



Georgetown University  
Center for Latin American Studies

## Strategy and Security in US-Mexican Relations

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1996

Working Paper Series No. 10

*OCCASIONAL PAPER SERIES, NO. 10*

**STRATEGY AND SECURITY IN  
U.S.-MEXICAN RELATIONS**

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Reprinted from Strategy and Security in U.S.-Mexican Relations beyond the Cold War, eds., John Bailey and Sergio Aguayo, published by the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, the University of California-San Diego, 1996, by permission of the Center. The book is a product of the Georgetown University Project on U.S. and Mexican National Interests and Strategic Options, coordinated by Ambassador Sally Shelton-Colby, John Bailey and Sergio Aguayo, made possible by a generous grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

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## Strategy and Security in U.S.–Mexican Relations

*John Bailey and Sergio Aguayo Quezada*

The guerrilla insurrection that burst forth on January 1, 1994, in Chiapas, the southernmost state in Mexico, illustrates well the significance of the end of the cold war. If, ten years earlier, more than a thousand armed and masked insurgents had marched out of the jungles bordering Guatemala, the reaction in Washington would have verged on panic. A guerrilla uprising in the United States' southern neighbor would have realized the worst nightmares of security policy makers: spillover of Central America's civil wars into Mexico's most impoverished region. In 1994, however, official Washington was concerned but remained calm and deliberately avoided involvement in an internal Mexican problem. The end of superpower rivalry had created a markedly different context. The Chiapas events were seen not as a nostalgic throwback to the 1960s and 1970s, but rather as a radical form of protest growing out of the "lost decade" of the 1980s and the wrenching consequences of the economic stabilization and structural adjustment policies of the 1990s. The U.S. government's response to the uprising was to support continued liberalization of the Mexican political system.

### National Interests in the Bilateral Relationship

The end of the cold war has prompted a general reconsideration of strategic and security interests among scholars and interested publics throughout the world. Alliances and rivalries fostered by nearly four

decades of a stable bipolar system are being reexamined in a new light. Such is the case with the United States and Mexico, two neighbors that bring different, and often conflicting, interpretations of their national interests to the formulation of national security policies. As a result, policies adopted by each government can become a source of discord and tension with the other, since they are often formulated without due consideration of the other country's interpretation of its own national interests.

For more than forty years, anticommunism and containment, along with promotion of democracy and market economies, formed the core of U.S. security thinking. Much effort was devoted to articulating these views and their supporting strategies both at home and abroad. The Mexican government, however, avoided public discussion of national security or the formulation of an explicit national security doctrine, fearing that such action might provide an opening for the United States to impose its own security priorities on Mexico. Historically, U.S. security policy toward Latin America has tended to stress military defense against conventional external aggression and the neutralization of domestic leftist movements seen as threats to the internal stability of friendly governments. Mexico has been vigilant in opposing any U.S. effort to promote the more interventionist manifestations of the U.S. security agenda in the region—for example, with respect to Central America in the 1980s.

Recent developments at both the regional and global levels have impelled both governments to reconsider the concept of national security and the bilateral security agenda. Since the late 1980s, and as part of a fundamental restatement of its national development project, the Mexican government has discussed national security issues more extensively and publicly than it had done previously. In this context, the government has publicly identified new security threats (such as drug trafficking) and recognized an increasing number of joint U.S.–Mexican security interests. For its part, the U.S. government has also reconsidered the concept of national security and its applications, in light of the potential rise of regional commercial blocs and the emergence of new threats such as transnational organized crime, terrorism, regional conflicts, failed states, and uncontrolled flows of refugees.

The U.S.–Mexican relationship is unique in the world. Only here do the developed and developing worlds meet along such a long (nearly 2,000-mile) border. The relationship is distinguished by what Thorup (1992: 1) has called “extreme interdependence,” a concept used “to underscore the unique depth, breadth, and long history of this very intense relationship. The concept also gives special emphasis to the transnationalization of civic participation and growing societal interdependency between the United States and Mexico.” Relations between the two countries should be seen as “intermestic” in the

sense that they combine both domestic and international dynamics, as is the case, for example, with trade and investment, organized crime, undocumented migration, public health and environment, and so on. Three recent trends are especially important. First, the bilateral relationship has become even more extensive and intensive in the post-cold war period, reinforced by closer economic and social integration and technological innovation in travel and communications. Second, both societies are experiencing increasing rates of crime and social distress. Third, the United States seeks to impose its own legal concepts and policy preferences on other countries generally and on Mexico specifically.<sup>1</sup>

