports reveal the interconnections between Mérida and military training and activity. In addition to support for border riverine operations,²⁴⁰ the DoD has highlighted how Section 1004 funding has supported the extended military deployment of Mexican marines at the Guatemala / Belize border to help, “conduct operations against TCOs”. The Report points out that these forces will have secure communications and the ability to communicate with the UH-60Ms donated via the President's Merida Initiative to the Mexican Navy.²⁴¹ Again the joined up, pan-institutional nature of the MI as part of NAFTA-land Security construction is underscored here. However, we also need to understand the importance of broader concepts of HS projection, layered defense and perimeter security for NAFTA. Indeed, courses specifically regarding ‘Perspectives on Homeland Security and Defense’ have been provided by the William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies since FY2009, under CTFP and Exchange mechanisms.²⁴² Again, military training and wider training supports more holistic conceptions of NAFTA-land Security, both directly through Mérida, and otherwise in separate but interconnected and complementary programmes. The

²³⁷ U.S. Department of the Navy Naval Criminal Investigative Service *Strategic Vision: Global Support to Global Challenges* (Quantico, 2010)

²³⁸ DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2010-2011* Sec IV-VI p.143

²³⁹ Seelke and Finklea *Merida and Beyond* (Apr 2014) p.22 This is not, however, as new a development as the authors claim, as we have seen throughout.

²⁴⁰ DoD *Section 1209 /1203 (b) FY2012* p.23

²⁴¹ U.S. Department of Defense *Section 1209 and Section 1203(b) Report to Congress on Foreign Assistance Related Programs for Fiscal Year 2011* (Washington D.C, 2012) p.24

²⁴² For example, DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2009-2010* Sec IV-VI p.118

deployment of Mérida NIIE's and their operators is thus not restricted to border spaces, for example. In fact they are spread throughout Mexico and set to expand. The following graphic lifted from a report on NIIE programmes highlights this reality. The aim to construct 'border depth' throughout and around Mexico through constructed and planned checkpoints is clear:

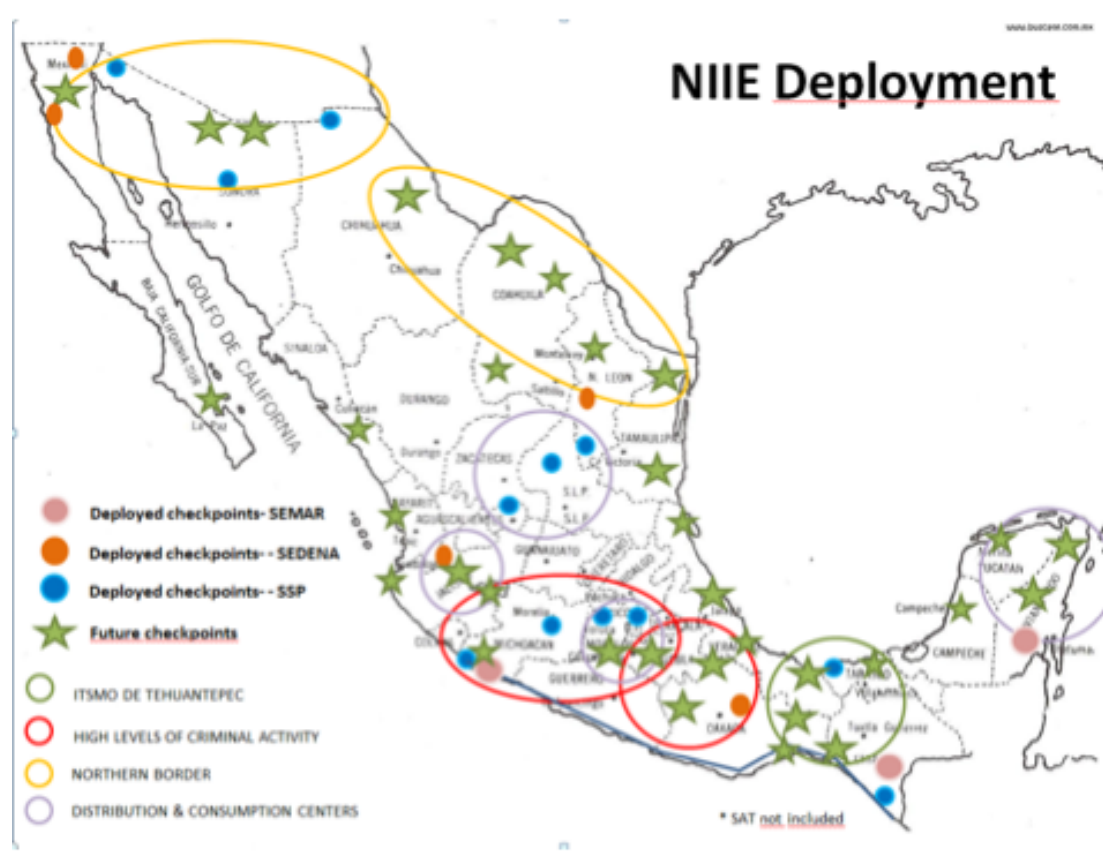


Fig 1: Current and future deployment of NIIE through Mexico

Source: U.S Embassy Mexico *Non-Intrusive Inspection Equipment*

There is an expansive principle behind the exportation of HS thinking to Mexico, in line with the priorities expressed in Chapter Five. There is a clear focus on monitoring all manner of traffic - from the individual on the ground (perhaps most difficult) to shipping and aviation on a grand scale. In terms of direct connections to Mérida, there is a litany of courses at a higher operational level that support Mérida's efforts to provide equipment for more efficient pan-institutional information sharing, and direct equipment like the four CASA-235 surveillance aircraft supplied to SEMAR under its equipment tranche. The MI's aid in NIIE and surveillance capabilities reflects its initial aims to improve Mexican border, air, and maritime controls, but this cannot be achieved just through equipment alone. Instead a deeper knowledge base is necessary to undertake what is fact a complex and challenging mission. Therefore expertise in aviation and maritime monitoring and planning is clearly a focus of U.S. funding. Outside of the official Mérida purview, but clearly within these same logics of NAFTA-land Security and supportive of Mérida's goals within that overarching

framework, Section 1004 funds and training has supported aviation security capabilities of Mexican institutions, again allowing the country to better track narcotics traffic, but also establish much greater operability on wider spectrum awareness, and interoperability with the U.S within NAFTA-land Security.

Thus, the DoD trained a number of pilots for aircraft traditionally associated with surveillance and reconnaissance missions. Again considering 1004 training, 25 pilots from *Fuerza Aérea Mexicana* (FAM - the Mexican Air Force) and SEDENA received training from Flight Safety International on the Embreair-145 model, of which Mexico currently operates three aircraft; one EMB-145 AEW&C (Airborne Early Warning and Control) and two EMB-145 MPs (Maritime Patrol). The Brazilian conglomerate Embreair, from whom SEDENA negotiated the purchase of these planes in 2001, describes the EMB-145's as, "the backbone of Mexico's [...] Aerial Surveillance System (SIVA- *Sistema de Vigilancia Aérea*)".²⁴³ SIVA is an integrated air and ground radar system, focused on Mexico's south-eastern border with Belize and Guatemala.²⁴⁴ Embreair explains that its planes will allow Mexico to track air and sea targets effectively.²⁴⁵ The DoD also trained 22 C-26 Metroliner pilots. The C-26 is a multipurpose transport/reconnaissance aircraft (depending on specifications), and the U.S. has modified several for CN operations in its own airspace. The U.S. transferred four modified C-26s to Mexico in 1997, officially to improve its CN capabilities.²⁴⁶ Finally, 46 SEMAR pilots took a MTT course in FY2007 entitled 'E2C TRNG'. This appears to be for the E2C Hawkeye Airborne Early Warning and surface surveillance aircraft. SEMAR operates three such units, which were purchased from the Israeli Air Force in 2004.²⁴⁷

SEDENA, SEMAR and FAM personnel have taken courses in areas such as 'Air Intelligence', 'Theater Air Operations', and attended the Air War College at Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base (AFB) Montgomery, Alabama. The 'Theater Air Operations' course, which was provided to one SEDENA and two SEMAR pupils, is described as aiming to, "provide Air Force Security Assistance Training (AFSAT) for international officers in the advanced knowledge and skills needed to perform air battle manager

²⁴³ Embraer 'Embraer Airplanes Chosen by Mexico for Surveillance Program' *Embraer Press Releases* (March 1st, 2001) <http://www.embraer.com/en-US/ImprensaEventos/Press-releases/noticias/Pages/AVIOES-DA-EMBRAER-SAO-SELECCIONADOS-PELO-MEXICO-PARA-PROGRAMA-DE-VIGILANCIA.aspx> Accessed 23.08.12; Embraer 'Embraer Attends AeroExpo in Key Mexican Market' *Embraer Press Releases* (April 8th, 2005) <http://www.embraer.com/en-US/ImprensaEventos/Press-releases/noticias/Pages/Embraer-apresenta-na-Labace-seu-novo-executivo-para-a-aviacao-corporativa.aspx> Accessed 23.08.12

²⁴⁴ Jane's World Air Forces: Summary (Mexico) 2012 <http://articles.janes.com/articles/Janes-World-Air-Forces/Summary-Mexico.html> Accessed 24.08.12

²⁴⁵ Embraer ISR Systems: Emb-145 Multi-Intel http://www.embraerdefensesystems.com/english/content/isr_systems/emb_multi_intel_state_of_art.asp Accessed 01.09.12; Embraer ISR Systems: Emb-145 AEW&C http://www.embraerdefensesystems.com/english/content/isr_systems/145awec_state_of_art.asp Accessed 01.09.12

²⁴⁶ In August 2011, the DoD's Counter Narco-Terrorism Program Office (CNTPO,) included system checks of Mexico's C-26 fleet as potential opportunities in an umbrella contract for private security contractors.

