From All Sides: How Mexico Ended Up in the Eye of the Drug Storm

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In recent years Mexico has found itself at the center of the drug “war” as powerful criminal organizations have destabilized the region by engaging in this illicit, multi-billion dollar trade that allows drug lords emerge as powerful political actors. Violence and corruption are having a devastating effect on the new and struggling democracy as the weak institutions put in place during the reign of the PRI have not been replaced with a workable system. The judiciary and law enforcement continue to be ineffective as President Calderon chose to mobilize the military to help combat drug trafficking. Mexico is also experiencing the challenges of drug addiction as the competitive trade drove dealers to open up local markets for cheap and highly addictive drugs. Mexico has found itself fighting the drug war on all fronts and this article seeks to explain the circumstances that led the nation to this vulnerable position. This article is a historical look at the processes by which Mexico transformed the economy to capitalism, developed and industrialized, and then transitioned to democracy, and found itself here in the eye of the drug storm.
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Introduction

In recent years Mexico has found itself at the center of a drug related crisis. Violence and corruption are threatening the effectiveness of Mexican politics, perverting the economy, and destabilizing society. As Mexico developed into a key source and transit country adjacent to the largest consumer market on earth, the increase in violence and corruption have shaken the fragile foundations of this emerging democracy. The War on Drugs has transformed from a political metaphor into an armed struggle as drug trafficking organizations have grown in power and size due the tremendous profits of the drug trade. Proximity to the United States not only allows for access to the consumer market, but as a source for sophisticated weapons with which to fight. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms has estimated that the United States has supplied Mexico with 95 to 100 percent of all their guns.¹ As drug trafficking organizations rise and consolidate their power violence is employed as a means to protect their profits from both law enforcement and rival organizations.

To understand why Mexico is in this current position it is important to understand the recent political and economic history of the country to provide context for locating contemporary Mexico. Section one begins with a brief narration of the Porfiriato period beginning in the late 19th century. Mexico’s process of modernization was made possible through the use of foreign investment as well as the importation of foreign technology.

For the elites, foreign cultures and customs were also adapted. This courting of outside finance and influence obviously benefited a small yet powerful group and the Mexican revolution of 1910 was made up of various marginalized groups, of which there were many, fighting for the redistribution of land, access to political power, and the conditions of these various ethnic groups. The struggles of the post-revolutionary government to control a mobilized population, many of whom were a newly formed class of wage earners, resulted in the origins of the PRI. It was necessary in those post war years to form a strong leadership that would prevent another violent struggle for power.

The PRI led industrialization of Mexico following the outbreak of World War II would then spawn a period of economic growth that would encourage and facilitate an out-migration from rural areas to the cities and the United States. The war generated a need for Mexican labor, as well as needed Mexico to produce some raw materials, including opium and this would start new era of cooperation between the United States and Mexico. In the following years new migration programs and bilateral agreements would pave the way towards the implementation of NAFTA in 1994. NAFTA would not only further impact migration patterns in Mexico, but would also more fully integrate Mexico into the global market with new liberal economic policies, and would significantly effect the drug trade.

Section two begins with a brief history of the illicit trade that has existed between the United States and Mexico since the 1914 Harrison Act. This history is important to understanding how the prohibition policies in the United States have inadvertently affected politics and society in Mexico. The weak institutions that existed under the PRI allowed for the executive office to maintain some control of drug trafficking traveling
through Mexico. The police, the judiciary, and the prison system were all under the jurisdiction of the presidential office and although corruption was rampant it was contained. Once the democratic process began, these weak government institutions that had been centralized under the executive branch floundered under democratic rule, and created an even wider potential for corruption. These institutions are crucial to the democratic process and have made a weak and ineffective government.

Section three then looks at the forces of globalization and its impact on the process of democracy in Mexico. Although definitions of this phenomenon are constantly shifting under scholarly debate, the explanation provided by David Held and Anthony McGrew in their introduction to The Global Transformation Reader: An introduction to the Globalization Debate, says that this process is simply the expansion in scale, magnitude, speed, and impact of interregional flows and patterns of social interaction that links distant communities and expands the reach of power relations.” This is also an era of increasing focus on criminal networks whom are empowered by the forces of globalization and the rapid advances in technology that provide civilians with the means to break down the traditional sealants governments had previously used to protect itself. Global criminal networks are able to take advantage of the “borderless” economy and in his work Illicit: How Smugglers, Traffickers, and Copycats are Hijacking the Global Economy, author Moises Naim claims that “global criminal activities are transforming the international system… incredible power [is] now resting in the hands of an entirely new kind of international entity, inherently stateless and deeply elusive.” Security is a central concern of nations integrated into a more global and free flowing society and this concern was brought to light by the events of September 2001. The response of the U.S.
government to this event created a whole new division of law enforcement and political rhetoric publicly linked the illicit funds from the drug trade to acts of terrorism. The creation of the Department of Homeland Security would also affect Mexican migration as the borders were tightened, and migrant workers already working in the United States were targeted for security fraud for using false identities to obtain work, all of which have increased tensions between the two nations.

This section then looks at the recent attempts of both governments to control drug trafficking amidst this chaotic transformations Mexico is undergoing, specifically the all out offensive strategies of the Calderon administration. Militarizing the drug war through financial support from the United States seems to have only escalated violence, increased the wealth and power of the drug cartels, and increased the number of drug consumers in Mexico. The legendary and ever growing demand for both illicit drugs and the militant crusade to stop them has caused a surge in the number of health problems, violence, crime, prison inmates, neglected children, and traffic accidents in the United States and Mexico. The battle between the insatiable appetite of humans for controlled substances and the efforts of governments to curb this appetite have resulted in numerous challenges to all nations conducting international politics and contributed to the recent growth in powerful organized criminal networks armed with vast resources with which to operate. Any success that the U.S. law enforcement has had in interrupting the flow of illicit drugs into or through one area of the United States and an alternative trafficking path is forged in another region. The U.S. law enforcement’s attack on heroin trafficking from Turkey and Asia in the seventies, the cocaine trade in South Florida in the late eighties and nineties and the manufacturing of meth from California in the nineties rerouted each of
these trades through Mexico. Drug traffickers are able to take advantage of the proximity to customers in United States through the long and porous border it shares with Mexico, use the well established, and well traveled, smuggling routes of Mexican traffickers to deliver the goods, and take advantage of the weak government institutions in Mexico that have a reputation for being susceptible to high, mid, and low level corruption.

It is estimated that Mexico supplies the United States with 90 percent of the cocaine U.S. customers consume, and is the number one producer of meth and the number two producer of heroin.\(^2\) Due to the spillover of available drugs and efforts of the U.S. law enforcement to crack down on smuggling over the border, many drug dealers have chosen to open up local markets, and now Mexico is also experiencing a rise in the number of drug addicts in addition to violence and corruption. Associated Press recently reported that the number of drug addicts in Mexico has doubled since the year 2002, from 158,000 to 307,000 people.\(^3\) The health secretary José Ángel Córdova Villalobos reported that only 20,000 beds are available in treatment centers across the entire country, and only 120 of which are in public clinics. Mexico is forced to fight the drug war on all fronts as drug abuse takes root while traffickers grow in wealth and influence. In the final pages of this section we examine the vulnerable populations of Mexico that exist as a result of Mexico’s attempt to emerge as a democracy during a period of rapid globalization and without properly functioning government institutions. This research project focuses on the rising problems surrounding drug trafficking in Mexico and seeks to explain just how Mexico ended up in the eye of the drug storm.


\(^3\)“Mexico: Man High on Drugs Kills Reproachful Mother”, Associated Press, April 7, 2009.
Chapter I

Mexico’s Transformation to Modern Capitalism

From Porfirio to the PRI

The practical ideology of order and progress that characterizes the *Porfiriato* era was essentially achieved by the administration’s stress on social, economic, and civil modernization, while keeping political modernization and constitutional democracy on the ideological backburner as he centralized government power. The dictatorship was able to develop industry and stimulate growth through the development of railroads and the mining industry that then stimulated migration and increased the number of wage earners. The organization of these peoples, as well as indigenous and other marginalized groups would result in the Revolution of 1910 and the attempts of the masses to address the vast inequalities of resources created by the *Porfirio* government. The post-revolutionary government and the development of the PRI would be the response of the Mexican government to prevent the outbreak of another war. The State led industrialization of Mexico would increase the power of the PRI and protectionist economic policies would last until the peso crisis of 1982 when oil prices dropped, forcing Mexico to begin to liberalize its economy as a matter of survival.

Though his accomplishments in office are significant in the modernization trajectory, the Porfirio Diaz administration was often cited for being all politics and little management. In the beginning Diaz did well to consider the needs of indigenous rural people while centralizing power in the urban center, at the turn of the century he would have been attuned to what was happening in the international markets and watching the
expansion of the capitalist model. The strength of the government under Diaz would be fueled by foreign capital to the extent that many scholars argue it was a serious betrayal to Mexican political and economic sovereignty. At the same time, Diaz was also taking liberties with political succession. The combination of turning towards modernists in his government and attempting to maintain a dictatorship is likely a major factor in his downfall. This is evident by the fact that the Mexican Revolution of 1910 was not a break from the last century of Independence, Reform, or even the Diaz regime as far as ethical, aesthetic, scientific, philosophical, or even religious values were concerned. The revolutionary writing points to a general feeling that while Porfirians were able to court foreign investments and technology, too little attention was paid to raising the standard of living and productive capabilities of the masses. In the post-colonial world it is not uncommon to have a ruling class seeking to compete and be accepted as equal with the European or “Western” nations. The ideology that governed the revolution of 1910 did not debate the merits of education or artistic culture, but rather put forth an aggressive discussion of the division of political power, land distribution, the role of the state, and the conditions of the various ethnic and cultural groups. A new generation of young leaders including Francisco Madero a firm supporter of democracy and threat to the Diaz administration, set the revolution in motion by denouncing the 1910 “re-election” of Diaz and declaring himself President Pro-temp until new elections could be held. In 1911 Francisco "Pancho" Villa, and Pascual Orozco commanded revolutionary troops who were able to gain control of cities in the north while Emiliano Zapata organized and armed the peasants of Morelos to reclaim land and water rights. Zapata and his troops took control of

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4 Garner, pg 137.
Cuautla and cut off the road to Mexico City. After Orozco and Villa captured Ciudad Juarez, Diaz resigned and fled to Europe leaving a large professional army under the command of General Victoriano Huerta and a provisional president Francisco Leon de la Barra as per the Treaty of Ciudad Juarez 1911. In an effort to reconcile some of the opposing factions of the revolution Madero, who was expected to win the national elections, helped to facilitate this treaty which may have changed those in charge, however left much of the Diaz administration intact as well as the federal army that had defended it.\footnote{Michael J. Gonzales, \textit{The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940.} (Albuquerque NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2002) 80.}