There is little reason, however, to expect a natural convergence of thinking about strategy and security between the United States and Mexico. The bilateral redefinition of strategic and security interests will likely engender new tensions and conflicts, as well as new opportunities for cooperation. Possible future points of bilateral tension include:

- heightened control, even militarization, of the border region arising from antidrug and anti-immigration policy;
- “interventionist” methods of promoting democracy and defense of human rights, as exemplified by the United States in Haiti;
- military involvement in the antidrug struggle, as was seen in Panama; and
- Mexican perceptions of a persistent U.S. tendency toward unilateralism.

## The Bilateral Project on Strategy and Security

Beginning in 1991, and supported by generous funding from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Georgetown University Project on Strategy and Security in U.S.–Mexican Relations in

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<sup>1</sup> Admittedly quite vague, our use of “social distress” refers not only to crime but also to broader ills in both countries, such as structural poverty and unemployment, homelessness, and personal insecurity. Some U.S. experts suggest that crime rates in the United States have not increased significantly; rather, the news media have tended to sensationalize specific crimes and thus portray a worsening situation. Even so, inviting reflection is a recent report to the effect that the number of persons presently subject to the U.S. prison system (behind bars, on parole, and the like) will soon surpass the number of persons in four-year colleges and universities. The best general discussion linking U.S. foreign policy with law enforcement is Nadelmann 1993.

the Post-Cold War Era has reflected on these issues. The study group was made up of distinguished scholars from both countries. Also, officials from security and foreign policy agencies participated in discussions, and several contributed memoranda or papers. The core group met for extended discussions in La Jolla, California (February 1992), Tepoztlán, Morelos (October 1992), Washington, D.C. (June 1993), and Mexico City (August 1995). Additional guests were invited to participate in each of these meetings.

We should underline the novelty, even uniqueness, of the project. The scholarship on U.S.-Mexico relations has focused extensively on commercial, economic, cultural, demographic, and political themes. An exception is the edited volume by Bagley and Aguayo (1993), which focused largely on concepts and theory. By and large, however, issues of strategy and security, especially at the organizational and operational levels, were largely considered "out of bounds" for scholars, as was dialogue with security policy makers. U.S. researchers were leery of topics freighted with "cold war" overtones and involving the defense and intelligence establishments. Mexican scholars were concerned not only about this U.S. dimension but also about the possibility that their scholarly involvement might lend legitimacy to the Mexican security apparatus, long associated with internal repression. Furthermore, Mexican officials were reluctant to address practical issues of security, even in Mexican public circles.

These deeply ingrained prejudices were tested by the end of the cold war. Our belief that questions of security must be reconsidered in light of a changed global setting coincided with a new willingness by Mexicans—both academics and public officials—to engage in dialogue. What Sergio Aguayo has called a "quiet revolution" in the professionalization of Mexican security agencies was reflected in an unprecedented willingness to discuss issues previously considered taboo. Thus the project was unique in bringing together scholars and officials drawn from both countries to consider at length the sensitive and crucial topic of strategy and security in the bilateral relationship.

Clearly, the post-cold war relaxation of tensions and prospects for a successful conclusion to the NAFTA negotiations fostered cooperation, which was especially important with respect to the Salinas administration's willingness to allow Mexican officials to participate in the project. But there remained some reservations. Objections were also signaled by the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City, which was similarly committed to a successful NAFTA negotiation. Had some unfortunate event occurred, or if the negotiations had soured, our project might have been placed "off limits" with respect to official cooperation.

Therefore, ours was a fragile undertaking, and some taboos were respected. Active-duty Mexican military officers did not participate. By general agreement, we excluded participation of the Central Intelligence Agency. Also, we deliberately chose to avoid making recommendations as a group or project, although various authors have offered policy advice and virtually all of the chapters contain policy-relevant analyses. We were more than satisfied to convene the meetings, promote dialogue, and thereby move issues of strategy and security out of the offices of "specialized bureaucracies" and closer to the mainstream discussion.