²⁴⁷ Oddly however, this was the plane that, according to the DoS at least, was due to be 'retired' and replaced by the CASA-235's provided under Mérida (*Guns, Drugs and Friends*, p.20). It therefore remains a possibility that this training may be applicable to other aircraft, or related to something else entirely. The author could not find a suitably plausible match, however.

duties in an air operations center (AOC) environment.”²⁴⁸ As a TAOC or Tactical Air Operations Center course the focus is again on monitoring depth of the airspace. The U.S. Air Force summarises the role of an air battle manager as one that pulls in multiple aspects of air operations; training, expert awareness of national strategy, establishing, “control of the battle space” and, put simply, “executing the entire theater air operation”.²⁴⁹ This course may dovetail with Mexico’s E2C Hawkeye fleet - the ‘plane is described by its manufacturer as an, “airborne early warning and battle management aircraft”.²⁵⁰ Two SEDENA officers were trained in ‘Air Intelligence.’ This course incorporates familiarity with mapping and charting, gathering and disseminating information (with special emphasis in the course description on ‘targeting’), and culminates in exercises that, “encompass order-of-battle construction for air, ground, naval, and electronic systems, pre-mission preparation and planning, post-mission debriefing, and a commander’s crisis situation briefing.”²⁵¹

A number of personnel, both SEDENA and SEMAR, were trained in ‘Intl Air Weapons Dir Trng’.²⁵² The FMTR does not provide any information on this course, but it seems likely it is Air Weapons Director Training. This position is described by the U.S. Air Force as one of a “combat controller” whom works aboard surveillance aircraft to, “monitor radar to tell pilots where the enemy is so the right aircraft may be targeted during a mission”.²⁵³ Similar and higher-level courses were provided under other aid programs. For example IMET funds were used to train students at Air Command and Staff College and the Air War College, as well as in the Air Intelligence course.²⁵⁴ Underlining the aims of these efforts, in January 2013 the U.S. and Mexico conducted a joint operation where the monitoring and tracking of a dummy rogue aircraft passed from U.S. authorities to Mexican ones.²⁵⁵ Whilst an official arrangement for North American aviation security that includes Mexico is still perhaps some way off, the U.S. clearly seeks to aid Mexico improving its airspace control as part of NAFTA-land Security, and this logic is both within the MI and bolstered by wider training. U.S. strategy appears to be more in line with John A. Cope’s suggestions in Chapter Five, whereby Mexico retains control over its security arrangements, but does so in line with the U.S.’ regional security priorities post-9/11.²⁵⁶

²⁴⁸ DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2009-2010* Section IV-VI p. 127; Section V p.225; DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2010-2011* Section IV-VI p.154

²⁴⁹ U.S. Air Force Careers: Air Battle Manager <http://www.airforce.com/careers/detail/air-battle-manager-abm/> Accessed 25.08.12

²⁵⁰ Northrop Grumman: E2C Hawkeye 2000 <http://www.as.northropgrumman.com/products/e2hawkeye/> Accessed 27.08.12

²⁵¹ DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY 2009-2010* Sec IV-VI p.119; Section V p.220-221; DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY 2010-2011* Sec IV-VI p.146

²⁵² For example, see DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY 2009-2010* Sec IV-VI p.122

²⁵³ 2nd Lt. Erin Tindell ‘Weapons Directors Provide Situational Awareness’ *U.S. Air Force* (November 17th, 2004) <http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123009186> Accessed 26.08.12

²⁵⁴ DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY 2009-2010* Sec IV-VI p.115

²⁵⁵ Miles ‘Northcom Pursues Closer Engagement with Mexico’

²⁵⁶ John. A Cope ‘A Prescription for Protecting the Southern Approach’ *Joint Forces Quarterly* 42, 3 (2006) p.17-21 Voices from within and without of military academia have advocated that North American Areospace Defense Command (NORAD) be extended. Maj. Lawrence Spinetta (USAF) ‘Expanding North American Aerospace Defense (NORAD): A Strategy to Engage Mexico’ *Air and Space Power Journal* (June 2005) <http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/apjinternational/apj-s/2005/2tri05/spinettaeng.html> Accessed 23.06.13; James Jay Carafano, Jena Baker McNeill, Ray Walser and Richard Weitz ‘Expand NORAD to Improve Security in North America’ *The Heritage*

Maritime security through improved management and monitoring is also supported through these programs. Of course the CASA-235s provided by Mérida to Mexico are specifically meant to help SEMAR better monitor Mexico's waters, but again wider training shows the broader, all-purpose logic behind this goal. Training is supportive of NORTHCOM's move into the maritime security arena, and the NAMSII. We have already seen that coastal, riverine and port security has been an important feature of U.S. military training. Added to this is the higher level expertise training necessary for the coordination and interoperability key to achieving improved maritime security on the U.S.' terms. In FY2011 50 SEMAR members took part in an MTT in Maritime Expeditionary Operations, whilst 41 participated in a 'NAVOCEANO' course.²⁵⁷ This refers to the Naval Oceanographic Office, which describes its mission as providing, "the warfighter the best available knowledge of the maritime battlespace. This includes tailored oceanographic, hydrographic, bathymetric, geophysical and acoustic products and services that aid in *safe navigation* and *effective mission planning*."²⁵⁸ Several 'Int'l Maritime Officer' courses have been undertaken,²⁵⁹ with the course description stating it, "provides professional military study in the organization, planning, management and operation of a *multi-mission maritime force*" where, "Marine safety topics include marine environmental response, safety and occupational health, pollution response techniques, contingency planning, marine licensing, and commercial vessel inspection".²⁶⁰ IN FY2008 18 SEMAR personnel received Naval Cooperation and Guidance for Shipping (NCAGS) training, a NATO-led programme to improve coordination between military and commercial shipping for mutual benefit in security and expedited passage.²⁶¹ Again this is key undergirding for increased maritime security operations on the part of SEMAR.

The overall sense here is of training being used to improve Mexico's capacities far beyond CN as a sole mission. Instead the weight of evidence continues to mount that the overarching aims are based around NAFTA-land Security and the priorities that were expressed under the SPP. The MI clearly locks into that. In truth I have only scratched the surface of the 10,000 courses plus that have been provided, but even in this indicative snapshot the idea that Mérida is simply a CN package, or that it is separate to much wider goals within North America, becomes untenable. Nonetheless, there is still a CN specific element to this aim. I now turn to this as a final example, looking at how the U.S. continues to militarise and support militarisation of CN in Mexico as part of NAFTA-land Security.

A Militarised Drug War

We have seen that the Obama 'Beyond Merida' strategy rethink was tempered by a continued, growing role for the U.S. military. Drilling down into the details of the various training courses provided by the DoD helps strengthen this conclusion.

Foundation (July 27th, 2010) <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/07/expand-norad-to-improve-security-in-north-america> Accessed 13.07.14

²⁵⁷ DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2011-FY2012* p.84

²⁵⁸ U.S. Department of the Navy: Naval Oceanographic Office

http://www.public.navy.mil/fltfor/cnmoc/Pages/navo_home1.aspx Accessed 17.08.14 My emphasis

²⁵⁹ For example, see DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2013-2014* Sec IV-VI p.64, 68 This course has been provided under both 1004 and IMET streams.

²⁶⁰ DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2009-2010* Sec V p.118

²⁶¹ DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2008-2009* p. 113-114;

Firstly, with regard to Mexico's CN strategy, the use of military concepts and methods is being strongly supported by the U.S. Secondly, it is also clear that whilst there is an obvious CN rationale for much of this training, it also supports wider U.S. goals. The courses provided by the DoD have a far more extensive 'security' applicability than simple drug interdiction. Many of the courses have multipurpose potential for a number of security contingencies. This is most obvious in the numerous references to "terrorism" that litter the training descriptions provided in the FMTR, but viewed as a whole this supports the U.S. goal of improving the Mexican military's capability to produce and maintain wide-spectrum security and stability, *and* deepens and expands a militarised approach to Mexico's continuing drug-related violence.

This section broadly explores this, with a focus on the U.S. support for militarised CN approaches. Firstly, however, it is important not to overstate the case here. Again as we saw above Mérida money and focus did move into 'civilian' institutions under Beyond Mérida. Also the lack of information on Mérida training can create a false impression that military training is where all, or the most important, action happens. Even with the limited information that is available on *direct* Mérida training it is clear that very significant numbers of trainees have participated in courses with a more 'civilian' applicability. One of the most useful reports on Mérida as a whole (in terms of numbers and detail of training) shows that thousands of participants from across Mexico's state institutions (and civil society) have undertaken "capacity building events" in areas such as "Victim Protection and Restitution", "Trafficking in Persons", "Citizen Participation Councils", "Money Laundering Courses" 'Evidence Preservation and Chain of Custody" and Firearms Trafficking,²⁶² as well of course as the border security and police training we have already encountered. I have already discussed the deep focus on judicial reform within the MI. This institutional aspect needs to be kept in mind in any consideration of U.S. contemporary aid to Mexico.

Nonetheless, there is no doubt that the U.S. is supporting Mexico's continued militarisation of its CN efforts. Critics pointed out the large equipment transfers in the early days of the MI were based on military weaponry, especially airpower to improve Mexican mobility. However the far less public Section 1004 funding and training is once again key to this story, alongside other U.S. DoD mechanisms. First of all, 1004 funding joins up with Mérida here. Whilst pilot and maintenance courses that could support Mérida equipment like the UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter are also undertaken under INL funding streams,²⁶³ the DoD and its contractors used 1004 funds to train a number of pilots and navigators, for a number of different 'planes and helicopters. This included several training, refresher training, and maintenance courses for SEDENA and SEMAR on the UH-60.²⁶⁴ One of the main training courses (UH-60 AVR QUAL SPANISH) included, "instruction in aircraft systems, navigation and command instrument systems, combat skills, flight training, mission planning, and safety", as well as high-tech night equipment training.²⁶⁵ It's important to note that ten of these courses were provided in FY2007, prior to the official start of Mérida

²⁶² *Common Enemy* p. 24-38

²⁶³ For example see DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2013-2014* Sec IV-VI p. 65

²⁶⁴ For example see DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2008-2009* Sec IV-VI p.114-115; DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2012-2013* Sec IV-VI p.76

²⁶⁵ DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2009-2010* Sec V p.231

funding, and Mexico operates some older Black Hawks. However the knowledge base being prepared also seemingly tallied with preparations for the provision of the newer equipment.²⁶⁶ 10 SEDENA personnel took pilot courses for Bell helicopters, including training that was outsourced by the DoD to the Bristow Group Corporation's premises at the Bristow Academy.²⁶⁷ Again, to reiterate, both of these helicopter types have been provided to Mexico under the MI.