Madero took on a moderate approach to his politics and popular uprisings of peasants and workers began around the country. Although Zapata tried to insist that Madero enact land reforms that would restore the peasants to their homes, Madero balked at fulfilling this revolutionary promise and instead wished to leave the decisions up to the courts. Madero refused to ally himself with those who had installed him into power, instead turning to conservatives and members of the Porfiran administration for support and making use of the federal army. Taking advantage of the counter-revolution brewing in Mexico City, General Victoriano Huerta, commander of the federal army, seized the opportunity to oust Madero and install himself as president. The coup divided the country but General Huerta was only interested in consolidating his personal power and increasing the size and might of the military. “Under Huerta, Mexican society became militarized, and political discourse was reduced to assassination, intimidation, and capriciousness.”\footnote{Ibid, 93.} U.S. President Woodrow Wilson refused to recognize Huerta as president, which, along with the continued mobilization of revolutionary forces would hasten his demise. In the wake of Huerta’s defeat, Venustino Carranza, governor of Coahuila and supporter of Madero,
emerged as a dominant figure of the revolution and was officially recognized as president by Woodrow Wilson. In 1917 he presided over the constitutional convention from which he banned any person who still supported Huerta, Zapata, or Villa.\textsuperscript{8}

\textbf{Post-Revolutionary Woes}

The post revolutionary government had the daunting task of attempting to establish itself amongst a needy, but mobilized population and preparing them for international economic competition. Poverty and wages were a central theme in the Revolution and in the aftermath of the exile of Diaz, politicians whom were eager to legitimize their position in the revolutionary government sought to appease the rebellious working class by including standards for minimum and overtime wages in the Constitution of 1917.\textsuperscript{9} The importance of establishing a fair living wage would continue to be a point of contention in Mexico as industrialization would bring about urbanization and increase the amount of wage or salary earners. Under the new constitution and the Carranza administration, political parties were allowed to flourish and labor was one of the first groups to organize politically. In 1920 Alvaro Obregon was elected president after a successful revolt, involving Plutarco Elias Calles, a political leader from northern Mexico, had forced Carranza to flee Mexico City, shortly after he was assassinated by a follower of Obregon. Once in power, Obregon dedicated himself to consolidating political power, suppressing independent and anti-capitalist labor unions and used the


state to control and co-opt organized labor. His successor, Plutarco Calles attempted to quickly orchestrate land reforms but his tendency to favor urban labor over the peasantry left many agrarian militants dissatisfied. Calles also sought to change the Constitution to allow the re-election of a president as long as the presidential terms were not consecutive. This alteration would allow Obregon to return to office and in July of 1928 he was elected, though he was assassinated two weeks later during a victory banquet. To prevent a violent struggle Calles created the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR) to encompass all of the revolutionary factions and to institutionalize the revolution and control the succession of power. Calles adopted the title Maximum Chief and held onto control with three consecutive puppet presidents during an era referred to as Maximato (1928-34).

The PNR was initially made up of a coalition of independent political parties and various interest groups that were slowly consolidated under the single bloc to create a “hierarchy of municipal, state, and national conventions which were to decide policy and select candidates” At the first national party convention in 1932 the PNR amended the Constitution so that no president could resume office after having once served and that no federal senator, or deputy could serve consecutive terms in office, ensuring frequent turnover in government.

In 1934 when former general Lazaro Cardenas was elected to the presidency, it was widely assumed that he would also be a part of the cult of personality contrived by Calles and the PNR; however Cardenas quickly dispelled such sentiments by sending

\[10\] Story, 19.
\[12\] Story, 21.
Calles and twenty of his cronies into permanent exile in the United States. Although reputed for honesty and integrity, the real legacy of Cardenas lies in his ambitious act to reclaim oil rights for Mexico, much of which was in the hands of U.S. owned Standard Oil. In 1938 seventeen foreign owned oil companies were expropriated causing such a rift that the United States and Britain boycotted Mexico oil and temporarily dried up their export market. The Mexican oil industry was somewhat saved by the outbreak of World War II when the United States and Britain resumed purchasing petroleum from Mexico.

Cardenas was also known for his positive relationship with the lower masses and effectively destroyed the economic and political power of the hacendados, and granted access of lands to individuals and communal groups in agrarian reforms that were designed to allow the state to retain ownership and control. Under his presidency, Cardenas nationalized nearly all of Mexico’s resources and reorganized the PNR into a more institutionalized, centralized, and expanded party. Shortly after the oil expropriation in 1938 the Partido de la Revolucion Mexicana (PRM) was introduced. Cardenas’ successor was General Avila Camacho, the former secretary of war who is credited with setting the stage for Mexico’s economic miracle. Financial settlements between Mexico and the foreign oil industries had finally been reached and Avila Camacho would again reorganized the party and disband the military sector, thereby

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13 Pilcher, 120.
15 Story, 23.
lowering the profile of the military’s role in politics. The name was changed to 
*Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) in 1946.

**Rural Transformation and State led Industrialization**

The outbreak of World War II would be the catalyst spawning a period of economic growth that would steadily expand over the next thirty years. The manufacturing and agricultural sectors flourished due to both public and private investment thus furthering development of both urban and rural areas. Growth of the private sector investors was encouraged by policies of import substitution, tariff protection and import licensing to assure industrialists of a protected domestic market, as well as tax exemptions, subsidized credit and services and the application of pressure on labor groups to keep wages down. Roads, communication lines, electric power, petroleum and steel were amongst the industries that contributed to this process of development and close to thirty percent of all public investment were made directly in these sectors to foster growth. Roads were better suited to the rugged Mexican terrain than the rail ways and road construction was held as a major nationalist project that contributed to formulating the Mexican identity, “For adventure, education, economic opportunity, and material gain. The revolution generation took to the roads. They headed for the cities, Mexico City, [and] for the United States.”

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16 Ibid, 28.
18 Ibid, 54.
The state centralized industrialization program in Mexico led to a great wave of both internal and external out-migration of the rural areas. The transformation of the peasant economy to a market economy could not absorb all of the surplus labor being released from agriculture and so a strategy was developed under the administration of Miguel Aleman (1946-52), the successor of Avila Camacho. Aleman used employment opportunities in urban centers to attract people from the rural areas, especially in Mexico City where many skilled and semi-skilled positions were available in construction as well as in the factories. He also took an authoritarian stance towards workers unions purging these organizations of communist or Cardenist leadership to halt land distribution and keep real wages down. The subordination of social organizations to state control would continue under the following president, Adolfo Ruiz Cortines (1952-1958).

Naturally not all rural peasantry would be able to take advantage of the opportunities of urban life. Cities in the developing world have little in common with the urban centers of more prosperous countries. The economic structure of developing world cities tend to be more complex because of a large presence of the informal economy that exists outside the taxable, registered commerce, yet is an important source of income and employment for many city dwellers. In addition to economic activities operating outside the “official” authority, makeshift neighborhoods and unregulated housing units crop up on properties and inhabitants that live there are often without proper titles or deeds. Naturally these “shanty towns” are not officially apart of the city so roads, sanitation services, police protection and other benefits of belonging to a municipality are

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unavailable. It also creates a situation where urban growth is allowed to continue unrestrained and swelling populations feed into a large labor pool not moved by national interest but by the perceptions and choices of individuals seeking to improve their own circumstances. A high concentration of people with social or economic difficulties living in dilapidated areas will naturally have some adverse affects on the communities established within these cities, but existing almost entirely outside of them. Regardless, the Mexican government worked hard to provide minimal facilities for education, health care, transportation, and recreation. The Mexican Government attempted to regulate dwelling costs, legalize squatter settlements on the land surrounding the city, and provide subsidies to regulate prices of basic food-stuffs.

The migration of labor to the United States is a central feature of the relationship between the two nations and post war migration policies included the expansion of the bracero program that had begun in the First World War as a way to supplement the U.S. labor force. The program expanded in the 1950’s as major water rights initiatives in the southwestern United States created vast farmlands through large scale irrigation projects. The program suffered somewhat in the mid 1960’s when much of the labor intensive farming was mechanized and therefore decreased the need for man power.

The maquila program began as apart of another Mexican industrialization initiative called The Border Industrialization Program, established in 1965 a year after the official end of the bracero workers. This offered foreign investment participation in both the capital and management of assembly factories. It allows for, temporary duty

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23 Alba & Potter, 54.
free imports of machinery and raw materials, as well as administrative equipment, to be used to manufacture, process, sort, transform, or rebuild export products. This program was particularly successful in the aftermath of the peso crisis in 1982, and again in 1994 when peso devaluation would give foreign investors even further incentive to participate.

The devaluation of the peso in 1982 was the result of an economy overextended. The Mexican government accrued a foreign debt that the oil driven economy could not pay after petroleum prices fell. Despite the strong record of economic expansion in the previous years the heavy hand of the PRI now caused severe conflicts between the public and private sectors and rampant corruption weakened the states ability to recover from the crisis. The “Mexican Miracle” also had an effect on growth rates of the population. In 1940 the census counted 19.7 million people and by 1980 that number had grown to over 66.8 million, many of whom were living in urban centers and in need of social services.

Up until 1982 the authoritarian regime was the agent of development that used its capacity to grant privileges or subsidies in the most strategic economic sectors and bestow social and economic benefits on popular organizations in exchange for political support. As the international oil markets weakened and interest rates rose, the Mexican economy began to buckle and capital flight intensified, severely decreasing the regime’s ability to maintain support. Yet the years of building tight administrative controls over all branches of leadership in Mexico allowed the government to impose an economic

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27 Alba & Potter,50.
28 Tulchin & Selee, 149.
restructuring without much resistance. When President Miguel de la Madrid came to office in the end of 1982 his administration acted quickly to reduce inflation and stabilize the foreign exchange market with new strategies to attract foreign investment. Both Presidents de la Madrid and his successor, Carlos Salinas de Gortari saw that a protectionist economy was no longer viable and that partnering with capitalists in the United States would draw the Mexican economy into the international market. Prior to the peso devaluation of 1982 Mexico had prohibited foreign investment in some key economic sectors and now the two nations began the negotiations for bilateral agreements that would lay the groundwork for the implementation of NAFTA. Privatization of state enterprises began in the late 1980’s and by 1989 the entire economy was opened for foreign direct investment.  