We anticipated that the discussions would be complex and perhaps difficult, especially since the convocation of both scholars and policy makers was breaking new ground. In fact, this proved to be the case. We were not prepared, however, for the extraordinary political volatility that beset both countries and the bilateral relationship between 1991 and 1995, forcing repeated delays in bringing our deliberations to closure. As a group, we lived through the surprising collapse of the Bush administration and the election of Bill Clinton in 1992. Then came the drama of the NAFTA debates and the treaty's passage by the U.S. Congress in November 1993. For Mexico, 1994 proved to be an eventful, traumatic year, beginning with the Chiapas rebellion and followed by horrific, high-profile assassinations and a dramatic presidential election in August. Just as events appeared to return to something like normalcy, the peso collapsed in December 1995 and Mexico once again entered a phase of extreme uncertainty.

This volatility brought personal adjustments as well. Sally Shelton, one of the original project codirectors, accepted an appointment in the Clinton administration with the Agency for International Development; Sergio Aguayo became deeply engaged in Mexico's presidential elections as one of the national coordinators of Alianza Cívica, an umbrella organization of some four hundred pro-democracy groups; and Arturo Valenzuela, the project's patron from the outset, joined the Clinton administration in the Department of State, which resulted in John Bailey's appointment as interim director of Georgetown's Center for Latin American Studies. In addition, several other members of the original core group moved along—and arguably up—their respective career tracks. While these adjustments slowed the project, we are convinced that they improved the product. We shudder to think how irrelevant conclusions reached in 1993 would be in light of subsequent developments. And we recognize that the pace of change will likely not slow in the coming months and years. Even so, we are better prepared to report our findings.



## Overview of Findings

Several broad questions structured our discussions. How do Mexico and the United States each understand the concepts of national strategy and security? What issues does each government regard as proper strategic and security concerns? Do the two countries have common strategic and security interests? What might these be? What impact does each country's interpretation of strategy and security have on the other? How do the changes wrought since the end of the cold war (regional economic integration, intensified antidrug operations, and political liberalization, among others) affect strategic and security considerations? What might be sources of future bilateral tensions and conflicts about strategy and security, and how might these tensions be mitigated? How appropriate is bilateral or multilateral resolution of security problems, given concerns about national sovereignty, self-determination, and interventionism?

An initial framework and assignment of topics rather quickly proved to be inadequate, as discussions and events forced us to think in new ways. We have grouped the chapters that grew out of our discussions under three broad categories, recognizing that the themes overlap in a number of ways. We begin with a broad overview of new strategic and security interests; from this we proceed to chapters whose central concerns involve a bilateral perspective. The final section focuses on civilian and military agency-level responses to new security issues.

In "Strategic Interests in the U.S.-Mexican Relationship," David Mares uses the concept "grand strategy" to analyze how Mexico and the United States identify their respective strategic interests and adopt policies to defend those interests. He argues that until the 1980s, both countries had a relatively stable threat assessment. Mexico viewed potential U.S. domination as its only significant state-based security threat, while the United States viewed direct or indirect Soviet aggression as the only real threat to its security interests. Mares argues that these traditional grand strategies are no longer adequate to address the new issues and challenges that will dominate the bilateral agenda in the post-cold war era, such as fighting the drug trade and promoting regional economic integration and global commercial competitiveness. Because these new bilateral issues are generally not susceptible to resolution by unilateral or military means, Mares warns against defining them as "security interests," given that security matters almost by definition demand unilateral resolution. To define economic competitiveness as a "security interest," for instance, might generate pressures for trade protectionism and thus undermine economic liberalization. Mares also warns against defining democratization as a security interest or challenges to democracy as security

threats since, he suggests, authoritarian regimes pose no inherent threat to democracies. He criticizes efforts to promote democracy through interventionist means as fraught with problems and rarely successful.

In "Mexico in the Sphere of Hemispheric Security," Luis Herrera-Lasso gives us a detailed examination of the various organizations that together constituted the cold war hemispheric security framework, and especially of those through which the United States and friendly Latin American governments cooperated in defeating the security threats of that era. Herrera-Lasso differs with Mares, however, in including democratization and human rights among the new security interests common to the United States and Latin American nations, although he agrees with Mares that these interests must not be secured through interventionism or the use of force. Even though Mexico opposes such tactics, Herrera-Lasso believes that other Latin American nations are increasingly receptive to external intervention in the domestic affairs of sovereign states, provided both that the motive is worthy—for example, promotion of democracy or human rights—and that the interventions are conducted multilaterally, preferably under the aegis of the United Nations or the Organization of American States. Herrera-Lasso underlines Mexico's deep reservations about external and aggressive forms of intervention into the internal affairs of sovereign nations, even for laudable and widely supported ends. Such interventions create troubling precedents that can lead to counterproductive actions in the future.