Mexico has also purchased Black Hawks directly. Their manufacturer, Sikorsky, has entered into an agreement with Mexico's helicopter service provider, and a regional executive for the company described Mexico as representing, "a large and growing market".²⁶⁸ Underlining this sentiment and the continued deep involvement of the U.S. in Mexico, in April 2014 the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) announced the sale of 18 Blackhawk UH-60Ms to Mexico at the cost of \$680million. A further five were announced in June 2014 for an additional \$225million.²⁶⁹ These purchases would run through the Foreign Military Sales programme (FMS) and thus would be supported by continued U.S.-Mexican cooperation to ensure training and expertise were up to speed in Mexico, but it already works with a base of expertise built up through training programmes like Section 1004 and the MI. The figures include extras such as navigation systems, night-vision goggles, M134 7.62mm machine guns, and radios.²⁷⁰ Reports have speculated that the sale is destined for FAM because of the lack of equipment specific to SEMAR, but what seems clearer is their planned use in CN operations.²⁷¹ This at least is the rationale provided by the DSCA, who state the proposed sale will:

[...] contribute to the foreign policy and national security of the United States by helping to improve the security of a strategic partner. Mexico has been a strong partner in combating organized crime and drug trafficking organizations. The sale of these UH-60M helicopters to Mexico will significantly increase and strengthen its capability to provide in-country airlift support for its forces engaged in counter-drug operations.²⁷²

²⁶⁶ DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2007-2008* Sec IV-VI p. 91

²⁶⁷ U.S. Embassy Mexico 'Mérida Initiative at a Glance: Law Enforcement Achievements' http://www.usembassy-mexico.gov/eng/merida/emerida_factsheet_lawenforcement.html Accessed 30.08.12 For information on the Bristow Academy see here: <http://www.heli.com/>

²⁶⁸ David A. Lombardo 'Sikorsky Expands Black Hawk Service in Mexico' *AINOnline* (February 22nd, 2012) <http://www.ainonline.com/aviation-news/ainmxreports/2012-02-22/sikorsky-expands-black-hawk-service-mexico> Accessed 26.02.12

²⁶⁹ U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Security Cooperation Agency *News Release: Mexico: UH60M Black Hawk Helicopters* (April 21st, 2014); U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Security Cooperation Agency *News Release: Mexico: UH60M Black Hawk Helicopters* (June 24th, 2014)

²⁷⁰ *ibid*

²⁷¹ Gareth Jennings 'Mexico Requests UH-60M Black Hawk helos' *HIS Jane's 360* (21st April, 2014) <http://www.janes.com/article/36831/mexico-requests-uh-60m-black-hawk-helos> Accessed 22.04.14; Sarah Kinoshian 'Mexico Prepping to Buy More Black Hawks: Settling in for a Lengthy Fight in Drug War?' *The Christian Science Monitor* (April 29th, 2014)

<http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Americas/Latin-America-Monitor/2014/0429/Mexico-prepping-to-buy-more-Black-Hawks-settling-in-for-a-lengthy-fight-in-drug-war> Accessed 01.05.14

²⁷² DoD, DSCA *Mexico: UH60M Black Hawk Helicopters*

Finally, the contractors involved - Sikorsky and General Electric Aircraft Company - are of course going to benefit financially in the short and long-term as the relationship with Mexico is deepened.

The DoD has trained a number of airplane pilots on a number of different aircraft too. 10 personnel received refresher simulator training for the Lockheed C-130 transport plane,²⁷³ and we have already seen training for C-26 planes. Moreover, complementing these pilot programs are a whole host of technical and support modules designed to maintain and sustain Mexico's aviation capabilities, again including the equipment provided, and due to be provided, under the MI. Courses range from aircraft electricians, avionics technicians, loading specialists for C-130 transports, specialist engine expertise, aircraft safety management, corrosion control, and airbase warehouse logistics. It is clear that in this instance 1004 and wider training works in tandem with Mérida in providing the personnel expertise required to ensure that the equipment provided to Mexico is properly serviced and used. The repetition of many of these courses, which often appear in each particular FY, reveal an objective to build a deep knowledge and capability base within the three Mexican military institutions that responds not only to contemporary security issues (including CN), but improves future performance and allows easier bilateral cooperation, and military sales, in the long-term.

Of course much of the military rationale for increased helicopter capability in Mexico is to improve Mexico's ability to conduct rapid and mobile military operations against CN targets in a variety of environments - from urban to mountain to rural. When assessing the almost 10,000 courses provided by the DoD to individuals in Mexico as covered by the FMTR, the sense that a deep culture of militarised CN is being inculcated in Mexico's military security forces becomes inescapable. Of course, this can be seen to a good extent, 'publicly'. For example, the MI has been highlighted as providing the mobility to Mexican forces to undertake expansive operations in restive states like Michoacán. The PF have deployed UH-60s in counterdrug missions, and SEMAR have also utilized their Mérida supplied hardware in this context. The U.S. Army described in October 2011 how UH-60Ms that had been specially modified before their delivery to Mexico were integral to a SEMAR mission to arrest nineteen alleged Zetas members.²⁷⁴ Surveillance and reconnaissance aircraft also have a clear potential usefulness in tracking and potentially helping intercept drug shipments flown, smuggled or shipped into and across Mexican airspace and territory, and providing training in piloting and utilising such equipment fits in with the DoD's assessment that 1004 allows them to aid in, "establishing command, control, communications and computer networks, aerial and ground reconnaissance".²⁷⁵

In addition, and more specifically, operations targeting kingpins, explicitly referred to as 'high-value targets' (HVTs)²⁷⁶ involved elite SEMAR units trained by the DoD.²⁷⁷

²⁷³ For example, DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY 2008-2009* Sec IV-VI p.109

²⁷⁴ Kristen Kushiya, 'US Army Modified UH-60M Used in Arrest of Alleged Members of Mexican Drug Cartel' *U.S. Army* (October 17th, 2011)
http://www.army.mil/article/67396/US_Army_modified_UH_60M_used_in_arrest_of_alleged_members_of_Mexican_drug_cartel/ Accessed 27.08.12

²⁷⁵ DoD *Section 1209/1203b FY2008-10* p.4

²⁷⁶ The same designation was used in the GWOT, though it has a longer history. See Priest 'U.S. Role at Crossroads'; Vanda Felbab-Brown 'Despite Its Siren Song, High-Value Targeting Doesn't Fit All:

In the case of Arturo Beltran Leyva (a top drug *capo*), a diplomatic cable fills out the public information stating that:

[...]the arrest operation targeting ABL [Arturo Beltran Leyva] began about a week prior to his death when the [U.S.] Embassy relayed detailed information on his location to SEMAR. *The SEMAR unit has been trained extensively by NORTHCOM over the past several years.* SEMAR raided an identified location, where they killed several ABL bodyguards and arrested over 23 associates, while ABL and Hector [his brother] escaped. On Monday, the Embassy interagency linked ABL to an apartment building located in Cuernavaca (about an hour south of Mexico City), where ABL was in hiding. SEMAR initiated an arrest operation on Wednesday afternoon, surrounding the identified apartment complex, and establishing a security perimeter. ABL's forces fired on the SEMAR operatives and engaged in a sustained firefight that wounded three SEMAR marines and possibly killed one.²⁷⁸

This kind of operation allows one to understand the continued training in the kind of specialist small-unit combat tactics that we see under 1004. For example the course in 'COUNTERDRUG OPS-SPANISH' undertaken at WHINSEC at Fort Benning involves, "advanced marksmanship with both rifle and pistol; precision operations in urban environments; riverine operations; development of intelligence packets in support of counterdrug operations; intelligence preparation of the area of operations".²⁷⁹ 59 SEDENA personnel were trained by NORTHCOM in FY2011 in 'Target Site Exploitation',²⁸⁰ whereby military units engage in, "systematically searching for and collecting information, material, and persons from a designated location and analysing them to answer information requirements, facilitate subsequent operations, or support criminal prosecution."²⁸¹ In FY2012 and FY2013 a specific MTT on "Urban Operations" was provided to 164 personnel in Mexico.²⁸²

Also in FY2013 U.S. Army North (ARNORTH) and the Texas Army National Guard undertook a number of specialist courses in nighttime infantry operations. U.S. Army North (under the Combatant Command of USNORTHCOM) states that its primary focus within its Theater Security Cooperation remit, as part of the U.S. Army's wider

Matching Interdiction Patterns to Specific Narcoterrorism and Organized-Crime Contexts' *Brookings Institute Paper* (October 1st, 2013) <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2013/10/01-matching-interdiction-patterns-narcoterrorism-organized-crime-contexts-felbabbrown> Accessed 02.09.14

²⁷⁷ On SEMAR involvement in the arrest of El Chapo, see Keefe 'The Hunt for El Chapo'

²⁷⁸ U.S. Embassy Mexico *Mexican Navy Operation Nets Drug Kingpin Arturo Beltran Leyva*
A marine was killed in this operation, and after his funeral four members of his family were assassinated in his mother's home in an apparent reprisal.