It is widely believed that the election of President Carlos Salinas de Gortari in 1988 was fixed and that the popularity of his opponent Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas, son of former President Lázaro Cárdenas, may have marked the significant decline in public confidence in the PRI. The restructuring of the Mexican economy was motivated by the need to generate growth and investment but would also coincide with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the further spread of capitalism. Salinas was a Harvard educated economist who surrounded himself with other U.S. educated technocrats to create a new generation of politicians who favored abandoning isolationist practices and privatizing some of Mexico’s major companies. Among these companies were Banco Nacional de Mexico (BANAMEX), Banco de Comercio (BANCOMER) and Telefonos de Mexico

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29 Ibid, 150.
Salinas was able to take advantage of the changing political and economic climate to simultaneously champion free market reforms and fight for the survival of the PRI. He argued that a reduction in government economic intervention would increase the state’s efficiency and redistributive capabilities.\(^{32}\)

Negotiations for NAFTA began with U.S. President George Bush Sr. whose Texan roots may have contributed to his belief in the importance of forging a working economic relationship with Mexico. He was unsuccessful in passing NAFTA through congress and it would be under the Bill Clinton administration that the policy was finally implemented, January of 1994. Under the North American Free Trade Agreement, the United States’, Canadian, and Mexican capital would be allowed to take advantage of the lowest cost area for production and exclude lower cost commodity imports from non-member nations. The *maquiladora* program had already been a success for the United States whom since 1989 was allowed to set up manufacturing plants in the border region to produce low cost goods in a relatively unregulated environment. These goods could then be brought into the United State tariff free, while simultaneously fueling Mexican industrial production.\(^{33}\) The 1994 passing of NAFTA would set off another large movement of Mexican labor away from rural areas to foreign owned factory and urban production zones. NAFTA’s stipulations on the agricultural trade consisted of three bilateral agreements, between the United States and Mexico, The United States and


Canada, and Mexico and Canada. The U.S./Mexico agreement would take great leaps towards the complete liberalization of agriculture with the ultimate goal of eliminating all quotas and tariffs through a fifteen year phase out period.\textsuperscript{34} According to the World Bank’s \textit{World Development Report 1995-2005}, Mexico’s agriculture dropped from $32 billion in 1993 to $25 billion in 2003, while over the same time period the number of Mexicans employed in rural agriculture declined from 8.1 million to 6.8 million.\textsuperscript{35}

Before Mexico joined in the NAFTA pact, the government launched \textit{Programa de Apoyos Directos al Campo} (PROCAMPO) to relieve some of the adjustment pains and provide supplemental income after NAFTA was implemented. The programs website sites a dedication to further developing rural areas to help the agricultural economy. Unfortunately, the debt crisis that occurred in 1994 would cause government expenditure on PROCAMPO to decline.\textsuperscript{36}

NAFTA negotiations did not attempt to tackle the drug issue and as Gary Haufbauer, economist at the Institute for International Economics in Washington, D.C. pointedly says “This was in the too hot to handle category”. The \textit{maquiladoras} and trucking companies that provide a pretext for drug smuggling are able to take advantage of the higher border crossings and standardized shipping containers which may conceal more illicit drugs. The incredible profits from drug trafficking allow these cartels to purchase anything from airlines to petroleum tankers to transport their product. The U.S. customs and drug enforcement personnel have called NAFTA the “North American Drug

\textsuperscript{36} Haufbauer & Schott, 296.
Trade Agreement.37 Long practiced political corruption escalates and enforceable law deteriorates under the weight of bribes and pay-offs to those at all levels of government and in this case, not just those on the Mexican side of the border. In recent years there has been a spike in the number of incidences of corruption amongst U.S. border patrol guards. James Tomsheck, the assistant commissioner for internal affairs at Customs and Border Protection, said the agency was “deeply concerned” that smugglers were actually sending operatives to take jobs with the Border Patrol.38 Whether the drug cartels are recruiting from without or within the agency, the job is perhaps one of the most highly susceptible to corruption, regardless, it would seriously hamper commerce and cause a severe traffic jam to inspect every truck that rolls through the lanes. Trade liberalization and economic integration have allowed drug traffickers to further penetrate the U.S. market, while the privatization of various state owned businesses and the deregulation of Mexican banks has helped them launder their funds deep into the overall Mexican economy. It was inconceivable to think that the U.S. could simultaneously open up their borders to trade while protecting the borders from undesirable elements. The reason that NAFTA could not tackle the issue of the drug trade is that the problem is too large and extremely delicate since so much illicit money is funneled into the state resources. Drug trafficking makes a great case for illustrating just how the forces of globalization work as it exists in its own market. The benefits of free trade to organized crime networks and the creation of agencies to curb criminal activity are a culmination of the basic struggle to control supply and demand. As Sidney W. Mintz wrote in his work, The Forefathers of Crack, “The economic forces driving cocaine's production and generating hostility

37 Andreas, “Open Markets”, 57.
towards it are no different today from what they were three centuries ago when the rising commerce in tea, coffee, sugar and tobacco linked Western Europe to its tropical colonies and revolutionized world consumption.”

The liberalization of the corn trade has caused a great debate amongst academics and journalists, some of whom see this as one of NAFTA’s great failings. There are two types of corn produced in both the U.S. and Mexico, the first is yellow corn-grown in abundance in the United States and mainly used for livestock feed. The second is white corn, which is predominantly grown in Mexico for human consumption. Under NAFTA, these commodities are treated equally. Most of Mexico’s corn production is done by small, labor intensive farms without the technological resources available in the U.S. Roughly 62% of these farms are communal style ejidatorios, and 70% of farm production is on rain fed land. Mexican Government policies have favored industrialized farmers that contribute to the export led growth and leave many of these small farmers competing directly with large farms in both Mexico and the United States. Corn, a staple of the Mexican diet, and under cultivation in the region for thousands of years, of which there are over forty varieties, is now cheaply imported from the United States.

In his work US-Mexico Open Markets, Closed Borders, Peter Andreas wrote that “[the] liberalization of agriculture and the cutting of government subsides in rural areas are increasing the incentive for peasant farmers to produce illegal crops such as marijuana. As one group of researches concluded in their study, “social disruption and

39 Ibid, 328.
40 Ibid, 334.
economic pressure from free-market reforms have intensified in rural areas, fueling the
tendency to grow illicit crops as a household survival strategy."\(^{42}\)

Less than one year after NAFTA was implemented, the peso crisis in Mexico
would put the new agreement immediately to the test and the response of the United
States and Canada would be crucial. In an unprecedented bailout package, former
President Bill Clinton managed to prevent an economic free-fall in Mexico, (although
many scholars argue that the Mexican economy did indeed fall into a depression) as well
as evoke an obscure Treasury entity called the Exchange Stabilization Fund that did not
require an approval from Congress. It is debatable if the United States was eager to
contribute to a NAFTA partner or was possibly saving the reputation of an important
model in the neo-liberal policy. Regardless the backlash of this crisis would all but
destroy small and mid-sized businesses and farms that were already weakened by the
competition of foreign imports. The manufacturing industry, however, grew under these
conditions and the devaluation of the peso again made Mexico an extremely desirable
destination for factories.

Relations between the U.S. and Mexico would begin to strain under the weight of
the drug trafficking issue, any mention of which was purposely kept out of NAFTA
negotiations lest it completely halt the free trade process by its complexity. In the 1990’s
two court cases involving Mexican citizens that allegedly participated in the 1985 murder
of DEA agent Enrique Camarena Salazar had reached the Supreme Court. In June of
1992 the U.S. had ruled that the kidnapping of Alvarez Machain, a physician accused in

the killing, was not in violation of the Mexican extradition agreement, yet the Mexican government disagreed and responded by severely curtailing DEA activities in Mexico.\textsuperscript{43}

In 1996, the Clinton Administration was urged by Federal narcotics officials to stop referring to Mexico as “progressing” against drug trafficking and essentially brand Mexico as a narco-state with the de-certification policy that had been used in Colombia. Mexico responded to the accusation by warning the US that any such motion would likely jeopardize future co-operations in the drug war. Foreign Minister Angel Gurria specifically said that a diminution of Mexico's status would "make us doubt whether cooperating with the United States will bring anything other than a lot of grief." The 1997 legislation passed, 94 to 5 in support of Clinton reissuing the certification and thereby continuing to publicly view Mexico as an ally in the war on drugs. It wasn’t until ex-President George W. Bush won his second term that Mexico went forward with legislation that allowed for their citizens to be extradited when facing charges in the US.

The Salinas government was fraught with scandal and under his administration there were two high profile political assassinations and many accusations of his family’s involvement with major drug traffickers. In 1994 Luis Donaldo Colosio, a former protégé of Salinas and slated to be the next candidate for President, was killed two weeks after giving a speech that distanced him from the Salinas government and called for political reform. Though arrests were made it is still speculated that this was a political execution.\textsuperscript{44} Salinas’ older brother, Raul was convicted after a four year trial, of the 1994 death of PRI secretary General José Francisco Ruiz Massieu, a man was once married to

\textsuperscript{43} Dominguez & De Castro, 88.
his sister, and sentenced to fifty years. The *New York Times* called the conviction “a verdict that signaled the end of impunity for the mighty in Mexico,” but concedes that the conviction was based on hearsay, without a direct confession, and there were indications of evidence tampering and torture.\(^{45}\) The murky cloud that surrounds the murder and its possible motivations had many journalists speculating that it may have been related to drug trafficking. During the investigations it was discovered that Raul Salinas had several Swiss bank accounts containing over 100 million dollars under fictitious names. Although Salinas vehemently denied any wrongdoing, Mexican authorities believe that some of those funds were received from businessmen who submitted bribes to win concessions and contracts while his brother was in office.\(^{46}\) There is also evidence that at least part of the funds were related to drug trafficking. Documents from the Office of the Attorney General (PGR) and the National Anti-Drug Institute (ICND) reveal that Raul Salinas de Gortari had ties with drug lords in Mexico as early as 1987.\(^{47}\)

The Salinas administration ended with the former President in exile, his eldest brother in jail, and in 2004 his youngest brother Enrique Salinas was found strangled outside of his home. Although he kept a much lower profile than his brothers, the death of Enrique came a week after *Proceso Magazine* had published an account of his immense finances. He was also known for having business dealings with his brother Raul.\(^{48}\)


In the years since the end of the Porfiran government, Mexico has gone through a number of social, economic, and political upheavals to set itself straight on the path towards democracy beginning with liberal economic policies. The state-led development practices and oil driven economy may have carried Mexico through the boom times, but diversifying the exports and creating bilateral trade agreements would be the key to longevity. In times of financial upheavals or a major change in the national economic structure, there are naturally members of the population who end up being left out of the benefits of economic reforms.
Chapter II Challenges of the Emerging Mexican Democracy

A Brief History of Illicit Trade

The drug trade between the United States and Mexico has essentially been the result of domestic policies in the United States. Throughout the years prohibitionist strategies have significantly impacted Mexico and contributed to the development of sophisticated smuggling organizations to meet the insatiable demand of the people in the U.S. Taking advantage of a weak and flexible enforcement of law, these organizations were able to purchase immunity from prosecution. The highly centralized PRI regime had severely curtailed other government institutions, especially in the law enforcement sector, that would prevent the judiciary, police, or penal system from acting independently of the Presidential office. As Mexico has transformed into a more democratic state these old lines of bribery and corruption have been exposed, yet not eradicated. The democratic process has actually extended the number of actors that are in a position to demand bribes and the institutions crucial to a functioning democracy remain stagnant and powerless.