Moving toward a more bilateral perspective, Michael Dziedzic and Manuel Villa Aguilera paint interesting contrasts of perspectives on strategy and security held by governing elites. In "Mexico and U.S. Grand Strategy: The Geo-strategic Linchpin to Security and Prosperity," Dziedzic characterizes the geo-strategic relevance of Mexico for the United States. Mexico's strategic significance has evolved along with changes in the global order. During the cold war, and long before, Mexico was prized as a geopolitical fulcrum. On the southern flank of the United States, it was cultivated as a source of leverage to distract U.S. energies away from other vital pursuits. In the post-cold war period, Mexico's geoeconomic importance has become much more salient. Mexico's efforts to move toward an open economy (whether successful or not) will heavily influence the viability of the U.S. government's strategy of enlargement. Concurrently, Dziedzic suggests, Mexico has also become a choke point for an array of what he terms "geosocial" or transnational afflictions that respect no national boundaries. Thus Mexico will play a key role in the emerging struggle to ward off the direct consequences of what pessimists refer to as the "new world disorder." If Mexico succumbs, the United States can scarcely expect to avoid the full and direct consequences of

what Robert Kaplan (1994) has called "the coming anarchy." Thus Mexico has been, and will continue to be, pivotal to the success of U.S. grand strategy.

In contrast to both Herrera-Lasso and Dzedzic, Manuel Villa ("Mexico's National Security Policies and Institutions in the Post-Cold War Era") underlines points of divergence between the United States and Mexico. He warns that future tensions between Mexico and the United States are most likely to result from mutual insensitivity to each other's national priorities and from the failure to communicate clearly. Villa rejects the contention of the volume's editors that Mexico failed to articulate a national security doctrine during the cold war era because it feared subordination to the United States. The absence of doctrine resulted instead from Mexico's distinctiveness in formulating a clear national project that created sufficient political space for labor and the Left, in contrast to most other Latin American countries. Further, Villa argues that failure to communicate clearly helps to explain why the United States tends to project its own priorities onto Mexico. (The reverse also happens, but to a much lesser extent.) Villa also warns that the U.S. tendency toward unilateralism in Latin America remains a threat, as illustrated by its militaristic and coercive methods in fighting the hemisphere-wide drug trade. He advises the U.S. government to rely less on military operations and diplomatic pressures against Latin American countries to restrict local supply, and more on fighting the poverty and ignorance upon which drug traffickers feed. Finally, Villa regards the U.S. insistence on global promotion of its own conception of democracy not only as inconsistent with Mexico's interests but also as an implicit threat to Mexico's own security. Villa anticipates that Mexico will have to formulate a more explicit and active doctrine of national security in order to keep from acquiescing in U.S. initiatives that contradict its own interests.

In "Challenges of Unfinished Modernization: Stability, Democracy, and National Security in Mexico," Guadalupe González undertakes the daunting task of characterizing Mexico's transition away from authoritarianism and linking this to concerns about security. Unlike Manuel Villa, González regards the Mexican regime as a source of instability and insecurity, not as the country's main protection against insecurity. She expands the definition of national security to include the nation's capacity for economic, social, and political progress. González urges us to consider the domestic factors that shape national security threats facing "peripheral" countries such as Mexico. These include domestic social conflict, ethnic diversity, poverty, economic underdevelopment, population growth, and weak state and political institutions, as well as the resources and strategies for dealing with those threats. She notes that domestic social conflicts

can become security problems when they are resolved through force, outside of established political and legal channels.