²⁷⁹ 18 SEDENA trainees and 4 SEMAR personnel attended this course at Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC - formerly the SOA) between FY2007 and 2013, excluding FY2011. In that year, it appears that 33 SEDENA took it in an MTT organised through the Security Assistance Training Management Organization (SATMO), which is connected to the John F. Kennedy School of Special Warfare. See FMTRs

²⁸⁰ DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2011-2012* Sec IV-VI p.85

²⁸¹ U.S. Department of the Army *Site Exploitation Operations: FM 3-90.15* (July 2010) p.1-1

²⁸² DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2012-2013* Sec IV-VI p.76; DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2013-2014* Sec IV-VI p.70

goal to, “shape the global environment to empower allies and partners to succeed”, is to improve Mexico’s security “capacity” so as to add another “layer of protection” to the U.S. homeland. This is seen as especially important as, “Presently, transnational narco-trafficking organizations and associated criminal elements are a significant challenge for both nations” and efforts to combat transnational elements are closely bound with those of the theater security cooperation process with Mexico and are part of the mission to defend the homeland in depth.”²⁸³ ARNORTH’s activity in Mexico has increased, as evidenced by the FMTR and ARNORTH themselves.²⁸⁴ A contingent of Mexican Marines (MEXMAR) were invited to a train with the U.S. Marines under a Junior Officer Development Course funded through 1004 funds, where the “Mission” was described as being designed to, “improve the leadership capabilities inherent in their [MEXMAR] officer corps with increased combat leadership, tactical planning, individual warrior skills and weapons employment proficiency” which would in turn “enhance the relationship between the Mexican Marine Corps and the United States Marine Corps.”²⁸⁵

On a more generalised level the DoD has provided several courses that relate to increased interoperability and asymmetric warfare more generally, without necessarily being, from the U.S. point of view, about CN in the traditional sense of interdicting drugs. Various courses prepare the Mexican military in force protection, Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW), ‘antiterrorism’, base protection and a whole host of other activities. Taken in the context of the deployment of the Mexican military around Mexico that I have already covered, the continued, *increasing* high levels of training of Mexico’s military suggests its role in CN is deepening to the point of permanency. The recent U.S. announcement that Mexico wants to buy over 3000 Humvees under FMS, to, “significantly increase and strengthen its capability to provide in-country troop mobility to provide security” in the drug war context suggests the Mexican government (Peña Nieto’s no less) doesn’t see the military returning to the barracks all that soon.²⁸⁶ These are not the actions of two governments keen to scale back military involvement in CN. There are murkier aspects to this militarisation too. One thing that is notable from the FMTR is the conflation of threats in the Mexican context, and the DoD’s definition of the Mexican security crisis as a military one requiring a military solution, *whatever* the wider strategy may be.

Thus, courses are provided in some interesting areas. A handful of courses were conducted under 1004 that made reference to ‘Counter Narcoterrorism’. Although unfortunately information on these courses is limited in the FMTR,²⁸⁷ WHINSEC described its ‘Counter Narco-Terrorism Information Analyst Course’ (provided to a

²⁸³ Association of the United States Army *U.S. Army North/Fifth Army: Building Relationships for a Secure Homeland* (December, 2011) p.1-2

²⁸⁴ Brian Woolworth ‘Enhancing North American Security Through Military to Military Relationships’ *Small Wars Journal* (November 30th, 2012) <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/enhancing-north-american-security-through-military-to-military-relationships> Accessed 17.03.13

²⁸⁵ U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Marine Corps (NORTHCOM) *Mexican Marine Corps Junior Officer Development Course (JODC) 26 NOV - 15 DEC 2012: After Action Report* (Virginia, January 23rd, 2013) p.2

²⁸⁶ U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Security Cooperation Agency *News Release: Mexico - M1152 High Mobility Multi-Purpose Wheeled Vehicles (HMMWVs)* (May 16th, 2014)

²⁸⁷ It may be classified

number of Mexican students) as one in which trains, “selected military officers, noncommissioned officers, and selected law-enforcement agents, at the operational analyst level, on their duties and responsibilities when working in a *counter narco-terrorist-operations environment*.”²⁸⁸ 1004 training has also been provided in PSYOPS, which has been used in COIN contexts elsewhere, and a course entitled ‘Spec-Ops Combating Terr-MET’ (25 students).²⁸⁹ This appears to be (based on its course number) the Joint Special Operations University’s ‘Special Operation Combating Terrorism Course’. It is described with no reference to ‘traditional’ CN whatsoever, instead focusing on the aid the course provides to U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and combatant commanders to, “cultivate joint SOF [Special Operations Forces] and interagency subject matter experts while strategically building and leveraging a global network of international SOF personnel in accordance with the Global War on Terrorism strategic goals.”²⁹⁰ This course was also provided under CTFP (5 students).²⁹¹ As Rosa points out, there are large questions about what exactly the DoD is doing with regard to a lot of these courses, and how they are being applied in the Mexican context.²⁹² Importantly, a NORTHCOM spokesman told her that his Combatant Command’s specialised training was, “in the spirit of the Merida Initiative objectives and fully supports the U.S. whole-of-government effort to work closely with Mexico”.²⁹³

Courses in subjects like ‘Terrorism and Counterinsurgency’, ‘Responses to Transnational Criminal Organizations’, and ‘Terrorism and Crime in Latin America’ have been undertaken within CTFP and Regional Center arrangements. The posited intersection of crime-terror-insurgency, and the specter of TOC, now appears directly in DoD training. Whether it is particularly accurate or useful to conflate threats in this way in terms of dealing with them is therefore in some ways moot - this is what is happening. Furthermore warfare concepts are clearly being applied in grander terms to Mexico’s security issues. The William J. Perry Center routinely runs large ‘NationLab’ exercises, which are constructed alongside partner nation institutions and the respective U.S. Embassy, in order to provide a simulated response to a security issue for these stakeholders.²⁹⁴ In 2012 a “wargame” NationLab was run between representatives and students from Mexico, the U.S., Canada, and Guatemala that was, “designed to provide hands-on learning in the formulation of national policy, and the formulation and adaptation of strategy in the shared regional fight against

²⁸⁸ U.S. Department of Defense, Secretary of Defense *Annual Report to Congress on the Activities of the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation for 2008* (2008) p.17; DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2009-2010* Sec IV-VI p.120 (for example) This course has also been provided under CTFP, see DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2007-2008* Sec IV-VI p.85

²⁸⁹ DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2007-2008* Sec IV-VI p.91; DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2009-2010* Sec IV-VI p.127; DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2010-2011* Sec IV-VI p.154

²⁹⁰ Joint Special Operations University ‘Special Operations Combating Terrorism Course’ <http://jsou.socom.mil/Pages/CourseInformation.aspx?courseName=Special%20Operations%20Combating%20Terrorism%20Course> Accessed 02.08.14

²⁹¹ DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2007-2008* Sec IV-VI p.85; DoS / DoD *Foreign Military Training Report FY2008-2009* Sec IV-VI p.105

²⁹² Erin Rosa ‘State Department Backing US Troops in Mexico’ *The Narcosphere* (October 4th, 2010) <http://narcosphere.narconews.com/notebook/erin-rosa/2010/10/state-department-backing-us-troops-mexico> Accessed 18.07.13

²⁹³ *ibid*

²⁹⁴ William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies ‘NationLab’ <http://chds.dodlive.mil/education/nationlab/> Accessed 28.08.14

transnational organized crime, including coordination between countries and government ministries.²⁹⁵

Finally, rather ominous direct links between Iraq, Afghanistan, the GWOT and U.S. training in Mexico exist:

Using 1004 support, our Army Service Component Command (ARNORTH) developed a senior-leader training program entitled Asymmetric Conflict Executive Seminar (ACES), which provides Mexican military leaders with the tools they need to succeed in Mexico's national campaign to counter TCOs by covering many of the lessons learned *from U.S. experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan*.²⁹⁶

A further indication of a potential link between Iraq and Afghanistan was the putative interest of Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) in extending their secretive targeting operations to Mexico and its traffickers.²⁹⁷

A Justified Military Approach?

The breakdown provided above suggests that a) the U.S. is providing training to Mexican military personnel that fulfils a wider military remit than CN assistance (and vice-versa with the terrorism programmes), in seeming contradiction of some of the legislation that actually funds the training and/or b) the U.S., through the DoD, has effectively designated TCOs as terrorist and / or military actors in some capacity (despite not formally doing so in, for example, its Foreign Terrorist List) and/or c) is applying COIN and other low-intensity conflict doctrines to the Mexican drug war context, and training Mexican military personnel accordingly. I would in fact suggest all three are happening, but that (c) means that the implications of (a) can be obfuscated somewhat, given the nature of the violence in Mexico. The problem for the researcher is that in the Mexican context these suppositions are *prima facie* at least plausibly justifiable, given that in some areas the cartels and their activities do represent a militarised threat. Thus, despite the fast and loose discourse that hypes the threat of cartels and collapses definitional categories, much of the military training and Mérida equipment has a plausible CN applicability, and I have already shown how it has been used in CN contexts. The specialist expertise involved in maintaining and using the equipment provided by Mérida, including the focused skills involved in air intelligence, leadership and aviation warfare, is of course the necessary addendum to the perhaps more high-profile equipment provision and piloting training.

However, it is clear that whilst this training has a clear usefulness to Mexico's

²⁹⁵ William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies 'MEX CESNAV NationLab V 2012' <https://chdsnet.org/news-story/mex-cesnav-nationlab-v-2012> Accessed 28.08.14

²⁹⁶ DoD *Section 1209/1203(b) FY2011* p.23 My emphasis

²⁹⁷ Dana Priest and William M. Arkin 'Top Secret America': A Look at the Military's Joint Special Operations Command' *The Washington Post* (September 2nd, 2011) http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/top-secret-america-a-look-at-the-militarys-joint-special-operations-command/2011/08/30/gIQAyYuAxJ_story.html Accessed 16.08.14; Douglas Lucas 'DEA Plan to Kill Narcos' *WhoWhatWhy* (July 17th, 2013) <http://whowhatwhy.com/2013/07/17/are-mexican-drug-lords-the-next-terrorist-targets-a-who-exclusive-series-part-i-of-iii/> For an overview of JSOC's operations in the GWOT see Jeremy Scahill *Dirty Wars: The World is a Battlefield* (Nation Books, 2013)

counterdrug missions, it is very much in line with an increasingly militarised CN response. Further, this deep training commitment is potentially helping to build a long-term counterdrug mindset within the Mexican military. The repetition and volume of courses that promote sustainable military capabilities ostensibly in CN, and plug into long-term strategic systems within Mexico such as SIVA, belie the supposed temporality of the Mexican military's counterdrug role that has been promoted by U.S. defense officials and U.S. policy documents. This has potentially harmful implications that may in fact be counterproductive for U.S. goals within NAFTA-land Security. In addition, troubling questions remain about the nature of some of the training actually being provided by the U.S., and that aforementioned conflation of threats. If asymmetrical warfare responses honed in Iraq and Afghanistan are being used in Mexico, what effect are they having? The answers to this question are extremely difficult to ascertain given the secrecy of some of the training, and the inherently clandestine and murky nature of Mexico's security crisis and its actors. What *is* clear is that the CN element of the NAFTA-land Security drive is far more 'robust' than the Beyond Mérida strategy would have us believe. Whatever the merits of the institutional improvements being undertaken at several levels within the Mexican state, the DoD is deeply implicated in the MI and security projection into Mexico, as well as the associated tackling of the cartels themselves.