The passing of the 1914 Harrison Act during the Mexican revolution made for an ideal environment that allowed illicit trafficking to flourish. Those fighting on the revolutionary front were unconcerned with controlling opium trafficking while others, such as Colonel Esteban Cantu a governor in Baja California (1916-20) controlled the opium trade to carry on his government and make payroll for his troops.49 Luis Astorga writes in his article Mexico Drugs and Politics that illicit drug trafficking in Mexico was first penalized but then subordinated by political power under the establishment of the authoritarian party in 1929 that held a “virtual monopoly over political power and the

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military control of the national territory, [and] made it practically their own.” Astorga goes on to say that the political structure resembled a pyramid, concentrating powers at the top, and that drug trafficking was regarded as just another profitable business.

Large scale opium production began in Sinaloa during the Second World War when Japan took control of the Asian opium supply and the U.S. Military needed morphine for its soldiers. After the war ended the trade was driven underground and thus smuggling routes into the United States were created. The demand for illicit drugs in the United States would continue to grow in the post World War II era and into the 1960’s. Illegal drug use would increase amongst the baby-boomer generation in America at time when social changes and challenges to the establishment were taking place and drug use came to symbolize the rejection of traditional values and even patriotism. Domestic policies set by the Nixon administration’s “War on Drugs” stressed prevention and treatment programs as a solution to reduce drug consumption. When former President Ford entered the White House in 1974 he did not share Nixon’s attitude about drug use and formally recognized the limits of federal efforts to control drug abuse. His presidency coincided with the increase in presence of cocaine and the resurgence in heroin addiction, partly credited to the establishment of more Mexican poppy fields a few years after Nixon successfully eradicated poppy cultivation in Turkey. The Carter administration would also be characterized as tolerant of drug use, however by this time a vocal public disagreed with having a relaxed attitude in regards to drugs and the election of former President Regan would mark the end of the era of tolerance. Draconian laws

52 Ibid, 259.
and stiff punishments for the ever widening selection of stronger and more powerful drugs would culminate in both the struggle between law enforcement and criminal networks, and the struggle of official policies to maintain public health.

The transnational crime syndicate that existed and operated between South Florida and Colombia began in the seventies and continued through the eighties, utilizing the infinite points of entry along the coasts that resembled a pirate port for smugglers dropping bales of marijuana, and later tons of cocaine. Former Vice President George Bush Sr. created the South Florida Task Force in 1982. This agency worked closely with the DEA, FBI, and Customs officials to deal with the drug trafficking issues in the region, which by now was suffering from major violence and record numbers of homicide rates related to the cocaine trade wars. As it became increasingly difficult to smuggle cocaine into South Florida, Colombians turned to Mexican heroin and marijuana traffickers to move their product into the U.S. market. The demise of the Medellin and Cali cartels in the 1990’s caused a surge in violence as Mexican drug trafficking organizations began their struggle to harness the potential wealth and power.

During the 1990’s there was a sharp increase in the use of methamphetamines in the United States. Because methamphetamines are a synthesized drug without a harvested crop at its base, it would give traffickers a product that could be made virtually anywhere, and create opportunities for more traffickers to enter the trade.

Mexican organizations have managed to remain steps ahead of law enforcement in developing and maintaining sources of supply for both ephedrine and pseudoephedrine. They have answered every attempt at regulation with an almost immediate shift to an alternate source. While regulatory efforts have clearly reduced the domestic availability of ephedrine and have had some success in

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reducing overseas availability, the largest Mexican organizations have little difficulty obtaining bulk quantities of ephedrine.
Randy Weaver, senior analyst of the National Drug Intelligence Center

The methamphetamine trade was once held by motorcycle gangs in the western United States in what were called “superlabs” by law enforcement. The police stepped up to close down these super meth labs and the immediate result was a decline in domestic meth production. What followed was an increase in US-Mexico border seizures of both methamphetamines and pseudoephedrine, indicating Mexico was picking up the trade. Between the years 2002 and 2004, the point-of-entry seizures increased seventy-five percent. Mexican traffickers were able to draw on previous resources established through their trade routes and professional networks already carrying cocaine, heroin, and marijuana into the United States. They were also able to import industrial shipments of ephedrine from Asia. One of the first major traffickers of methamphetamines to be identified by US authorities was Jesus Amezcu. As domestic law enforcement cracked down on the motorcycle gangs and clandestine labs that dotted the US landscape, Amezcu, and several others imitating his practices, was not only able to sweep into the west to supply meth, but was able to distribute nationwide through the established drug routes. Previously the United States had to tackle meth in rural areas, where cooks were less likely to be detected and users had less access to other drugs, but now we are seeing a scourge of meth in urban areas as well. Jesus Amezcu may have been the first major methamphetamine trafficker, but he was immediately copied, and none of the arrests made of traffickers has halted the market. Meth found itself with many eager Mexican

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manufacturers and distributors. The meth traffickers either added the drug to their existing and varied supply of exportable drugs, or, like Amezcua, found an opportunity to rise out of the mid-ranks of the cocaine trade and become a major trafficker. While the legal production or sale of substances may be curbed or controlled by the government, the drug trade has always been an international enterprise that requires international controls. Imposing these controls takes a certain amount of coercion and as the struggle intensifies, becomes more profitable for those able to successfully traffic drugs.

**From Authoritarianism to Democracy, Always Corruption**

Corruption may be defined as the acquisition of material benefits for politicians and public officials in exchange for illicit influence. Politicians and public officials may sell these decisions in order to accumulate funds for either political purposes such as a future election campaign or to accumulate private wealth.56 Under the authoritarian regime of the PRI this extended to the law enforcement branches of the government whose favors could be purchased and used as a tool for battling political enemies. In 1918, under the presidency of Carranza the police powers were separated into preventative police, or beat cops, and judicial police, who were empowered to arrest and take suspects into court, answering to the federal ministry under the supervision of the President’s office.57 With the formation of the PRN in 1929 the judicial police and the administration became even more entwined as did the judiciary branch. Although the 1917 Constitution protected the independence of the judiciary branch, by the 1930’s the

courts were being consolidated under the state. The judiciary took a far more passive role in political matters and disputes with the administration were often of an internal organizational nature. The judicial system was further subjugated in 1934 by the Cardenas administration that replaced the life tenure of Supreme Court judges to a fixed tenure of six years, coinciding with the presidency. The Mexican legal system is based upon Spanish law and the 1917 Constitution prohibits the Court of Justice to apply rulings beyond an individual case or otherwise amend the Constitution. The *amparo* suit was the main tool with which to contest the legality or constitutionality of law or a judicial decision. In *amparo* suits the Court’s ruling does not lead to abrogation of the law or act, and only when the Court makes the same ruling for five consecutive cases is jurisprudence established and the low courts then must apply the same conclusion to all future cases. Naturally in such a centralized legal system, rarely were decisions implemented that went against the administration.

Police corruption and a legal system that blatantly favored those in power created a climate of fear and mistrust amongst Mexican citizens that continues until today. It was common for police to act with impunity and to be involved in a range of illegal activities, including the drug trade or intimidating citizens for bribes. A public opinion poll conducted in 2005 by *La Encuesta Nacional sobre Cultura Política y Prácticas Ciudadanas* (ENCUP), have reported that 77.4% of the population completely distrusts

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60 Domingo, 716.
the police. This, in combination with an ineffective judicial system fostered an environment where problems of order and violations of “law” are handled at the street level in “an unofficial system of every day justice” which further de-legitimizes the official legal system. Since the 1990’s there has been rapid growth in the private security sector and a continual demand for these services, especially in the cities, which speaks to the severe lack of faith in the rule of law and the belief that the same legal system applies to everyone. The privatization of police services allows citizens to bypass due process and contributes to violence and insecurity, especially when considering the necessity of arming these forces and individuals as a means of protection.

Mexico’s penal system is composed of 457 prison centers, the majority of which are considered medium security; with three of the six federal prisons considered to be of maximum security. According to United Nations figures, as of April 2005, the Mexican prison population totaled 201,931, a rate of 191 prisoners per every 100,000 citizens of the national population. As the official capacity of the prison system is approximately 152,000, the occupancy level averages at 125.6%. In 2001 the infamous escape of Sinaloa cartel leader Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán-Loera from Puente Grade, a maximum security facility where he had been serving a twenty year sentence for criminal association and bribery. In her article The Wretched Plight of Mexico’s Crippled Prison System: Yet another Blemished Aspect of Fox’s failed Presidency, written for the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, May 1, 2006, <http://www.coha.org/2006/05/the-wretched-plight-of-mexicos-crippled-prison-system/>.


62 Davis, 19.

63 Ibid, 41.

on Hemispheric Studies, Sabrina Starke reported there were allegedly up to 78 people involved in his escape via a laundry cart. Three years later his brother Arturo Guzmán Loera, whom was serving time in another maximum security prison was supposedly murdered by a hit man acting on the orders of rival, Gulf Cartel leader, Osiel Cardenas Guillen, whom was also imprisoned. Starke severely criticizes the Mexican government under Fox reporting that,

The government has practically given narco leaders a de facto office from which they can conduct their business, allowing them to be equipped with any technology or device they desire to expedite their clandestine activities. Prison administrators, usually complicit in this outright system of corruption, claim it helps maintain order, yet in reality it only ensures impunity and offers no solution to the country’s epic crime containment problems.

The Salinas administration (1988-94) had several brushes with corruption scandals and political violence amidst an economic crisis that exposed the authoritarian practices and centralized institutions as the primary agents of peaceful stability rather than a social consensus and citizen satisfaction. With a policy of economic liberalization and an increasingly active society, the demands for appropriate legal channels to voice grievances soon followed. Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de Leon became Mexico’s next president in December of 1994 with the legacy of Salinas tight on his heels. 1994 began with the rebellion of Mayans in Chiapas against the government and in response to the activation of NAFTA. Within three weeks of Zedillo’s inauguration the peso collapsed, and in March of 1994 the PRI’s presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio was murdered, which was then followed by the murder of PRI secretary General José Francisco Ruiz Massieu.