González's analysis of the formulation of national security policy highlights "political" variables—including political support coalitions, state institutions, state strength, and internal sociopolitical cohesion and consensus. State institutions is the most important of these variables, since weak sociopolitical cohesion can undermine both the regime's political legitimacy and the prevailing consensus regarding basic national values. This in turn conduces to violence and domestic instability which can undermine national security. Further, she believes that inadequate social and political integration—insufficient democratization—is the chief security challenge facing Mexico today. During the 1980s, the nationalist project inherited from the Mexican Revolution underwent a fundamental transformation, as the desire for democracy came to overshadow the imperative of maintaining national unity against perceived external threats. Only democracy, González insists, can give the country enduring stability and internal peace. Genuine democratization requires not just clean and fair elections but also effective administration of justice and decentralization of power. The major contrast between the administrations of Carlos Salinas and Ernesto Zedillo, she suggests, is the latter's emphasis on governing within legal institutions. The dilemma, however, is that while stressing legality reinforces trends toward democratization, it weakens the presidency's short-term ability to deal with authoritarian political bosses and conservative elements in the ruling party.

In "Controlling Drugs: Strategic Operations and U.S. and Mexican National Interests," Jorge Tello Peón provides a useful bridge from broader global and bilateral issues to our interest in operational matters of policy making and institutions. Tello Peón views the struggle against the international drug trade as an opportunity for closer U.S.-Mexican cooperation. He explains that drug trafficking has become increasingly both a hemisphere-wide concern and a bilateral security challenge. It is a many-sided problem that requires an "integral" solution—that is, one that uses a variety of means to attack simultaneously all of its various manifestations. Since the causes and impacts of the drug problem are global in scope and implications, so must be its solution. Tello Peón explains that the drug trade has come to pose a direct national security threat to Mexico, even though the country has traditionally served only as a transit point for drug shipments, and even though it does not share the cultural weaknesses that have allowed drug traffickers to penetrate the United States so easily. Nevertheless, drug trafficking has steadily undermined Mexico's territorial integrity, domestic political stability, and atmosphere of legality.

Consistent with his emphasis on "integrality," Tello argues that multinational cooperation is essential to defeating the international

drug trade. He provides useful descriptions of the Mexican government's various bureaucratic innovations to assist in fighting drug trafficking, especially in the areas of information sharing, demand reduction, and crop eradication. He warns, however, that such cooperation must always eschew interventionism and violations of each nation's right to self-determination.

Sergio Aguayo Quezada asserts in "Intelligence Services and the Transition to Democracy in Mexico" that our complete ignorance about Mexico's intelligence services is not only absurd but dangerous, since the role of these services in Mexico's political transition has tremendous importance. Aguayo makes a twofold contribution: he carefully analyzes the functions of intelligence services in democratic polities, and he describes the origins and recent evolution of Mexico's security services in the postwar period, and especially from the mid-1980s to the present. He maintains that democratic polities need effective intelligence and security services but that special arrangements must be made to subject these services to democratic controls, especially through popularly elected legislatures. He identifies several requirements that must be met in order to reconcile the efficiency of intelligence services with respect for democracy and human rights. These include legislative control, especially through oversight and budgets; the separation of intelligence gathering from security operations; the separation of foreign from domestic intelligence; effective interagency coordination; the creation of career personnel systems; and some means for legal self-defense against security agencies' operations. He recognizes that security services by their nature pose permanent problems for democracies, but the collective experience of various countries offers valuable insights of use to the Mexican case.

Aguayo describes the founding of Mexico's Federal Security Directorate (DFS) in 1947 and the varieties of problems incurred from the outset. President Miguel Alemán created the agency by decree, without consulting congress. The DFS acted thereafter as a virtually unrestrained presidential instrument. It operated without professional personnel, mixed intelligence gathering with operations, and used violence with impunity in its main task of controlling the population. Aguayo suggests that the broad freedom of operation granted to the DFS in its campaign against urban guerrillas in the 1970s contributed to the agency's degradation. He describes how in the area around the state of Jalisco a convergence of right-wing social and governmental groups, including death squads, became intermixed over time with elements from the DFS and with drug traffickers, and facilitated the arrival of the international drug trade to Guadalajara. Complicity between the DFS and drug traffickers festered until 1985, when the murder of DEA agent Enrique Camarena and his Mexican pilot precipitated a complex crisis within Mexico and in the bilateral relation-

ship with the United States. Out of that crisis came the impetus to reform the intelligence services, thus launching a period of transition in which their character and mission began to be reconsidered. Aguayo traces the steps that led to the formation of the Center for Investigation and National Security (CISEN) and describes some of the agency's shortcomings in the mid-1980s. Rather than bemoaning CISEN's lack of effectiveness, he suggests that the admixture of impunity and efficiency could have been devastating for Mexico's democratic transition. By stressing important changes in civil society and some progress in the professionalization of the agency, Aguayo leaves us with a basis for cautious optimism.