These more troubling aspects speak to my sub-questions as to whether the MI can be said to be working. Firstly, there is vexing question of the MI's 'kingpin' strategy, which the military strategy supports. Knocking out 'HVTs' has been convincingly linked to power vacuums and struggles within Mexico's trafficking world, which in turn worsen levels of violence.²⁹⁸ It could be that the U.S. is satisfied that drug trafficking groups exist, but are not 'allowed', as it were, to reach beyond certain levels of power without triggering a robust security response. This would be in line with the Strategy to Combat TOC's aim to turn national security problems into criminal ones. However if the kingpin strategy is adding to violence, this would appear to contradict U.S. goals in stabilising the situation in Mexico more broadly. The second concern remains the human rights situation 'on the ground in Mexico'. There are in-built mechanisms in U.S. assistance that are meant to ensure human rights standards, and Mérida has both aims and safeguards added by Congress to achieve this too. Human rights training is a component of the military training courses themselves. Nonetheless human rights abuses remain inherent in certain areas of Mexican security (e.g. police torture), and they spiked as security forces rolled out across Mexico. The direct risk remains that training will be provided to and used by abusers within the security forces. There is also the continued high likelihood that some Mexican security forces themselves will become corrupted. The still more insidious risk is that a militarised 'drug war' is one in which violence and abuse is more likely, as society-security force relations are distant and frayed.

Thirdly, relatedly, and perhaps most disturbingly of all, the question of desertion from the military and police forces remains pertinent. Mexico's military and police desertion rate, not to mention the continued purges of corrupt police forces, provide

²⁹⁸ Eduardo Guerrero-Gutierrez 'Security, Drugs, and Violence in Mexico: A Survey' 7th North American Forum (Washington D.C., 2011) p.66-67

potential recruiting pools for traffickers.²⁹⁹ The U.S. has undoubtedly enjoyed success in how it has pulled SEMAR into NAFTA-land Security as a trusted and professional partner, and maybe hoping that similar results can be achieved with, for example, SEDENA. However the risk remains that the skills being imparted to security forces will end up being employed *by or for* traffickers and trafficking. All of these worries and blocks on success connect up with a fourth concern, which is whether there is a logic of violence involved in using militarised methods to meet the trafficking threat. Cartels have already proved willing to fight the state, as well as each other, and improve their paramilitary capacities to do so.³⁰⁰ In the complex context of Mexico's security crisis, is the U.S. 'fuelling the flames' by enjoining further, deeper militarisation and the designation of TCOs as a threat akin to terrorism and insurgency, even if there is some plausibility to this definition? If so, this has serious implications for NAFTA-land Security.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have traced Mérida's formation, legislative history, implementation, and change across its lifespan. In the second part of the chapter I engaged in more granular analysis of some of its detail, and connected it to the related elements in other aid programmes. I argued they are key not only in supporting and complementing Mérida, but also in making it 'work'. Through this process I have shown that the MI expresses many of the same policy goals and logics as the SPP. When understood within this context Mérida is clearly a core component of the drive to create 'NAFTA-land Security'. As the highest-profile element of this, Mérida has not only provided large amounts of funding and equipment on its own CN terms, but has also helped strengthen the NAFTA-land Security framework in various ways. Firstly, and most directly, it has put the policy 'meat on the bones' of the SPP, fleshing out the skeletal North American security framework with tangible policy programmes and progress. Secondly, it has helped push forward U.S.-Mexican interaction and cooperation in other areas. The roots of this effort lie in the deepened interests in an increasingly important North American economy, powered by the dynamo of NAFTA and shown to be vulnerable by 9/11. We can trace a process from the deepened U.S. security interest in Mexico after NAFTA and the tentative military engagement in the 1990s through to today's unprecedentedly close bilateralism, although it has taken the crisis of Mexico's drug violence to unlock some of the doors for wider U.S. involvement in Mexican security. Whilst this is not a linear, teleological, or perfectly executed strategy stretching back through administrations, it does reflect the burgeoning and ossifying of U.S. interests in Mexico.

²⁹⁹ 56,000 military deserters were reported under Calderón's tenure *alone*. Edward Fox 'Mexico Military Sees Over 56,000 Desertions Under Calderon' *Insight Crime* (April 9th, 2012) <http://www.insightcrime.org/news-briefs/mexico-military-sees-over-56000-desertions-under-calderon> Accessed 12.04.12 For a chilling account of a Mexican *sicario* (hitman) who claimed to use his police training and protection in his brutal life see Molly Molloy and Charles Bowden (eds.) *El Sicario: The Autobiography of a Mexican Assassin* (Nation Books, 2011)

³⁰⁰ Again, the account of Kenny and Serrano is instructive. Kenny and Serrano 'The Mexican State' and Paul Kenny and Mónica Serrano 'Transition to Dystopia' p.54-85 in Kenny, *et al Mexico's Security Failure*

Thus, despite some of the complications I point to in the final stages of this chapter (and explore a little more in the Conclusion), the analysis here and in Chapter Five reveals the *continuing* rationale for the MI within NAFTA-Land Security. Combining this depth analysis with the historical narrative, and placing it within the context of the historical-materialist framework, provides a stronger and more satisfactory explanatory purchase on contemporary U.S. policy with Mexico. The MI and NAFTA-land Security, seen in this light, are more explicable in their underlying drivers, and in their aims, continuation, and perceived efficacy. NAFTA-land Security now forms a notable feature of U.S. regional hegemony, and bolsters that hegemony further. Mexico is increasingly locked into a security relationship with the U.S. that has durability beyond specific administrations, as shown by the consistency of the U.S. effort through shifting U.S. and Mexican governments. The U.S. seeks to bolster its own HS and protect its strategic interests within North America's political economy through a regional security architecture. By the same token, however, the understanding of hegemony offered in this project helps us understand that NAFTA-land Security, and wider regional and bilateral relations, cannot be reduced to a command-and-control system operating from the U.S. metropole which only ever smoothly attains U.S. goals. The U.S. aim is for Mexico to *conduct NAFTA-Land Security at an increasingly autonomous level*, where the U.S. acts as an encouraging tutor. This means that Mexico can still display independence inimical to U.S. preferences, and again some of the actions of the Peña Nieto administration provides the evidence here. However, within the hegemonic power logics of North America, operating importantly at an economic level within logics of capitalist social relations, that independence exists within genuine parameters.

Conclusions

Is Mérida Working?

“...could you tell me how we measure the success, any one of you, of the program? It certainly can't be by the number of deaths, because that would mean we are failing.”¹

Introduction

This chapter summarises the findings and overall contribution of this research project. It connects what I have argued and uncovered herein to the explicit research questions set out in the Introduction, and summarises briefly how these findings relate to some of the wider debates the project touches upon in terms of North American regionalism, U.S. foreign policy, and U.S. hegemony. The *implicit* but core U.S. aim revealed through this analysis, namely to more fully open up Mexico's security forces to wider U.S. influence in order to pull them into a NAFTA-land Security framework, is currently being met. Mexico, as U.S. military officials have stated, has never been more open to U.S. influence within its security sector. I have shown how the U.S. is actively constructing a regional security architecture - NAFTA-land Security - that Mexico is a participant in. This has been both in part *achieved through* and *extended and deepened* U.S. regional hegemony. However once we move down from this overarching level things start to get more complex. Violence continues in Mexico. Human rights observance in Mexico's security forces is still shockingly poor. The aims of Beyond Mérida to institutionalise better rule of law approaches over military-led CN are clashing with the reality of DoD training. In this concluding chapter I open up, very briefly, some of these tougher questions. Having established this, I consider future directions the research could take, based around some of the gaps in the project that are highly relevant to its aims, but which space and time did not allow me to interrogate.

Summary of Findings: The Birth of NAFTA-land Security

This thesis has shown that the MI is a multi-purpose security package designed to improve Mexico's security capacities on a number of indices and in a number of areas. CN is a crucial part of this, largely as a reaction to the rise of destabilising drug-related violence inside Mexico. Moreover, I have shown how the MI is *enveloped within* a wider goal to regionalise security in the North American economic space, and better protect that space and the U.S. itself through security projection to the NAFTA perimeter. The deeper motivations for the U.S. to pursue such a course lie in its political-economic / strategic interests; part reflective of a long-held aim in U.S. bilateral relations with Mexico (and of course beyond) to ensure the stability of a key political economy for U.S. interests, partly reflective of a new regional thinking based around securing the increasingly strategically important North American economic

¹ Congressman Payne (D-NJ) Committee question on MI See *Has Mérida Evolved: The Evolution of Drug Cartels and the Threat to Mexico's Governance* Hearing Before the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere and Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation of Committee on Foreign Affairs (Serial 110-60) 112th Congress (September 13th, 2011) p.61

zone, where interests and the compulsions to secure them have deepened through economic regionalisation processes connected to NAFTA. The result is the active NAFTA-land Security effort. In building to this argument, I showed that the extant literature had made important contributions to understanding the MI, but had not fully captured its wider goals. I then built a theoretical argument based around meta-theoretical exploration of interests as product of complex, social structures. I built a picture of U.S. interests from this basis, and applied this to U.S.-Mexican historical relations to show how those interests motivated U.S. action. I then showed how *more regional* security logics, precipitated by 9/11 but with roots in that bilateral history *and* the deepening of interests through regionalisation, were established under a rubric of NAFTA-land Security, before undertaking the key analytical task of this project in showing how the MI *fundamentally plugs into and extends the NAFTA-land Security* effort. The MI has been crucial in aiding the U.S. in its key aims to engage Mexico's previously recalcitrant military and military establishment on the security issues the U.S. is most concerned about, which has included Mexico's drug-related security crisis, but also encompasses U.S. HS and the security of the North American political economy from variegated transnational threats.