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The Democratic Transition

The administrations of de la Madrid (1982-88) and Salinas (1988-94) were extremely proactive to open up the Mexican economy to foreign capital and influence. By the time that Zedillo (1994-2000) took office the administration was still in that mode of correcting the past economic policies that hindered Mexico from competing on the international market. The liberalized reforms called for a reduction in government interference and an increase in autonomy for the banking industry. The peso devaluation of 1994 continued to produce economic reforms that further privatized public services, such as ports, railroads, airports, and telecommunications, as well as reformed social security benefits to promote private savings.66

Democratization became a necessary step in the political progression of Mexico as the activation of NAFTA put the country under international scrutiny. Salinas sponsored electoral reforms in 1993-94 that would scale back the “overrepresentation” of the PRI and empower the Tribunal Federal Electoral, (TFE) to prevent election fraud.67 Zedillo entered office with three governing principals that would break with the previous presidential traditions. He argued in the importance of the rule of law and promised to govern by the Constitution. He relinquished the extra-constitutional roles adopted by his predecessors, such as the leadership of the party and head of the nation’s political class, and he called for a sweeping reform of the judiciary.68 The enactment of these reforms would create a more open political climate where the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN)

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and the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) could make demands that would be taken seriously. Zedillo attempted to somewhat distance himself from the PRI, which would create tensions within the party, and more importantly destabilize the center of gravity of Mexican politics. Without a heavy political hand many of the state governors who had been used to taking their marching orders from the president would either bring their governance to a virtual standstill or would act completely independently of the administration and become these local bosses. “Even though Zedillo retreated from many of his earlier positions, the “damage” done to the traditional “imperial” presidency cannot be undone.” 69 Zedillo did not attempt to utilize the monopoly held by the president to choose his successor and in the 2000 elections Mexico voted to oust the PRI after seven decades of one party rule.

It seemed democracy had arrived in Mexico and the election of President Vincente Fox (2000-2006) was full of promise for a new era in Mexican politics and society. Although the expectations of this new democracy may have been set too high for what was realistically accomplished. The election process does a great deal to further democratic participation however with the same weak institutions in place than full citizen participation cannot be realized. The removal of the presidency from control of the PRI revealed serious cracks in the executive/legislative relationship. Fox lacked the effective mechanisms necessary to organize his diverse cabinet and wrongly assumed that the people and the legislation would automatically follow his lead because he was democratically elected. 70 Perhaps it is that Fox’s expectations of the democratic process were unrealistic, and he in turn raised the expectations of the public as to what exactly

69 Ibid.
can be achieved by a nascent democracy. The result was that his presidency is somewhat regarded as being full of promises he was unable to keep and the cabinet remained ineffective due to fragmentation.

The PRI had a relative grip on the drug trade due to the highly centralized practices of the Presidential office that could manage and contain the flow of drugs through Mexico by use of the judiciary, law enforcement, and penal system, which was also employed to combat political enemies. To transition this type of authoritarian government to a democracy essentially highlights all of the problems that were once hidden. The fact that these institutions were not created to act independently of the executive office have stalled the process of creating an effective democratic government.
Chapter III

The Forces of Globalization and the Impact on Drug Trafficking

Organized crime corruption networks can be understood as the HIV virus of the modern state, circumventing and breaking down the defenses of the modern state.” Phil Williams

Rapid Globalization and the Challenges to Democracy

The loss of influence and legitimacy from the PRI administration’s previous control mechanisms due to economic liberalization of Mexico and the introduction of democracy has co-incited with the international shifts towards globalization. Ultimately, the processes of globalization result in the economic integration of various foreign states. These governments or international institutions will enact domestic policies favorable to this global economic integration and try to take advantage of freely moving capital, technology, information, and transnational organizations. Each of these states attempts to use their comparative advantages to attract foreign capital, compete in the international market, and stimulate national production. Although globalization definitions and theories often stress the free flow of goods, people, and capital, which has arguably occurred for centuries, the phenomenon of contemporary “globalization” is its connection with the spread of capitalism on a grander scale than was possible before. Ever advancing technologies have revolutionized communication and transportation opportunities that allow for various business networks to open administrative centers all over the world and exercise competitive practices. The shift in the reach of social relations has been significant and occurrences or developments on the one side of the

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world can have serious impacts on the other side. Without constraints of time and geographical space the local social life becomes embedded with more interregional relations.\(^{72}\) This coupled with the response of the U.S. and Mexican government to further militarize the drug war has created an even more confused and violent environment that has increased the potential wealth of the drug trade and fostered such fierce competition amongst criminal organizations that domestic drug consumption rates in Mexico have climbed as dealers open up local markets for cheap and highly addictive drugs. The vulnerable populations that have emerged as a result of Mexico’s industrialization and integration into the global market are a large pool of potential customers seeking to alter their circumstances through drug use.

**Militarizing the Drug War**

In February of 2001 President Fox and President Bush were in the midst of negotiations for a migration plan that would strengthen the relations between the two countries. The four point plan included the legalization of the unauthorized Mexicans already living in the United States, the introduction of a new guest worker program, a solid cooperation to curb border violence and changes in the U.S. law that would exempt Mexicans from US immigrant visa ceilings.\(^{73}\) Migrant workers would be given government issued ID cards to open bank accounts or rent apartments and serve as papers in the security conscious United States. Fox was extremely supportive of this type of

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\(^{73}\) Houfbauer & Schott,455.
laborer and called migrant workers in the United States heroes whose remittances are helping to create a modern and prosperous Mexico.74

Unfortunately, events of September 2001 drastically changed perceptions and created a deep seeded fear about security along the borders. A month after the attacks, the George W. Bush administration created the White House Office of Homeland Security. This new agency would essentially bring together the various border security and defense protection organizations that already existed. Celebrating five years in March of 2008, the Homeland Security Department has 216,000 employees who are “responsible for protecting the territory of the United States of America: patrolling borders, protecting ports, defending the skies, enforcing immigration laws, and responding to disasters and emergencies”.75 The Homeland Security website lists the following accomplishments since implementation,

- **Securing the Border** - built more than 302 miles of fencing and increased number of agents from 10,500 to more than 17,500 by the end of 2008
- **Enforcing Immigration Laws** - removed over 275,000 illegal aliens, interdicted more than 86,000 illegal migrants at sea, and secured fines and judgments of more than $30 million against violating employers
- **Countering Drugs** - seized more than 7 million pounds of drugs and made 8,920 arrests at land and sea

The border of the United States and Mexico is nearly two thousand miles long. The number of crossing far exceeds any other border, and it is a dividing strip between the developed and developing world giving these two nations a very special relationship politically, economically, and socially. Until recently population and commerce flowed freely with people working or attending school on either side, making those in the border

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74 Ibid, 457.
regions realize the dream of the borderless and free flowing economy. Stricter controls on immigration and movement have made border crossing a more dangerous journey for migrant workers, and therefore a more profitable venture for smugglers. Migrant workers whom before may have traveled back and forth seasonally are forced to stay in the United States longer, and likely will seek factory employment in the off season.

Many scholars have recently begun to speculate that there has been a rise in corruption as a result of the global economic liberalization and democratic practices being introduced into developing nations. In his work *The Politics of Corruption in Latin America*, Kurt Weyland writes that beyond greater transparency or broader media coverage exposing corruption, there are more opportunities for extracting bribes and more incentives to do so within these developing world democracies. The privatization of property and industry give bureaucrats and politicians vast and tempting resources while the new division of powers has extended the range of actors who can demand bribes. Weyland does not stop there, however, and believes the rise in neo-populist politics and necessity of waging costly campaigns or acquiring private retirement funds in case a career in politics does not pan out. As Mexico attempts to emerge as a functioning democracy during this period of major global transitions where the “market” dictates government policy, the citizens are presented with a puzzled view of democratic citizenship and national identity. Mexico is forced to struggle under the weight of operating a decentralized government without the proper institutions to replace the authoritarian state. Lack of faith in the rule of law and the legitimacy of the Constitution in the minds of Mexican citizens is important to the understanding of Mexico’s democratic shortcomings. Democracy did not stop corruption, indeed some scholars
argue it actually increased, but it did expose how deep the lines of corruption are in all levels of government and law enforcement. It is especially evident in Mexico due to the prevalence of the illicit drug trade and the immeasurable profits there of. Free and open markets exist at the decline of state interventions to increase trade and development however criminal networks also flourish in this liberal economic environment. Louise Shelley, a professor in the School of International Service and founder and director of the Transnational Crime and Corruption Center at American University in Washington, D.C. wrote in her article *The Globalization of Crime and Terrorism*,

> The growth of legal trade is regulated by adherence to border control policies, customs officials, and bureaucratic systems, transnational crime groups freely exploit the loopholes of state-based legal systems to extend their reach. They travel to regions where they cannot be extradited, base their operations in countries with ineffective or corrupt law enforcement, and launder their money in countries with bank secrecy or few effective controls.

No state can always be equated with law and order, and illicit practices are fairly embedded into both social life and government processes, especially when concerning economy. The state’s ability to welcome or criminalize illicit activities is the central struggle of predatory versus commercial enterprise, and the finer points that separate trafficking/smuggling from trade and migration. The implications of the ease in which criminal networks can filter illicit funds through the “legitimate” economy have allowed these networks to obtain cutting edge technology that further empowers them to conduct counter-intelligence against governing authority and break down the traditional defenses of the state.76

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Attempts by the United States to curb the laundering of illicit funds from the drug trade have increased in severity in the years since September of 2001, including a significant decrease in the ability of banking institutions to maintain a protected relationship with their clients. Generally large amounts of cash have always aroused a great deal of suspicion for all levels of law enforcement, but now that there is a “rhetorical” link between drug funds and terrorism the informal or illicit economy has taken on a far more dangerous tone than before. The neo-liberalist policies and the fear of terrorism essentially have created a contradictory vision of the globalized world market operating in a borderless economy, while simultaneously barricading the borders of states from organized crime networks.\footnote{Naim, Moises. Illicit: How Smugglers, Traffickers, and Copycats are Hijacking the Global Economy. (New York: Doubleday, 2005)23.}

The large “grey area” between legal and illegal transactions is making it much more difficult for law enforcement to effectively decipher between “legitimate” and “illegitimate” funds. Money laundering is far easier with a large number of national markets accepting trades online and these impersonal financial transactions occur with far more regularity than ever before.

The 2001 attack on the Trade Towers highlighted the necessity of international prohibition regimes to standardize law enforcement cooperation and eliminate potential havens where criminals may escape prosecution or launder illicit funds.\footnote{Peter Andreas and Ethan Nadelmann, Policing the Globe: Criminalization and Crime Control in International Relations, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006)18.} According to author David Mares, Drug Wars and Coffeehouses: The Political Economy of the International Drug Trade, the traditional process of money laundering utilized small businesses to conceal illegal origins, however drugs sales and values rapidly increased
and the amount of money that needed to be laundered exceeded the capacity of the traditional system. Larger operations were employed to funnel cash and in the 1970’s United States, the creation of non-bank financial institutions that provided banking services were able to integrate significant amounts of licit and illicit money into brokerage firms and insurance companies. The far and wide distribution of illicit funds in legitimate economy transforms the international system and consequentially weakens the state’s defenses as these criminal networks step forward as powerful political actors. The grey area where the legitimate world meets the underworld thickens and criminals are able to exercise political influence, support public works, participate in large scale acts of philanthropy, or obtain ownership of media organizations that will serve to further expand illegal markets and resources. These complex and strategic alliances will continue to span both culture and continent, operating elusively and without state affiliation.