In "Law Enforcement and Intelligence in the Bilateral Security Context: U.S. Bureaucratic Dynamics," John Bailey focuses on bureaucratic dynamics of U.S. agencies, emphasizing aspects of agency structure and culture. He notes that security takes on effective meaning in agency behavior at the policy implementation phase. The decentralized, pluralistic nature of U.S. politics allows ample space for government agencies to develop clients, purposes, and tasks, all of which comprises the institutional basis for bureaucratic politics. This level of analysis is important to the overall security relationship due to a mix of institutional and conjunctural factors. These include the weakness of the Clinton presidency, due to underlying structural causes (such as continuing party dealignment and fiscal deficits) and erratic performance; the Republican resurgence in Congress after the November 1994 elections, which further weakened presidential leadership over the bureaucracy; and the inclusion of Mexico-related issues in mainstream U.S. policy debates and thence into bureaucratic maneuvering. Finally, the most salient foreign policy concerns in U.S. public opinion in 1994-95 involved Mexico (including drugs, migration, employment, energy, and trade), and domestic concerns focused on crime and violence, all of which suggest that security will occupy a high priority in the agenda with Mexico.

Bailey describes how constituent agencies within certain bureaucracies—especially the Departments of State, Justice, and Defense, and the Central Intelligence Agency—appear to be redefining their missions in the bilateral relationship. He describes how organizational structures and cultures affect interagency conflict and cooperation, especially between general-purpose security agencies, such as CIA and Defense, with those whose main mission is law enforcement, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Drug Enforcement Administration. He notes how agencies such as Defense and CIA are undergoing role expansion as they adjust their missions in the post-cold war period. His discussion highlights the rather erratic efforts of the Clinton administration to link national security to broader concerns about law enforcement, democracy, and human

rights, and he describes the comparatively high levels of controversy and instability that U.S. security agencies are experiencing. Bailey concludes that some aspects of bureaucratic politics will, by the institutional nature of U.S. politics, continue into the future. This is the case, for example, with problems of control and coordination. In contrast, some significant adjustments in behavior should be expected as the defense and intelligence communities shift from their cold war orientations toward greater attention to issues of law enforcement.

John Cope's "In Search of Convergence: U.S.-Mexican Military Relations into the Twenty-first Century" seeks to dispel some of the mystery surrounding the little-studied nature of U.S.-Mexican military relations, whose current state and future potential are far more important than they seemed in the past. He suggests that the frame of reference for military dialogue and cooperation provides a rare analytic window for observing aspects of Mexican strategic thinking about national defense and cooperative security. Cope describes the origins of the Joint Mexican-United States Defense Commission (JMUSDC), which continues to be one of the main structures for military diplomacy between the two countries and a means for signaling government positions or intentions. The JMUSDC also offers a means for rough measurement of the effectiveness of international and bilateral security- and confidence-building programs. Military diplomacy through JMUSDC, Cope suggests, provides a case study of how change can occur within corresponding national institutions in neighboring countries when both are affected by a common compelling influence, such as the development of a free trade agreement. The experiences of the U.S. and Mexican defense establishments stemming from NAFTA may hold lessons from which other government institutions may benefit.

Cope finds that the U.S. military sought improved relations with their Mexican counterparts more actively after 1988. What followed was a pattern of proactive U.S. proposals and reluctant Mexican responses. The intensity and cordiality of contacts increased, especially at the higher ranks. By and large, improvements in relations among naval forces has advanced farther than those between the armies. Still, efforts to strengthen institutional ties, especially through JMUSDC, have not lived up to expectations. It became increasingly apparent in 1993 and 1994 that Mexican military leaders did not want to broaden the commission's mandate and were particularly opposed to its assuming an operational role. Even so, Cope recommends continuation of U.S. initiatives, within a careful respect for Mexico's unique balance of civilian-military relations. He warns that difficulties could arise if the U.S. government should begin to tempt the Mexican armed forces with visions of high-cost, high-tech equipment or urge Mexican officials to reform their system of civil-military relations

along more democratic lines. Overall, the Mexican model of civil-military relations, with its emphasis on unquestioned and unfettered civilian control, has worked well for the country. The creation of a powerful, autonomous corporate identity with its own ideas could spell trouble in the context of a complex political transition.