Thus, the historical materialist framework employed has helped the project arrive upon original conclusions to the research questions posed in the Introduction. Firstly, to examine the puzzle of why the MI continues despite the deteriorating security situation in Mexico, I argued we needed to ask the animating research question that comes prior to that puzzle, i.e. what are the U.S.' *aims* in constructing and implementing Mérida? I have historically situated and contextualised the MI within the development of U.S. foreign relations and U.S.-Mexican relations. I also provided an argument for core political-economic animators as drivers of U.S. policy in the evolution of those relations. Those animators - strategic interests - have stemmed from complex social structures that are nonetheless heavily conditioned by capitalist socio-economics. U.S. economic expansionism, emanating from logics within capitalism and burgeoning U.S. economic success, led to the proliferation of key interests beyond U.S. borders that increasingly presented themselves as strategic realities that needed to be secured by the U.S. state. I have shown that the aims of the MI snake back to deep continuities in protecting political economic interests in Mexico, which itself is part of a much wider trope within U.S. foreign policy to ensure the stability of key political economies. However, in sum these logics became part of something much more grand strategic in scope. Over time, these processes have culminated in the U.S. seeking to encourage and secure *economic and political openness on a global level*, with this openness accruing material benefits to the U.S. The drive to openness has been underpinned by, and in part underpins, the U.S.' position of economic and military primacy.

The U.S. has, overall, tried to secure and bolster its position through hegemony, inviting others to spread, support and secure global economic openness, and locking in those economic and security logics through alliances, institutional arrangements, and aid flows. A complex mix of power relations also sustains hegemony as the hard reality *and* benefits of U.S. preponderance (and selective applications of coercive power), combining with the structural realities of increasingly globalised capitalism, constrains choices for other actors whilst enabling freedom of action for the U.S. This has a direct application to the case examined here. U.S. policies to further open the world to U.S. and global capital during the economic crises in the late 1970s and early

1980s were applied to Mexico almost as a ‘test case’. The processes unleashed culminated in NAFTA, which locked in institutional logics with regard to North America’s political economy. This deepened the U.S.’ regional hegemony by fundamentally tying the Mexican economy² and its economic development to openness to the U.S. The economic regionalisation proceeding from this point deepened already significant U.S. strategic interests in Mexico to a regionally unique level. It also increased interdependencies and security vulnerabilities, including to forces that in part piggybacked on globalised and regionalised economies. 9/11 was a revelator not just in terms of highlighting U.S. vulnerability to motivated transnational actors, but also in the costs it imposed on the *North American political economy*. A firm focus on these developments from a historical materialist perspective allows us to understand *why* the U.S. increasingly seeks to better secure itself, the Mexican political economy, and North America holistically and regionally. In conjunction with the methodological commitment to historical narrative and then a depth policy analysis, I have also been able to show that the MI *fundamentally plugs into that aim*, in a manner that departs from extant analyses significantly.

In addition, in North America - or NAFTA-land - we see a regional microcosm of the some of the absolutely fundamental aspects of the U.S.’ foreign policy and grand strategy, and the difficulties and debates that arise from those core aspects. This thesis has revealed that an increasingly important question for the U.S. is not just how much it can further open up the world to capitalism and the concomitant ideology of market openness, free trade and (albeit in a more limited sense) democracy, nor how much it can secure that arrangement, but also how it maintains its *own* openness to global capital, talent and ideas as transnational threats maintain an ability to have impacts beyond their obvious reach. More inchoately, it has touched upon how hegemony works in North America and, incidentally, beyond. Historical materialism also offers us a purchase here not afforded to other approaches. It can be extremely useful in pinpointing the importance of political economic questions in U.S. hegemony. However, it also gives us an explanatory tool to deal with the contradictions inherent in state strategies that have to cope with multifarious complexities that arise from capitalist economies and capitalist social relations. Prosaically, North America is likely to become more important to U.S. grand strategy, primacy, and hegemony through its strategic importance. More tentatively, it may offer lessons in terms of the threats that exist within increased global economic interdependence, and how the U.S. goes about securing both its *apex position* in global capitalism *and* that open economic system itself. There is a lot of scope here for further work, most especially in examining especially North American regionalism and U.S. hegemony within it, and relatedly, the Mexican *and* Canadian policy *response* and *contribution* to the development of NAFTA-land Security. This could be extended to examining how the U.S. is bolstering its hegemony through deeper security interaction beyond NAFTA-land.

However, the important point at this stage is to stress that in the sense of helping to open up Mexico’s security forces to U.S. interaction as a good *in and of itself*, and thereby augmenting U.S. regional hegemony and *beginning* to better cooperatively secure NAFTA-land, the MI and the regional security effort it is part of *is working*,

² Canada’s political economy was of course pretty much locked in by earlier free trade agreements and policy choices from the U.S. northern neighbour.

and *that* is *why* it continues. U.S. access and influence within Mexico's security apparatus has never been stronger, perhaps best highlighted by the revelations concerning the level of U.S. involvement in Mexico's CN operations, and the fact that the same approaches continue under Peña Nieto, despite promised changes. There is a sense now that Mérida has done for security what NAFTA did for economics, 'locking in' Mexico to a particular arrangement - NAFTA-land Security - shaped around U.S. interests and reliant on heavy U.S. support. This, alongside associated actual policy progress in certain areas less immediately head-turning than the violent drug-related security crisis, is the key explanation for why the MI continues as a core part of the active and evolving NAFTA-land Security framework. This is the key original finding of this thesis.

Human Rights and Citizen Security in NAFTA-land

Nonetheless, the continuing violence in Mexico itself can neither be swept under the carpet, nor disassociated from the U.S.' strategic goals. There is certainly a case for applying the classic questions of critical security to the MI and NAFTA-land Security - who and what is it for? My argument has revolved around tracing complex processes and analysing a wealth of policy documents to suggest it is first and foremost for the protection of NAFTA's political economy. This means that CN, citizen security and even human rights are not unimportant to NAFTA-land Security, but neither are they the *primary motivating factors for the policies pursued*. If they were, Mérida would be an utter failure. However, the Initiative itself does have some clearly stated aims in those areas that it can be measured up against. From a normative perspective, I consider it extremely important to do so. In addition, even from the perspective of the U.S. itself, continued violence and instability in Mexico remains concerning for the very reasons I have already set out. One of the key subsequent goals that improved security interaction is supposed to achieve is improved stability, and continuing violence more generally belies progress on this. Perversely, Mérida, or at least the militarised strategy it supports, appears to be plausibly implicated in the expansion of violence in Mexico. Even more perversely this expansion also helps us explain why Mérida continues. Can it be that better security integration somehow trumps *actual positive results* in stopping violence? There are questions here for further research on the issue of whether the MI and NAFTA-land Security can be said to be working on these levels, as looked at a little more below.

Aside from the questions for U.S. policy itself, there are normative ones to be asked about the MI and associated policies, especially regarding police and military training. In 2005 Freeman and Sierra wrote a disturbing and stinging rebuke of U.S. CN policy in Mexico. Focusing on several areas, they wrote that the already developed and developing militarisation of Mexico's drug interdiction posed threats to the fledgling democracy's political transition, and skewed policies away from harm reduction in the U.S., and poverty reduction and institutional reform in Mexico.³ These concerns have become all the more pertinent since this point. As I have shown, the Mexican military is still *fundamental* to the CN effort in Mexico. It is being geared up to aggressively take on the cartels using tactics taken from warzones - targeting of

³ Laurie Freeman & Jorge Luis Sierra 'Mexico: The Militarization Trap' in Coletta A. Youngers, & Eileen Rosin, (eds.) *Drugs and Democracy in Latin America: The Impact of U.S. Policy* (Lynne Rienner, 2005) p.263-302

HVTs, PSYOPS, COIN, CT, urban operations, and so on and so forth. On one level, this means questions already asked about what effect these strategies are having on Mexico's violence are still crucial.⁴ On another, past and *current* experiences that Mexico has experienced with corruption of security forces, and their problems with human rights, remain very concerning. This in turn feeds into whether MI and NAFTA-land Security as currently employed actually *hampers* stabilising efforts, which of course impacts on whether it can be said to be working.

The media abounds with stories that would appear to corroborate the large-scale corruption of Mexican security institutions with frequent instances of wide ranging purges of municipal or local police, disbanding of short-lived institutions, and most recently, the firing of the *entire* municipal police force in Veracruz.⁵ The possibility of the Mexican army allowing the Sinaloa and Juárez cartels to “diminish each others strength” in Juárez, with a favouring for a Sinaloa Federation victory, was taken seriously enough by the U.S. consulate in the city to report it back to Washington.⁶ This was detailed along with claims that the military may have met with former *Zetas* who went onto set up a paramilitary self-defence force in the city, along the lines of similar groups in Colombia.⁷ *Los Zetas* themselves are persistently described as being former U.S. special forces military trainees from the GAFE programme, including by U.S. security agencies, as are rogue *Kaibiles* personnel from Guatemala who have apparently worked with them.⁸ Corruption charges continue to be brought against military personnel and, despite the claims of Security analysts that the army is less corrupted than Mexican police institutions (which may indeed be true) high profile cases have emerged in the past.⁹ This is an indicative snapshot a long way from being an authoritative overview.

Given this context, looking at what the U.S. is doing to try and ensure human rights observance in Mexico is important. Firstly, it should be noted that a number of training courses provided to the Mexican military contain human rights elements, and indeed courses specifically *on* human rights are also provided through the MI and by the DoD itself.¹⁰ The DoD is acutely aware of its past issues with human rights in

⁴ See Eduardo Guerrero-Gutierrez ‘Security, Drugs, and Violence in Mexico: A Survey’ 7th North American Forum (Washington D.C., 2011) p.66-67 for the strongest expression of this argument.

⁵ Freeman and Sierra ‘Mexico’; Associated Press ‘Mexican Authorities Disband Veracruz Police Force in Bid to Stem Corruption’ *Guardian* (December 22nd, 2011)

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/dec/22/mexico-veracruz-police-force> Accessed 22.12.11

⁶ Geoffrey Ramsey ‘Cable Suggests Mexican Army May Have Worked with Juarez Paramilitary Group’ *Insight Crime* (March 28th, 2011) <http://www.insightcrime.org/insight-latest-news/item/717-cable-suggests-mexican-army-worked-with-juarez-paramilitary-group> Accessed 27.12.11

⁷ *ibid*

⁸ Bill Conroy ‘State Department Looking for U.S.-Trained Zetas in all the Wrong Places’ *The Narcosphere* (January 24th, 2011) <http://narcosphere.narconews.com/notebook/bill-conroy/2011/01/state-department-looking-us-trained-zetas-all-wrong-places> Accessed 15.07.12 As the article makes clear, there is no *direct, incontrovertible* evidence that *Zetas* members were U.S. trained.