In October of 2007 President Bush announced a “security cooperation” plan to combat drugs in Mexico. He requested from congress 500 million dollars for 2008 that would be apart of a multi-year 1.4 billion dollar aid package. The “Mérida Initiative” as it is known would provide donations of US military and intelligence equipment, as well as training programs for Mexican law enforcement officials. President Bush remarked that circumstances in the US/Mexican drug war had reached a crisis point, and that current efforts on both sides of the border have been successful. The Washington Post has reported that more than one third of the package was allocated for aerial surveillance.

and the immediate deployment of troops. The joint statement released by both
governments regarding the Mérida Initiative, entitled, *A New Paradigm for Security
Cooperation* states,

> The strengthening of the bilateral cooperation between Mexico and the U.S. will
facilitate our regional and international cooperation against organized crime,
particularly with the countries of Central America. Both Mexico and the United
States recognize the global and regional nature of transnational criminal
organizations trafficking in drugs, people, bulk cash and arms across national
borders.

President Felipe Calderon took office in 2006 after what the *New York Times*
referred to as “the most contentious election in Mexican history”. Right away,
Calderon, a conservative member of the PAN, pledged to fight organized crime and
immediately sent thousands of federal police and troops into the most drug plagued
states. He initiated large military operations aimed at ending the grip of organized crime
in Tijuana by sending troops to set up roadblock check points, put the city under
helicopter and navy boat surveillance and then stripped all 2,320 city police officers of
their weapons due to the belief that local officers would be more likely to be on the
payroll of drug cartels. Since 2007 Calderon has deployed more than 40,000 soldiers
patrolling the most drug ravaged areas and implemented *Operacion Limpieza* to purge the
government and judiciary of corrupt officials.

> **Este esfuerzo de depuración y de limpieza corresponde precisamente a nuestro propósito, voluntad y compromiso de entregarle a los mexicanos instituciones de**

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83 Ibid
Militarizing the drug war and flooding the streets with soldiers has had a tremendous consequence on the states in which they are deployed. The level of violence has risen dramatically as well as the number of civilians caught in the cross-fire of the drug war. Because these troops are soldiers, not local police officers who are members of these communities, so there is little diplomacy or regard for the needs and safety of the citizens. “Indeed much of the current bloodshed can be traced to the special forces that Mexico trained to find and arrest drug traffickers, receiving instruction from the U.S. military on tactics, intelligence gathering, air assault and advanced weaponry.” These criminal organizations fiercely compete for a piece of the illicit drug market as well as fight the police and military, murder journalists, police, politicians, judges, and anyone else who may compromise their authority. Over 6,000 people were murdered in 2008, the first thousand deaths occurred in 113 days, the last thousand in 42 days. However, the numbers are not nearly as staggering as the manner in which so many corpses have been found. Decapitated heads and severely mutilated bodies are constantly turning up in public areas and on September 29, 2008 eleven tortured bodies were left at a school in Tijuana. The emotional toll that this violence is taking on the lives of Mexican children is a concern and the New York Times reported “Experts say the atrocities that young people are hearing about, and all too frequently witnessing, are hardening them, traumatizing them, filling their heads with images that are hard to shake.”

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Miguel Ángel González Tovar of the Tijuana school “fears that the awful scenes playing out across much of Mexico are so common that they will eventually lose their shock value among the young, making killing an expected, even acceptable, part of life.”

The United States Congress has withheld all but 700 million of the 1.4 billion dollars outlined in the Mérida Initiative, as well as canceled the funds for the fleets of Mexican trucks to be allowed onto American highways. In response the Mexican government imposed 2.4 billion dollars in tariffs on 89 American exports, in a signal that relations are becoming more strained. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton arrived in Mexico on the March 25, 2009 to represent the Obama Administration’s plans for helping to curb the violent drug trade and pledged to ask Congress for 80 million dollars to provide Mexico with three Blackhawk helicopters and possibly deploy 450 law enforcement officials to the border region. Clinton was quoted as saying bluntly, “Our insatiable demand for illegal drugs fuels the drug trade. Our inability to prevent weapons from being illegal smuggled across the border to arm these criminals causes the deaths of police officers, soldiers, and civilians.”

However, more restrictive borders seem to have only resulted in an increase of drug sales within Mexico and in October of 2007 the New York Times reported,

As Mexican drug cartels have grown in power, they have begun to open up local markets for cheap forms of highly addictive drugs like crack and ice, as methamphetamine is known. Now even medium-sized towns like Zamora have large and growing populations of addicts, along with a rise in violent crime.

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“Ten or 15 years ago we didn’t even see powdered cocaine, just marijuana,” said Cmdr. Juan Carlos Espinosa of the Zamora police department. “Then about three years ago we started to see a lot of signs of ice, crack and heroin.

The increase of competition and immense profits in the illicit drug trade have allowed dealers to unabashedly sell dangerous highly addictive drugs to their own people for name, power, and profit. Poor public health institutions and a lack of education about the dangers of drugs have contributed to Mexico being hit particularly hard by this pandemic as well as the social conditions that create an environment of despair and addiction.

Across society, groups that are discriminated against, repressed, exploited, isolated, or marginalized by or from the authority or mainstream are more likely than to experience problems in cultural adjustment, blocked opportunities, economic deprivation, status frustration, and social stress. Members of these groups may hence engage more in substance use and abuse.90

**Emerging Markets, Vulnerable Populations**

In the case of Mexico, one of main contributing factors of the recent spike in drug use has to do with the availability of drugs on the streets after local markets were created in response to stricter controls on the U.S. border. The mere presence of illicit substances will naturally lead to an increase of users, especially when very little, if any, preventative education exists. Couple this with an environment where depression, poverty, sexual abuse, and intense anxiety drive the individual towards substance use as a means to escape these circumstances. Spending ones formative years in a state of poverty related

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chaos within a society of limited opportunities creates a particular set of stressful circumstances of which there is little relief. In 2002 the World Bank reported that half the population in Mexico was living in poverty and one fifth was living in extreme poverty and about one quarter of those living in extreme poverty in Mexico reside in urban areas in the center of the country. The conditions of living in these urban areas are extremely precarious in both health and safety and the majority of those barrios are made up of indigenous peoples. While we cannot make absolutes about the link between poverty and drugs, high rates of substance abuse in disadvantaged areas has been well documented. Limited economic opportunities manifest into feelings of frustration and helplessness while drugs and alcohol offer a temporary retreat. Deprivation of access to social capital then creates a street culture where illicit drugs offer a means to financial success through gang networks and organized crime. Densely populated areas have high numbers of those frustrated by the system and escaping with drug use as well as entrepreneurs seeking to capitalize on those seeking to avoid reality or dispel their fears through substance abuse.

Migration to the United States has long been a fixture in the relationship between the two nations, and the financial contributions of these migrant workers not only benefited the individual families, but fostered growth and development in Mexico. Negotiations for ID cards and a more flexible immigration program for Mexicans was taking place between former President Fox and former President George W. Bush when the events of September 2001 froze these discussions. The deeply unfortunate incidents that occurred that September morning would alter the migrant workers ability to travel freely over the border yet the only appropriate response of the U.S. government to the
terrorist attacks was to at least address the need to prevent terrorists from entering illegally through the large and porous boundary.

The life experience of migrant workers can be very dangerous and very lonely. Being so far away from home also stirs up feelings of freedom from social constraints and may cause any person to behave differently than they would in the presence of a strong family. In 1992, an article printed in the *New York Times* reported that many migrant workers were returning to Mexico from the United States with the AIDS virus, with several cases linked to intravenous heroin use. A manager for an AIDS outreach program in Watsonville, California said of the migrant workers, “These young guys are really at that adventurous stage in their lives, and for them this is the big city. There’s easy access to the women. There’s easy access to the men. And there’s very easy access to the I.V. drugs.”91 Some also engage in homosexual activity, have sex with drug using prostitutes or participate in other risky behaviors. In 1989 the *New York Times* reported a scheme that exploited workers with a substance/debt dependency program that essentially reduced workers to slaves. The illegal sales of wine, tobacco, and drugs by crew leaders fostered a strange relationship where workers were toiling strictly to support their habits as supplied to them by their boss. Scores of ledgers have been recovered detailing the credit system for these addictive substances and James Witmer, an assistant director of the Labor Department wage and hour office in Raleigh, North Carolina was quoted saying “That’s an ideal environment for drug usage to take place. A drug dealer can

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develop a captive work force. We are hearing more and more about drug usage and payment for work in drug form instead of cash."^{92}

Societies experience with alcohol as a dangerous but legally sanctioned drug gives us some context when looking at the social acceptability of substance use. The acceptance of alcohol as a traded commodity serves as a pretext for acceptance of its use for celebrations, business dealings, sorrow, or any other occasion where alcohol is present. If we then apply the presence of illicit drugs in various cities and other parts of Mexico, as well as the frequency of which drugs are moved and traded, we can make some assumptions about how many processors, transporters, or sellers may be consuming the drugs and profiting from them. News stories about the drug and alcohol fueled mayhem of some top drug traffickers show that there is little deference paid to the dangers of “working” while intoxicated.

Barbas has a reputation as a man given to fits of drug-addled rage. "He's diabetic," a former police commander tells me. "When Barbas [the Beard] mixes cocaine and alcohol, he loses the floor" — gets high — "and has paranoid delusions.

Julio calls Chapo his padrone — the man who supplies him with the seeds for the poppies he grows. Many times, he says, he has partied with Chapo and his compadres. The men gather in the mountains and slaughter pigs and cattle and drink whiskey and snort coke and dance the night away.

The problem is not Chapo, but those who emulate him. As more drugs pass through Mexico, the rate of addiction has skyrocketed, further fueling the violence. The worse thing is the young people who try to imitate the narcos. It used to be only Americans took drugs. But now kids are stoned.^93

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^93^Lawson, 78.
Young narco-soldiers or gang members involved in the trade are extremely vulnerable to drug abuse and violence as one begets the other. A culture of fast living and short life expectancy would send the message that drugs were the most important part of whatever life you have, no matter how little that time may be. The trauma experienced by children growing up with this violence is also considered a trigger of drug use later. Human beings develop consciousness in the social setting through organizations, such as the family, church, and school. However, when these bonds break down the moral identity becomes confused and children or young adults become easy targets for exploitation. The subculture of violence in some of these lower class urban areas has always existed as young males without proper role models tend to exhibit aggressive behavior. The introduction of hard drugs to a mentally or emotionally unstable person can negatively affect the personality and intensify this aggression which would possibly exacerbate this problem of violence.