## Directions for Future Research

One of the most useful results of the project is that we have a clearer idea about the kinds of topics that will most likely receive attention in the future. A recurring theme in the chapters that follow is the relationship between democratization and security in Mexico, and the possible roles that should or should not be played by the United States. The democratization-security link is a consequence of a reality that has "overdetermined" several aspects of the bilateral relationship: Mexico and the United States have quite different, and in some respects incompatible, political systems. Mexico is one of the oldest authoritarian regimes in the world; the United States is one of the oldest and most deeply rooted liberal democracies. This asymmetry in the nature of the political systems will receive growing attention in the future (in part because of the growing interaction among societies) and will raise delicate problems about the right to "intervene" versus the right to self-determination.

Democracy will also be linked to security because of the possibility that the economic crisis, touched off by the peso devaluation of December 1994 and continuing throughout 1995 and well into 1996, will accentuate social conflicts, even to the point of violence in some regions. There is evidence that the conflict in Chiapas will not be resolved without significant progress toward broader democratization of the political system and of national institutions.

To this point the Clinton administration and its congressional allies have identified U.S. national interests with the government of Ernesto Zedillo and its agenda of gradualist reform. The long-established consensus to support Mexican authoritarianism, however, is coming under severe challenge due both to economic mismanagement by the Mexican government in 1994 and 1995 and to doubts that the reformist political agenda will result in significant change. Are there circumstances under which the U.S. government might push for more rapid reform?

Mexico's ongoing crisis will fuel a number of other problems that will continue to receive attention as part of the strategic and security agenda. Drugs and immigration are the two most important. Mexico will continue to be a major transit route, producer, and even consumer of illegal drugs, with all the economic, political, and security



risks that this implies. How will the drug problem expand and deepen relations between the intelligence and law enforcement agencies of the two countries? Is there on the horizon the possibility of an expanded military relationship?

In the matter of illegal immigration there are also new developments. One of the most important, and least understood, is that the U.S. government may gradually be "regaining control" of its southern border and may be better able to block illegal immigration. This alteration of the status quo will have important implications because the U.S. economy continues to attract cheap, unskilled labor. As Mexico will be incapable of creating the necessary jobs for the foreseeable future, the conditions are being created for an agreement similar to the "Bracero" programs of old.

Yet another issue that is raised obliquely in several of the chapters is the security relevance of police, law enforcement, and the criminal justice systems of the two countries. Personal insecurity and the priority given to law enforcement in opinion surveys in both countries signal the growing attention that these issues will receive. High-profile crimes such as murders, assassinations, kidnappings, and the like have seriously complicated bilateral relations since the mid-1980s. The penetration by criminal organizations of security agencies and key services such as transportation and communications (air traffic control, for example) is cause for profound concern. That we could not find a single systematic, empirically based, academic study of the Mexican police underlines the enormous gap to be addressed. Further, the patent inability of the police to deal effectively with crime has led Mexican authorities to involve military forces on a growing scale in civilian law enforcement. Although some of our contributors will disagree, we believe the inevitable problems of corruption and politicization that accompany such involvement will complicate civil-military relations in the near term.

These various problems need to be considered in the context of the enormous power asymmetry between the two countries. This implies that U.S. conceptualizations of its security interests have global implications, whereas those of Mexico are limited to the region and the bilateral relationship. It is not enough to recommend that Washington take into account Mexico City's perspectives. Most likely, the U.S. government will continue to act unilaterally when it deems this to be convenient. Yet there are dangers in unilateralism. The current Mexican financial and economic crisis reminds us of the interdependence between the two countries and the vulnerability of the United States.

We believe there are grounds for optimism, however. The most important result of the project and book is that there has been progress in willingness to discuss openly the several problems faced by the two countries, and these discussions helped to advance our

knowledge of the issues. Many gaps remain, and we have underlined the need to know more about police and intelligence activities of both countries and the ways in which these are—or are not—coordinated. The most useful contribution we can make, under these circumstances, is to create conditions to promote continued open discussion about and systematic research on issues of strategy and security.

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