⁹ Jose de Cordoba, & David Luhnnow ‘Mexican Army Officers Detained for Cartel Payments’ *Wall Street Journal* (June 15th, 2009) <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124510705768916735.html> Accessed 10.01.12 Chief amongst these is the arrest of General José de Jesús Gutiérrez Rebollo, who briefly headed the *Instituto Nacional para el Combate a las Drogas*, effectively the military's drug tsar role, before his arrest and conviction for taking bribes from the Juárez cartel in 1997.

¹⁰ See the various U.S. Department of State and U.S. Department of Defense *Foreign Military Training: Joint Report to Congress* documents Mexico sections for further information here. Also see

Latin American training. In addition, and relatedly, the Leahy Laws remain in effect, whereby any assistance is prohibited to “any foreign security force that is credibly believed to have committed a gross violation of human rights” under the FAA ‘61 and AECA (i.e. DoS programmes) and DoD training is prohibited under similar circumstances. Very recently regarding the time of writing, the DoD provisions have been strengthened to preclude equipment provision.¹¹ Finally, as we saw in Chapter Six, Patrick Leahy himself has also led efforts to attach *specific* human rights conditionality to the MI.¹² Nonetheless, there are gaps here that should invite caution and pause when reflecting what impact U.S. policy may be having, and what its oversight can achieve.

Human Rights Oversight on Foreign Assistance: Persistent Gaps

Under the FAA ‘61, the DoS retains responsibility for the coordination of counterdrug assistance. As CRS researchers have pointed out, DoD programs are intended to, “generally complement” the work of the DoS in countering drugs. However, as the researchers go on to state, the “independent authorities” that empower DoD assistance programs create a situation whereby those programs, “are not necessarily integrated into the policy planning and the budgeting process for State Department-led counterdrug assistance programs”.¹³ In other words, the authorities under which DoD aid is provided have created a level of independence for the Pentagon vis-à-vis the DoS on both budget and policy of foreign counterdrug assistance. This independence also extends to reporting and Congressional oversight requirements, which are less stringent than those the DoS faces. Whilst elements of the FAA ‘61 do apply to DoD programs, such as the need to supply information for the annual FMTR to Congress, Withers *et al* argue that the oversight role played by the Armed Services Committee’s for DoD programs is not sufficiently robust.¹⁴ Finally, Seelke *et al* state that because, “DOD counterdrug assistance is obligated out of global accounts and the agency is not required to submit country-specific requests to Congress for its programs, obtaining recent data on DoD programs and plans [...] can be difficult”.¹⁵ We can

Clare Ribando Seelke and Kristin M. Finklea *U.S.-Mexican Security Cooperation: The Mérida Initiative and Beyond* (Congressional Research Service, April 2014) p.31

¹¹ Nina M. Serafino, June S. Beittel, Lauren Ploch Blanchard and Liana Rosen “Leahy Law” *Human Rights Provisions and Security Assistance: Issue Overview* (Congressional Research Service, January, 2014) p.1

¹² Seelke and Finklea *U.S.-Mexican Security Cooperation* (2014) p.29-31 Funds have been blocked under these provisions on two occasions. Recently Sen. Leahy also blocked around \$225 million in Mérida funding, but although human rights were part of the reasoning, an aide reported there was also concern (and frustration) at a lack of operational progress, strategic planning and insufficient reporting (apparently a 2-3 page document was provided by the DoS on the entire rationale for the MI). Laura Carlsen ‘Leahy Freeze on Mexico Drug War Funds will Save Lives and Money’ *Truthout* (August 9th, 2013) <http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/18080-leahy-freeze-on-mexico-drug-war-funds-will-save-lives-and-money> 03.09.14

¹³ Clare Ribando Seelke; Liana Sun Wyler; June S. Beittel and Mark P. Sullivan *Latin America and the Caribbean: Illicit Trafficking and U.S. Counterdrug Programs* (Congressional Research Service, May 2011) p.20

¹⁴ George Withers, Adam Isacson, Lisa Haugaard, Joy Olsen and Joel Fyke ‘Ready, Aim, Foreign Policy: How the Pentagon’s Role is Growing, and Why Congress - and the American Public - Should be Worried’ *Center for International Policy, Latin America Working Group, Washington Office on Latin America* (March, 2008) p.5

¹⁵ Seelke *et al* *U.S. Counterdrug Programs* p.21 This may also offer us some explanation for the confusing differences in reported levels of DoD assistance across different sources, a problem we will encounter throughout. There is simply a deficit of clear and stringent requirements for Congressional and civilian oversight of DoD programs.

thus see the level of operative independence the DoD has been authorised to wield by the U.S. legislature, and better understand why information on their activities can be hard to come by. This is the first alarm bell with regard to oversight of the DoD's role in Mexico.

The independence stems from DoD programs establishment through different legislative channels than DoS programs. Their authority is derived through the National Defense Authorization and Defense Department Appropriation Acts (hereafter NDAA and DDAA) and more recently (due to Congressional deadlock) the Consolidated Appropriation Acts, rather than the broader FAA '61. U.S. foreign assistance is thus increasingly bifurcated along two separate avenues, and increasingly larger amounts are flowing through the avenue that runs via the Pentagon. We can see the potential significance of this split in terms of legal limitations to funding. Whilst DoD foreign assistance is subject to the "Leahy Law" we have discussed above, it has in the past been a markedly different version that is enacted through the Defense funding channel, most pointedly in the fact that equipment could still feasibly (and legally) be provided to human rights abusing units. This meant provision of equipment, equipment repair, arms sales and joint exercises could conceivably have continued to be supplied to units complicit in human rights abuses under Section 1004 (and other DoD programs) without falling foul of the legislation (as pointed out by Stokes).¹⁶ In addition, the language of previous Leahy provisions on DoD aid suggested responsibility lay with the DoS to share information rather than the DoD acting on its own to identify abusers. In 2012 the relevant language stated aid should be prohibited if, "the Secretary of Defense has received credible information from the Department of State that the unit has committed a gross violation of human rights".¹⁷

Under the current version of Leahy changes have been made, but differences remain. Prohibitions have been extended to equipment, and the language puts more onus on the DoD. However, it is still weaker and vaguer language than the DoS iteration. The DoD can effectively override restrictions if the intended recipient nation has ensured, "all necessary corrective steps have been taken" regarding abuses. The provisions are subject to a waiver should the Secretary of Defense and State decide "extraordinary circumstances" render it necessary to proceed with training.¹⁸ The requirements upon DoS programs are intended to involve a much higher level of vetting, investigation and archiving of unit human rights abuses in potential foreign aid beneficiaries, and an onus to make any results from these procedures, "publicly available, to the maximum extent practicable."¹⁹ This is not the case for the DoD version. According to the legislative language, the onus is on the DoS to gather, retain and share information on human rights abuses with the DoD and others, whilst the DoD should share information with the DoS on human rights violations, "in a timely manner".²⁰ When this is taken in conjunction with the fact that reporting requirements and

¹⁶ Doug Stokes *America's Other War: Terrorizing Colombia* (Zed Books, 2005) p.97-98

¹⁷ Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2012 Pub L. No. 112-74 Stat. 785 (2011) Further, "The Secretary of Defense, in consultation with the Secretary of State, shall ensure that prior to a decision to conduct any training program referred to in subsection (a), full consideration is given to all credible information available to the Department of State relating to human rights violations by foreign security forces."

¹⁸ Serafino *et al* "Leahy Law" p.7-8

¹⁹ *ibid*

²⁰ *ibid*

congressional oversight are also less stringent under this DoD track assistance, many analysts are concerned about the continued risks and ramifications of DoD foreign assistance, especially for human rights.²¹

Section 1004 Counter Drug Funding provides a case in point here. 1004 is not subject to the same legislative/Congressional oversight, requirements or limitations as training or aid programs based in State Department budgets. In terms of oversight and reporting requirements, the DoD was only required to provide significant information to Congress covering the program almost ten years after its introduction. Under Section 1022 of the NDAs of 2001 and 2002, a report to Congress was required of the DoD detailing, “its support of counter-drug activities of foreign governments,” specifically covering “(1) The total amount of assistance provided to, or expended on behalf of, the foreign government. 2) A description of the types of counter-drug activities conducted using the assistance. (3) An explanation of the legal authority under which the assistance was provided.”²² This ‘DoD Foreign Counterdrug Activity Report’ was not legally required between 2003-2005, before being reinstated in the 2006 NDAA. Despite being the only specific overview of the DoD’s counterdrug initiatives, information provided therein continues to be extremely limited even taking into account it is subject to optional classification. For example, in the reports between 2006-2010 Mexico is only mentioned once, in the provision of the single figure of around \$89 million in counterdrug support in FY10, that itself doesn’t tally with other DoD/DoS reports.²³ The DoD has been providing counterdrug assistance to Mexico through this entire period.