Beyond what the violence may be doing to the mental stability of the youth in Mexico, there must also be a consideration of how media and entertainment may be contributing to the appeal to live a narco-life. More than ever there are barrages of images of wealth and power that permeate into a cultural psyche. The fame attached to drug dealing and belonging to the drug trade is becoming an entity in itself as the media and population have been captivated by the real life, and extremely dangerous soap opera of the narco-world. Joaquin Guzman Loera, (El Chapo), is currently one of Mexico’s most wanted and on the Forbes Magazine’s list of World’s billionaires.

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94 Shaw, 223.
The song tradition of *corridos* began in Mexico with roots in Spanish romances or scandalous tales. The genre began to evolve into a folk tradition during the fight for Mexican independence and was also employed as tool for spreading stories and subversive messages during the Mexican Revolution. These songs were simple and about the lives of the downtrodden, their heroes, and bandits making alcohol runs to the Untied States.\(^5\) The genre has further evolved to include stories about the various players in the narco-business with great commercial success and wild popularity amongst the *narcos*. “The *narcos* don’t care if they die in a shootout, because they know they will get a song written about them. They will literally die for a song.”\(^6\) The genre coupled with the power of the internet as a media outlet has allowed for the broadcast of rivalries amongst the Mexican underworld. A story published in the *Washington Post* in April 2007 said that the release of a music video on *Youtube* by the singer known as “The Golden Rooster” “spawned an unprecedented cyberspace drug war” with a ballad that supposedly was “promoting the *Sinaloa* cartel and mocking its rival, the *Gulf* cartel.” The internet response from drug lords and other commentators was to post photographs of beheadings, executions, shootings, and other images of torture. Several months later the singer was killed after a concert and the footage of his autopsy showing his naked body riddled with bullets was released online.\(^7\) The article went on to say that the internet activity of drug traffickers has proven to be an excellent tool of publicity and intimidation.

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\(^6\) Lawson, 78.

Following the model of terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda, the cartels have discovered the Web as a powerful means of transmitting threats, recruiting members and glorifying the narco-trafficker lifestyle of big money, big guns and big thrills.

Women are at equal risk for drug use, but treatment centers have found that the experience of women and drug taking differs from that of men. In the United States, most girls were found to take substances to control weight, alter their mood, relieve anxiety, or lower their sexual inhibitions.98 Girls were found to have more contact with older men and boys than their male peers and are more likely to receive more offers of drugs. While the same sense of helplessness and fear may drive women to take drugs, the increasing involvement of women at all levels of narco-trafficking show it goes much deeper than that. Generally women in high ranking positions of trafficking are apart of a larger family enterprise and take over the trade in place of their fathers, husbands, or brothers but most operate at the mid or lower ranks of smuggling. Many of these women are manipulated or otherwise coerced into collaborating in the business and are often exploited or victimized as a result, while others may be prostitutes who sell to their clients.99

Vidas truncadas, extrañas historias de mujeres que de pronto se involucraban en una alucinante realidad. Las adicciones, la violencia, el poder y la riqueza. Pocas vivieron para contarla.100

Women are desirable as drug mules because they are often able to use their feminine wiles to entice border guards to let them pass.” They flirt and charm and beg


the officers, often middle-aged men, to “just this once” let an unauthorized relative or friend through. And then another and another”. The same poverty and inequality that may drive a person to consume drugs may motivate them to risk becoming involved in the business as a means of economic gain.

As the numbers of women in the drug trade grow, so does the number of women incarcerated on drug related charges. While male prisoners are also vulnerable to abuse and rape, typically males deal with inmate on inmate attacks. Women are subjected to attacks by corrections officers who may coerce them into exchanging sexual favors for food, blankets, or other small comforts. Long and severe sentences are handed down for those caught smuggling narcotics and the separation from their children is one of the most painful aspects, especially for those women working to support their families. Mexico City has a program where young children are allowed to remain with their mothers in prison until the age of six, regardless of the mother’s crime. “Warden Margarita Malo, said the children had a calming effect on the rest of the inmates. The presence of children also inspires the mothers to learn skills or, in many cases, to kick drug habits that landed them in trouble in the first place.” Still, these women must provide for their children and continuing to sell drugs while incarcerated is a common occurrence.

The consequences of the strong arm efforts of militarized law enforcement have been dire. Responses from both administrations have pressed for more money to continue an all out war that has already demonstrated to have serious collateral damage on the Mexican people, their government, and their reputation. The proximity of Mexico to the

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101 Archibald and Becker, NYT.
largest group of drug consumers on earth has set a ripple of violence and drug addiction that will continue to threaten the stability of these communities. Ted Carpenter states in his book *Bad Neighbor Policy*, “given the realities of global consumption, the only alternative open to prohibitionists is to try and smash the existing suppliers and to prevent other entrepreneurs from replacing them”. Although that strategy has failed several times in the past and Carpenter ponders how any good capitalist can possibly ignore the basic principals of supply and demand. For Mexico to emerge as a functioning democracy under these precarious conditions may well be a miraculous testament to the democratic process. The neo-liberalist economic policies are somewhat driving the democratic transitions of many nations in the world, though the process of democracy is not necessarily achieved from the bottom up. The responsibilities of democracy are not necessarily understood by the masses and therefore democracy exists almost entirely for market purposes. The gruesome violence that results from the struggle to compete and control the illicit drug market is obviously an outward and extreme use of competitive business tactics that highlight the value of the trade as it stands in its illegality as well as the immense potential for wealth and power that makes life seem so cheap in comparison. Regardless, if we treat illicit drugs as any other viable commodity in an ever widening, liberalized market place we can see where this commerce fits in with any other competitive global struggle for markets and trade zones and how it actually represents the kind of high risk and daring enterprise that characterizes the free market.
Chapter IV

Conclusion

At the heart of the drug related problems in Mexico lies the legacy of a weak institutionalized judiciary and law enforcement apparatus that has proven to be incapable of containing either the drug trade or the violence. Beginning with the Porfirio regime we see a legacy of Presidential manipulation of these institutions that would continue during the 71 year reign of the PRI. Although Diaz purposefully courted foreign investment and the PRI pursued protectionist economic policies until it was no longer viable, this vein of modern Mexico non-the-less concentrated a great deal of power in the hands of very few. Economic integration into the global market would do little to improve the great disparity of wealth in Mexico, while the international market driven government policies has created even more tensions. The government must keep production costs down and offer tax incentives to be more competitive and attract foreign investment, however it prevents the government from maintaining a properly functioning bureaucracy or public health programs. Mexico’s weak institutions are further weakened by the inability to use economic gains to build up the welfare state and improve the lives of their citizens. The insertion of Mexico into the global international system with weak and ineffective government institutions has also widened the potential for corruption as the privatization of property and industry has extended the range of actors that are in a position to demand bribes. The estimated 15 to 30 billion dollar illicit drug industry has given rise to a number of major criminal organizations that are able to take advantage of open financial markets and weak law enforcement to build empires and firmly embed their organizations in the state economy.
The cartels bring in billions of dollars more than the Mexican government spends to defeat them, and they spend their wealth to bolster their ranks with an untold number of politicians, judges, prison guards and police officers — so many police officers, in fact, that entire forces in cities across Mexico have been disbanded and rebuilt from scratch.103

From the Porfirio government to the Salinas administration, the executive branch prevented Mexico’s other institutions from functioning as anything more than a tool of the presidency. The judiciary police force, which is empowered to arrest and take suspects to court, has been an agency directly supervised by the President since 1918. For many years the police were not only used to persecute political enemies, but also offered immunity from arrest to criminals with high power connections. Preventative police, or beat cops, have also operated with relative impunity and engage in illegal activities to supplement their low wages, triggering a rise in the private security sector. As police services become privatized the rule of law is further weakened. The judiciary courts were also concentrated under the power of the executive and in 1934 the six year tenure of a Supreme Court Judge, the court which handles all criminal prosecutions, coincided with the office of the President, which would ensure full judicial cooperation with the executive branch. Preventing the judiciary from acting independently of the President’s office negates a necessary “checks and balance” system meant to deter corruption. The vulnerability of the Mexican penal system to both corruption and overcrowding contributes to this undermining of the overall judiciary system and there are minimal resources available to rebuild the corrections branch of law enforcement. The transition to democracy and the “redistribution” of powers would not automatically

103 Ibid.
establish legitimacy for these weak institutions, nor would it provide an instruction handbook for how these institutions may be repaired. The purging of corrupt officials as per Calderon’s *Operacion Limpieza* has possibly had the opposite of the desired effect. The highly publicized arrests of top officials involved with the drug trade says more about how deeply affected the Mexican government is by the will of drug lords and “narco-dollars”, than it says about the government’s efficiency to sort out the criminals and politicians. In the past year the director of Interpol in Mexico was arrested for receiving cartel cash, as was a top prosecutor. The *New York Times* reported in March of 2009 that the cartels are managing to slip moles into the United States Embassy. “Those in important positions who have resisted taking cartel money are often shot to death, a powerful incentive to others who might be wavering.”104 Democracy has seemed to only increase the number of actors who may demand bribes and highlight the major problems once concealed by an authoritarian government. Without a system of highly concentrated political power, the drug trade is thrown into a free for all as new entrepreneurs establish criminal operations.

The battle to control this multi-billion dollar drug trade has turned to acts of public violence as narco-organizations are eager to show off their ferocity and exemption from the law. Many people have been caught within the cross hairs of these organizations and fear is permeating through the country. Globalization has opened up the economy to foreign actors, both legal and illegal, but it is the overall ineffectiveness of Mexico’s government institutions that has compromised a proper response to drug trafficking and criminal organizations.

Another crucial point to understanding the drug related chaos in Mexico is the demand for illicit substances and the inability to control the supply of sophisticated weapons going into Mexico. For years Mexico has been the dealer in the alley for Americans wishing to obtain a range of substances not available in the United States. The harder the U.S. government squeezed with supply side policies the more explosive the result. “We have had the same policy since the Nixon administration,” says David Shirk director of the Trans-border Institute at the University of San Diego. “We ask other countries to fight the war for us. We try to export the problem by asking other countries to not sell us the goods we want to buy.” Many of the “successes” of U.S. law enforcement to crack down on the drug trade in one region, for instance the efforts made by the South Florida Task Force to curb the flow of cocaine through the Caribbean or the Drug Enforcement Agency breaking up super meth labs in California, have only resulted in a balloon effect as alternative routes are forged. For many years Mexico has been a transit point for smuggling illicit goods over the border. However, the crackdown of U.S. law enforcement on the Colombian cartels or the California motorcycle gangs, opened up competition for drug territory and likely spread drug use even further throughout the United States because of the well established routes of Mexican smugglers making it possible for more types of drugs to become widely available.

This problem has also been exacerbated by the “breakthroughs” in synthetic drug production and it is reportedly much more difficult to wean a user off of meth than other types of substances. Unfortunately there is nothing to prevent meth use from spreading to other continents and any number of countries that will have the resources to

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105 Lawson, pg 110.
produce *meth*, as well as a price point that could be suited to any local economy, but very few of these countries will be prepared to treat those who abuse it. The experience in North America has made it clear that the demand for this drug and its super-powerful effects is there and will find its place on the global drug market.