However under a variety of other legislative arrangements the DoD is obliged to report on more general ‘foreign assistance activities’, which brings in 1004 material. As mentioned above, a good deal of information on Counter-Drug Assistance appears in the FMTR, as required by Section 656 of the amended FAA ’61. However, this report continues to be subject to extensive classification, and indeed is still far from complete in terms of detail on training programmes, whilst being inconsistent. Sections 1209 and 1203(b) of the 2008 and 2010 NDAA respectively required reports on a number of DoD foreign assistance programs, including 1004. The report required, “the dollar amount, type of support, and purpose of each foreign–assistance related program carried out by the Department of Defense.”²⁴ FY2007’s report was extremely limited, but the FY2008-2010 report, and those thereafter, do contain greater information that I have provided herein. Nonetheless, it should be noted that this report is also afforded the opportunity for a classified annex. In addition, this still does not mean the information is *what is required for a sufficiently informed public*. The fact a researcher spent four years picking through the elements of various reports and could still only *surmise*, for example, that COIN and CT *may* be being applied to

²¹ Withers et al ‘Ready, Aim, Foreign Policy’; Laura Lumpe with Frida Berrigan, Kurt Biddle, John Gershman, and Ingrid Vaicius ‘U.S. Foreign Military Training: Global Reach, Global Power, and Oversight Issues’ Foreign Policy in Focus (May, 2002)

²² National Defense Authorization Act of 2000 Pub L. 106-398 114 Stat. 1654

²³ U.S Department of Defense *Fiscal Year 2005 Foreign Counterdrug Activity Report* (Washington D.C. 2006); *Fiscal Year 2007 Foreign Counterdrug Activity Report* (Washington D.C. 2008); *Fiscal Year 2008 Foreign Counterdrug Activity Report* (Washington D.C. 2009); *Fiscal Year 2009 Foreign Counterdrug Activity Report* (Washington D.C. 2010); *Fiscal Year 2010 Foreign Counterdrug Activity Report* (Washington D.C. 2011)

²⁴ For example, The National Defense Authorization Act of 2008 Pub L. 110-181 122 Stat. 3 (2008)

Mexico, with hardly any information on what many of specific training courses contain, should be alarming.

Also, as we have seen, legally Section 1004 is only subject to the DoD versions of the “Leahy Law.” Partly as a result of the weaker requirements placed upon Section 1004 as a DoD administered arrangement as detailed above, and its limited reporting requirements, the program has attracted some controversy in its history. This is not least due to its extensive use in Colombia despite ongoing human rights concerns about state security forces.²⁵ In a real-world example of the potentials of the two-strand funding channels that now exist in U.S. legislation, Withers *et al* detailed that military assistance continued to flow to Colombia via the Pentagon even as the DoS was withholding funds. Those same analysts feared that without a re-consideration and public scrutiny of the DoD’s assistance channels, and its then proposed role in Mexico associated with Mérida, similar human rights issues as had been encountered in Colombia could continue to arise with programs like 1004.²⁶ These fears have to a certain degree been borne out, *regardless* of the recent changes to Leahy laws. Whilst Congress has withheld Mérida funding in response to Mexico’s overall *deteriorating* human rights performance with regard to the provisions set out in the Supplemental Appropriations Act and subsequent law,²⁷ *DoD funding remains unaffected as it not officially a Mérida component.* The DoD channel has never stopped flowing.

Areas for Further Research

In this section I wish to highlight those areas I would like to take the research forward into, and also those areas that were not dealt with due to limits of space and focus. I have already noted how a deeper engagement with regionalism and regional hegemony in North America could prove fruitful, as could a more expansive analysis of U.S. security aid in the contemporary context within the theoretical and methodological frameworks I have employed here. This wider list of areas is more attuned to the case itself and its more granular detail. It is of course meant to be indicative rather than exhaustive, but it covers most of the major points.

Critiquing the Policy

I think the foremost aim that would animate the continuation of this research would be to undertake a more wide-ranging critique of the policies currently being pursued in Mexico. The work I have undertaken in this project gives me a very solid grounding in offering an expansive, thorough and well supported conception of what the MI policy and NAFTA-land Security is intended to do, based on a theoretical examination of *why* it is intended to protect the NAFTA economy and U.S. interests in it, U.S. HS, and stability in Mexico. I have also already opened up more complex areas incipiently here - the limits, contradictions, and human rights concerns within NAFTA-land Security. Nonetheless, there is scope to take the analysis further still, especially in terms of asking a) whether, or to what extent, it is working b) who is it working *for* and c) why is it limited in achievements on citizens security, human

²⁵ Stokes *Terrorising Colombia* p.98

²⁶ Withers *et al* ‘Ready, Aim, Foreign Policy’ p.6-7

²⁷ See footnote 12 above

rights, and tackling cartels. Especially pertinent here would be a deeper exploration of the militarised training that has been undertaken by the U.S., especially the application of CT and COIN military paradigms to what is supposed to be a CN problem, through aid channels that are strictly supposed to be CN. Elite interviews designed to ascertain how much policymakers and strategists consider Mexico's crisis to be a unique COIN issue would build on the hints that there is some official treatment of the problem as such. This would also give a better base to judge the causal relationship between the MI and NAFTA-land Security, an argument made strongly in some Critical literature but through implicit evidence.

However, the MI is hard to grapple with when it comes to policy in detail. First and foremost, the information provided by the U.S. government on the MI and the wider policies it intersects with is patchy and incomplete, and this is even truer of associated policies like training provided by the DoD. This is an issue I have flagged up throughout the project. In addition, the research design, aims and level of analysis of this particular thesis focused mostly on a theoretical appraisal of U.S. interests in Mexico, and a macro policy analysis of how Mérida fitted with them. Thus looking at how and where *specific* Mérida money has been applied would provide a good research opportunity to fill out some of the gaps herein. Some different research aims and methods may help here, for example (again) elite interviews, research in and on Mexico itself (using official Mexican government sources), more disaggregated data for spending in states and cities (if available) and so on. This would also help to corroborate or complicate the analysis, taking it in different directions and adding even more depth.

One particularly interesting issue is the impact of Mexican drug violence on investment. There are suggestions the relationship here is more complex than it first appears (i.e. violence always lowers investment).²⁸ Whilst the argument that a lot of what motivates the U.S. with regard to CN is the destabilising effect of drug violence is a strong one, a more disaggregated, detailed approach to this issue, looking at the interactions between investment and violence, and even potential connections to where Mérida money or U.S. trained security forces have been deployed (for example) is a potentially very exciting area for further research. This would in fact greatly complement a more critical examination of the MI and NAFTA-land Security. Of course data may still be challenging to come by, and research in Mexico on this particular topic involves both a potential personal safety risk, and the ever-present challenge of picking through truth and fiction in Mexico's drug war context.

Canada & NAFTA-land Security

Perhaps the biggest 'elephant in the room' when it comes to this thesis' arguments is the fact I have been discussing 'NAFTA-land Security' throughout, without focusing explicitly on Canada. There are some reasons for this 'occlusion'. As a reminder, the focus has been the MI, and the conclusion that something much more regionally focused was going on came about through an analysis of the MI specifically. In addition, whilst I *do* consider the U.S. to be interested in NAFTA-land Security holistically, there is simply nothing like the level of security concern within Canada as there is in a still developing, recently (formally) democratised and fractious

²⁸ See Chapter Three, footnote 183

Mexico, as I have noted herein. Therefore, whilst it may seem odd to make claims about ‘NAFTA-land Security’ when dealing with bilateral issues, I have proceeded with the understanding that two bilateral policies can still add up to a compounded trilateral one, and therefore the ‘trilateral’ (or, perhaps better, regional) logic behind the MI is not denuded by focusing on U.S.-Mexican relations. Indeed, this actually better suits the U.S.’ ability to maintain control over the North American space and set security on *its* terms, and any further research would be undertaken with this hypothesis in mind.

Nonetheless there are some interesting points on Canada, and adding this to the study of NAFTA-land Security is another area of potentially fruitful further research. Just by way of an indicative starting point, it is clear the U.S. very much includes Canada in ‘North American defense’, and there is an interesting story to tell about how the U.S. has further incorporated Canada into this, with Canadian agency here much stronger with regard even to the design of the Security and Prosperity Partnership. The National Security Strategy of 2010 discusses Canada thusly:

Canada is our closest trading partner, a steadfast security ally, and an important partner in regional and global efforts. Our mutual prosperity is closely interconnected, including through our trade relationship with Mexico through NAFTA. With Canada, our security cooperation includes our defense of North America and our efforts through NATO overseas. And our cooperation is critical to the success of international efforts on issues ranging from international climate negotiations to economic cooperation through the G-20.²⁹

There are other specific areas to look at. Canadian firms are heavily involved in Mexican mining, and thus could stand to benefit from NAFTA-land Security arrangements (interestingly a point that ties back to investment’s relationship with violence). The growing focus on Arctic security, as anthropogenic climate change causes Arctic sea ice to melt or form less readily opening up the region to commercial exploitation and shipping, could be added to the North American security matrix. In short, even if I do so on an exclusive bilateral basis (matching the policy efforts for the most part), Canada needs to be understood within the NAFTA-land Security framework. Also on this note, how Central America will be affected or pulled into this orbit is a very interesting question, considering that drug related violence in some of the countries in the region is *much, much* worse than in Mexico, and there are effects cascading across the region as a result.

Contextualising the Policy

Whilst I provided a singular case study in this project, I consider the policy in Mexico to be reflective of some wider trends, and to indicate some potential sustained directions in U.S. foreign policy and grand strategy. Regarding the first point, contemporary security aid to Mexico provides a highly specific version of what Reveron has referred to as “exporting security”, whereby the U.S. builds “partner capacity” of a dizzying array of states (and ties their security to the U.S.’ largesse) in

²⁹ U.S. White House *National Security Strategy 2010* (Washington D.C., May 2010) p.42

order to better ensure global stability.³⁰ Although of course I have argued here for a deep continuity in that goal, the levels of global engagement are growing. The CRS notes with regard to ‘Leahy Laws’ that, “U.S. Administrations have increased emphasis on expanding U.S. partnerships and building partnership capacity with foreign military and other security forces.”³¹ Relatedly, we can clearly connect the policies and interests in Mexico to the concern more widely over TOC. Again, Mexico provides a very specific case because of NAFTA and the interconnectedness of the North American economy. Research could therefore make these links more strongly comparatively, or look at other important cases. Central America again springs immediately to mind here. Of course they are also uniquely affected by Mexico itself - their own behemoth to the North.

Summary Thoughts

This project has shown that the MI is in fact a part of something far more expansive, a North American security framework that seeks to layer security over and across the NAFTA zone to protect. However disturbing questions remain about the effect this is actually having on what is a genuine security crisis in large swathes of Mexico. It is even possible that U.S. policy within NAFTA-land Security arrangements is contributing to citizen *insecurity* and violence. Nonetheless, the policy is set to continue, as the primary goals are based around U.S. interests. These may, unfortunately, outweigh progress on security, stability and human rights in Mexico for its actual population.

³⁰ Reveron, *Exporting Security*

³¹ Serafino *et al* “Leahy Laws”

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