The United States has not done enough to control the domestic demand for illicit drugs that makes this business so incredibly profitable. Although prevention and treatment programs get a fair amount of lip service as we seek to handle the illicit drug issues, very little is known about the most effective measures to treat substance abuse and relatively very little money is offered towards the public health issues caused by drug use. A relapse, or several back into abusing substances is typical and expected of a drug treatment patient. Despite the chaos Mexico is in because of the drug trade, it is possible that the dark times are yet to come as drug user’s increase in number. The hard drugs like crack and ice have already shown their destructive powers in the United States as users become enslaved by the need for the drug. To introduce something so destructive into an already disadvantageous community is courted disaster and while in the future Mexico may see a reduction in violence, it is likely that it will remain a transit country. Consolidated institutions, economic fluctuations, and the related social problems of drug consumption will pose a major obstacle for Mexico to overcome and unfortunately the way forward is unclear.
Appendix

Notes about drugs and drug use

Although “drugs” can be very dangerous, the individual experiences of the various forms of available drugs do not always result in some kind of tragedy or the destitution of the user. Considering that the legality of some drugs and illicitness of others varies greatly throughout the world—as do the opinions regarding their harmfulness— it is reasonable to say that there is no real consensus in the public discourse and what passes for debate about drugs. It is far too complex a subject for many to be truly objective about and, in part, this is due to the degree of the individual experience.

Without some historical or cultural context, drugs and the dangers associated with drugs lose their meaning. Cultural acceptances in the use of particular substances are rarely consistent with the actual dangers or side effects using these substances may produce. In the United States there is a very causal attitude towards the use of prescription drugs and a significant amount of direct-to-customer advertising by pharmaceutical companies that are approved through government channels. The Food and Drug Administration was created specifically to monitor the safety and efficacy of human and veterinary drugs, biological products, medical devices, our nation’s food supply, cosmetics, and products that emit radiation.\textsuperscript{106} The notoriously rigorous process of seeking FDA approval for new products may have given the public a false sense of security as to the significant risks prescription drugs carry, especially when used in combination with alcohol or mixed with other medications. Society’s attitudes towards drugs have a significant impact on the perceptions about the dangers of drugs, although little to do with the actual risks.

\textsuperscript{106} U.S. Food and Drug Administration, “FDA’s Mission Statement”, Mar 3 2009, \textless www.fda.gov\textgreater .
Although individual attitudes towards drugs may vary due to the individual experience there are some core features of drug dependence taken from Griffith Edwards, a professor of addiction behaviors at the Institute of Psychiatry in London, and an advisor to the British Department of Health and the World Health Organization on aspects of drug and alcohol policy. The following definitions are from his work, *Matters of Substance: Drugs and Why Everyone’s a User*.

- Addiction is a state of duress where the individual freedom of choice over their drug has become impaired and the drug has begun to take control over their drug taking.
- Self control is impaired and the user will persist even when their rational self wants to stop.
- Responsiveness to external controls is likely to be weakened and the drugs will negate the controls ordinarily exerted by good manners, what the family expects, and the expectations and sanctions of society.

While the degree of danger to the individual using drugs may vary, if the individual drug user is exponentially multiplied there is a significant impact on the larger community. The disregard for the social expectations of the self and society is a major factor in social disorganization.

The *New York Times* reported in October of 2007 that the competitive drug trade in Mexico is increasing the number of drug addicts being reported by both the police and drug treatment centers. “Ten or 15 years ago we didn’t even see powdered cocaine, just marijuana,” said Cmdr. Juan Carlos Espinosa of the Zamora police department. “Then about three years ago we started to see a lot of signs of ice, crack and heroin.”

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cheap and highly addictive drugs have both a high degree of danger to the user, their family, and their community due to the inherent personality changes that occur.

**THE GOODS, A brief history and physical effects of the following drugs,**

**COCAINE** is an excellent example of a drug that has gone through many changes in its image and social acceptability. Cocaine epidemics have come and gone in the United States, but according to indigenous legends it was revered by the Incas as a gift from the Sun God. The coca plant grows with little difficulty and was used to promote endurance amongst the indigenous people in the high Andean altitudes. Albert Niemann, a German chemist in the mid 19th century pulled the hydrochloride from the Erythroxylum coca leaves and identified its chemical structure. In the United States the exhilarating effect of cocaine made it extremely popular and was used in medicines, soft drinks, wines and so on.\(^\text{108}\) It wasn’t until the early 1990’s a chemical researcher, Dr. Michael Kuhar; found that cocaine interfered with the body’s dopamine transport system.\(^\text{109}\) The interference is with the chemical messengers -- neurotransmitters -- that nerves use to communicate with each other. Cocaine blocks norepinephrine, serotonin, dopamine, and other neurotransmitters from being reabsorbed. The resulting chemical buildup between nerves causes euphoria or feeling "high." The chemical messenger dopamine mediates pleasure for such procreation activities as eating or having sex, as well as other emotional pleasures. High dosages of cocaine can result in anxiety, agitation, and a noticeable disruption in behavior. Mental confusion and paranoid


misperceptions that are associated with psychotic behavior are common as a result of high dose intoxication.

**ICE** or Crystal, or Methamphetamines were first synthesized in Germany in 1887 and methamphetamines were affectionately called a cure in search of a disease because it had no real applicable purpose at the time of its invention. In the 1950’s United States, amphetamines were widely used by truck drivers, students, mothers, athletes, and any one else who needed to stay awake, control weight loss, or even treat mild depression. Looking at the brief history of methamphetamines we see that most often the drug was forcibly administered to its users as a means of suppressing hunger and fatigue. Current circumstances show that more people are voluntarily addicting themselves to methamphetamines, although many cite the same physical effects of combating weight and fatigue as reasons for use. As methamphetamines have been further developed, including the potent form of crystal meth, the psychological impact on the user seems to be far more prevalent a motive for use. The methamphetamine euphoria described on various websites or in books, states that meth gives the user a sense of self confidence and an initial sense of well being. One prisoner, serving time on drug related charges, described meth as a “magical drug” that makes people feel “strong, brave, like they can do anything.”

To create that feeling, methamphetamines force the transfer of dopamine in the brain. Methamphetamine can force large amounts of naturally occurring dopamine in single hit-three times the amount of dopamine as of a hit of cocaine, which causes the intense euphoria described. However, the brain senses that there is an overproduction of dopamine and will shut down the over-active neurotransmitters. Long term effects of this

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110 Edwards,181.
shut down have yet to be proven, although there is a serious concern that recovering users may no longer be able to feel pleasure naturally. The physical effects of using methamphetamine can be just as devastating. Aside from the gaunt, emaciated appearance one gets from lack of food, sleep and minimal amounts of water, there are two “meth specific” ailments that affect the heavy user. The first is termed “meth mouth”, and is extreme tooth decay and breakage caused by both the lack of bodily fluids and neglect of dental hygiene. Breakage is caused by the severe grinding of teeth associated with stimulant use. The second ailment is termed “meth mites” or “crank bugs” and is the result of overactive nerve endings that make the user feel as if bugs were crawling on their skin. The user will then pick at these imaginary bugs causing sores and open wounds that are prone to infection and even gangrene.

**CRACK** is another dangerous product of drug technology. If powered cocaine hydrochloride is boiled with an alkali, the cocaine base is separated from the chloride and puts the *free base* cocaine into a smoke-able form which accelerates the means to get the hit to the brain cells.\(^{111}\) The process was dangerous for the amateur because the end product was extracted with ether, and may lead to an explosion. When technology of cocaine improved even further the end product was a smoke-able material that could be sold as cheap as five dollars. Low cost and high absorption would transform the glamorous party drug cocaine into a violent and ugly disease amongst the urban poor. Laws regarding crack possession reflected the racially biased attitude against crack and its users. Five grams of crack carries the same sentence as 500 grams of powdered cocaine and specifically targeting the African American community. As with other

stimulants, crack can induce paranoid, psychotic behavior and neglect for all other aspects of the users life and health.

**HEROIN** is a drug made from morphine, a natural substance in the seedpod of the Asian poppy plant. Heroin usually appears as a white or brown powder and can be injected, smoked or snorted. After an injection of heroin, the user reports feeling euphoria and an encompassing warmth. Regular users develop a tolerance that requires even more heroin to achieve the same intensity. Withdrawal, which may occur only a few hours after the last injection produces a restlessness, drug craving that is accompanied by muscle and bone pain, insomnia, diarrhea, vomiting an cold flashes.\(^{112}\) Heroin addiction is a psycho-physiological state or brain dependence and the biggest danger for heroin addicts is the purity level of each batch, which can vary greatly and puts the user at risk for overdose.\(^{113}\) Users who inject the drug also put themselves at risk for contracting or spreading HIV and Hepatitis C.

**ALCOHOL** is not illegal in either the United States or Mexico, but it begs attention in the matter of substance abuse because whether it is used by itself or in combination with other drugs the effects on the user are significant and can pose as great a danger, if not greater than the abuse of any other harmful substance. Alcohol is absorbed through the digestive tract and rapidly distributed throughout the body tissue. When it reached the brain it manipulates the natural transmitter system, seeming to interact with serotonin, dopamine, and the GABA systems meaning it can act as either a stimulant or sedative.\(^{114}\) Most addicts are likely to abuse alcohol in combination with

\(^{112}\) Ibid.
\(^{114}\) Edwards, 6.
other substances and because of its legality there are social relationships related to
drinking, as well as smoking and drug use. Alcohol easily exacerbates existing mental
health issues in the user and even at a low dose can impair judgment and coordination. In
the United States more than 100,000 deaths are caused by excessive alcohol consumption
both directly and indirectly when including drunk driving accidents, cirrhosis of the liver,
cancer, strokes, or simply falling. It tends to also play a role in violence, domestic
abuse, rape, and other crimes. Sufficient to say, all of these illicit drugs and incorrectly
used prescription drugs severely impair the user and their judgment. Abuse of these
drugs and alcohol are linked to arrests for violence and non-violent crime, some of which
are committed in pursuit of funds to obtain the drug, they are linked to the spread of
disease, either through the deterioration of the internal organs or transmitted sexually, but
especially they are linked to a tremendous loss in quality of life for the users and their
loved ones. Drug and alcohol use often co-occur with mental disorders and as a coping
mechanism for those who experience trauma or loneliness. Substance users
simultaneously become these active and passive figures in the substance use process, they
are both the subjects of substance use as an active participant and because they suffer
from the addictive power or harmful side effects of the drug they are passive agents as
well.

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115 Califano, 35.
116 “Substance Abuse: The Nation’s Number One Health Problem”, Robert Wood Johnson
117 Shaw, 63.


